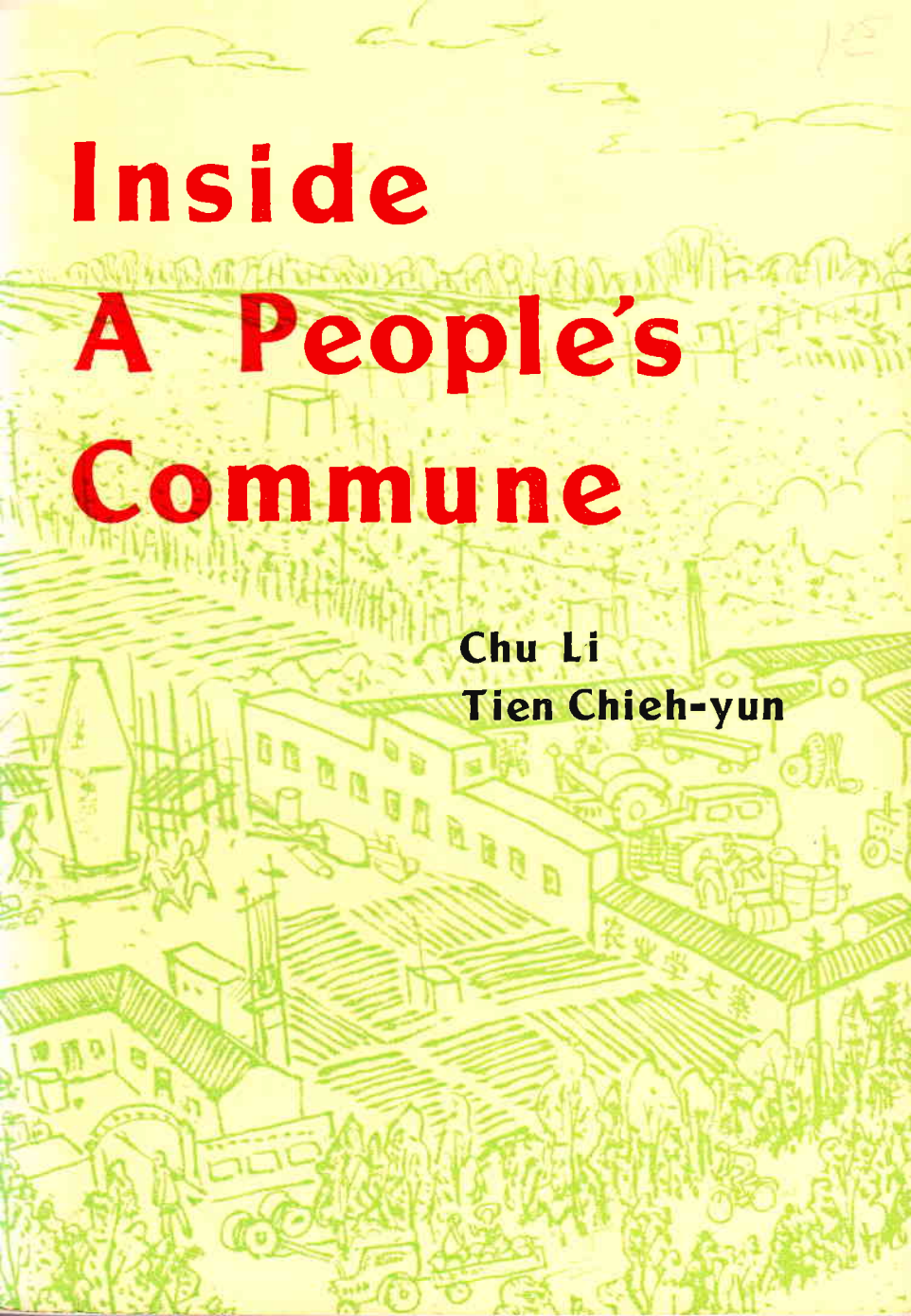


Inside A People's Commune

Chu Li
Tien Chieh-yun



THIS is a book of easy-to-read reportage in depth from a pioneer people's commune in China.

The story of Chilying's struggle and growth over fifteen years is typical of the people's communes as a whole. It should help readers to understand better the character, make-up, functions and advantages of these new-type socialist collectives, and of the life, work and outlook of the 600 million rural people, about four-fifths of China's population, who are organized in them.

China's agriculture, which feeds the world's most populous country, is the basis of her economy. The authors give a close-up view of how the spirit of self-reliance and hard struggle, which promotes her entire advance, shows itself in the communes.

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P. T. HARRISON

**Inside
A People's
Commune**

**Report
From Chilying**

By Chu Li, Tien Chieh-yun

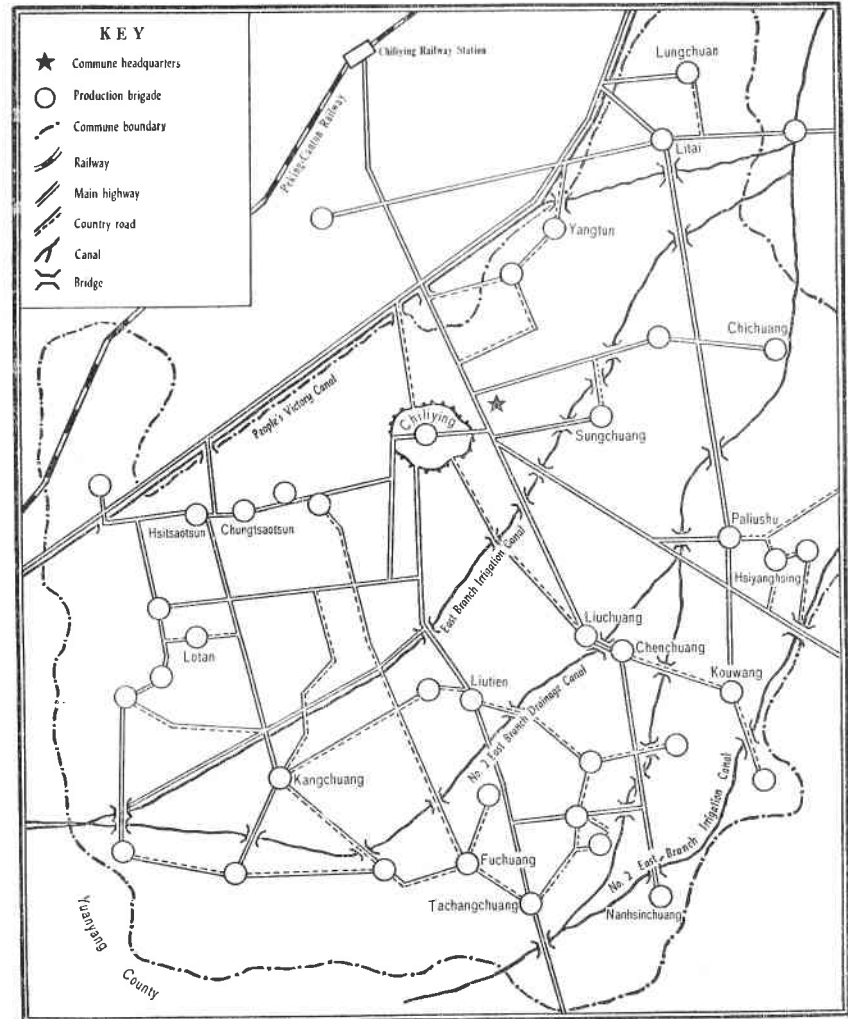
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Chairman Mao Tsetung during his rural inspection
tour in Honan Province in 1958.

SKETCH MAP OF CHILIYING PEOPLE'S COMMUNE



Contents

Foreword	1
I. Birth and Growth of the Commune	5
Whence the name?—What are the people's communes? —High grain and cotton yields—An arid plain comes under irrigation—Battling natural disasters—Helping one another—The keystone, a correct line	
II. Science Comes to Farming	32
The "general staff"—A forecast of insect pests—Better seed strains—Close planting—The dialectics of farming	
III. Liuchuang—New Landscape, New People	46
A new landscape—Grain in store—A big, prosperous household—An industrial army for agriculture—The "big household" and small households—The commune mem- bers' new outlook—The younger generation	
IV. Shih Lai-ho—A Grass-Roots Cadre	63
The earliest militiaman in the village—A jar of honey—A bitter lesson—A peasant cotton-growing expert—Struggle against nature	
V. The Commune's Industries	80
Constantly adapting to new demands—Repair, the primary task—Training all-round tractor drivers—A burden lifted from women—New generation of workers	
VI. Rural Commerce	91
Steadily rising purchasing power—Rural commercial net- work—How the commune leads trade—A strong link in worker-peasant alliance—Between the state and the com- mune members	

VII. Agricultural Technical School	106
Born of the Cultural Revolution — Self-reliance and hard work — Study, labour, scientific experiment — Developing peasants of a new type — Training veterinarians — Graduates go to other counties	
VIII. The Commune Militia	124
Glorious revolutionary tradition — Military training — Support by the masses — Enforcing proletarian dictatorship — A shock force in production — Learning from the PLA	
IX. "Little Sungchuang," No Longer Poor	140
Rising curve — The first step — Confidence plus modesty — Revolutionary optimism — The power to climb new heights	
X. A Young Team Leader Matures	156
Democracy and reliance on the masses — Learning modestly from others — Firmly grasping class struggle — The line is what counts	
XI. Peasant Art Group	170
Doing it themselves — Source of art: the people's life — Powerful weapons — Following a correct principle — Serve the people whole-heartedly	
XII. Women Shoulder Half of Heaven	183
Women's great role — Training women cadres — Democratic and harmonious families — A long struggle	
XIII. Medical and Health Service	194
The bitter years — After liberation — Stress on rural areas — Co-operative medicine — Prevention first — Family planning — "Barefoot doctors"	
Afterword	209

Foreword

The invitation that came to us read: "A meeting to mark the 15th anniversary of Chairman Mao's visit of inspection will be held here on August 6, 1973. You are cordially invited to attend." It was signed: "Chiliying People's Commune, Hsinhsiang County, Honan Province."

We were very happy to accept, warmly welcoming the chance to revisit this commune. It had been much in our thoughts since we went there last.

Three years earlier, while training at our Foreign Languages Press "May 7" Cadre School, we had spent a week at nearby Chiliying. Never would we forget those memorable days of working with and learning from the commune members.

Side by side with them, we cleared and levelled the snow-covered fields. The commune youngsters went at it with such vigour that they had to peel down to their undershirts despite the winter cold.

Often we were invited to the commune members' homes, where they would lay out an ample meal of rice with four dishes, or treat us with dumplings or fried doughnuts. We talked a lot with them. One told how he was building a new home for his son and prospective daughter-in-law. Another spoke of a letter he had just received from his son in the army, enclosing a citation for meritorious service, and about his daughter's forthcoming

graduation from senior middle school. All our peasant hosts radiated happiness with their new life.

There being hundreds of us, we carried our own bed-rolls and lived scattered in several villages. Some put up in offices, most in commune members' homes. Everywhere we lodged, we found fires already ablaze and the rooms welcomingly warm.

An elderly woman came to the room where some of us stayed, carrying two thick new quilts from her home. "It's colder here than in town," she said. "You'll need these. Mustn't get a chill." With many thanks for her concern we tried to decline, but in vain. Soon, other housewives and girls came with more quilts. Finally most of us went to sleep under two covers. Snug and warm, we glowed also in our hearts. Many of us recalled moving stories – from the accounts of veterans or descriptions in films and literature – of the people's warm care for the cadres in the years of revolutionary war.

We attended vivid talks by a commune vice-chairman and a brigade cadre about how they were organizing and leading the members in the three great revolutionary movements – class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment. They spoke factually and penetratingly, and we learned many new things.

Each people's commune is like a cell of China's vast countryside. Anyone sharing its life for a time finds himself in an interesting and varied world not apparent from the outside.

Our week's stay was much too short, enough to see only the surface. In farewell, we said we would like to come again.

That was how we came to be invited to the Chilying commune's anniversary. We attended the mass meeting,

saw militia exercises and stage performances. We joined the members in the glad celebrations in which they renewed a treasured memory, reviewed the commune's achievements and set still higher aims for the future. Not only did we fulfil our old wish to return, but we arranged to stay on for two months, in order to write up this pioneer commune for friends abroad.

New China's farmland now produces all the grain needed to feed her people in town and country, the largest population in the world. It also supplies the needs of her industry, and of mass consumption, in cotton, oil seeds and other economic crops. Clearly the work of the communes, the basic units in organizing agricultural production, bears directly on the national economic plan and the people's livelihood.

Organized in the communes are more than 600 million of China's peasants, who constitute 80 per cent of her population. The people's communes are not only economic collectives, but also basic units of political power in the countryside. Anyone who wants to know China today must have some understanding of them.

Some of the questions we wanted more light on were:

How did the people's communes grow and develop? How have their characteristics manifested themselves?

How do the people's communes combine agriculture, industry, commerce, education and military affairs under unified leadership?

How does a people's commune deal with the complicated class struggle in the countryside, the recurrent threat of natural calamities, and the many problems that arise in production and in the life of its members?

What have the older generations of peasant cadres done in the quarter century since China's liberation in

1949? What are they like today? How are they bringing up young cadres of the new generation?

How have China's peasants, organized into communes, changed the world and themselves? What are the differences in every aspect of work and life as compared with the old days of individual farming? What are their thoughts, worries and joys?

We ourselves went to Chiliying with many such questions in our minds. There we talked to a lot of people engaged in many kinds of work. While we cannot claim to have obtained all the answers, we did learn a good deal and acquire a broader view.

In telling what we saw and heard in the Chiliying People's Commune, one of the first in China, we hope to be of some help to friends who want to know more about China's immense countryside.

Chu Li and Tien Chieh-yun

Birth and Growth of the Commune

On August 6, 1958, a light blue sedan drew up before the office building of the Chiliying People's Commune in Honan Province. A strongly-built senior comrade alighted, a warm smile on his face.

"Look, it's Chairman Mao!" some onlookers shouted in glad surprise. They burst into applause and cheered, "Long live Chairman Mao!" Some people rushed up, joyously shook his hand and said, "How are you, dear Chairman Mao?"

Chairman Mao then walked briskly towards the commune office. He stopped before the new signboard on the right side of the gateway, inscribed: "Chiliying People's Commune, Hsinhsiung County."

He read the sign half to himself. Then he said, "**People's commune, that's a good name.**"

Later, Chairman Mao looked over the commune's flour mill, ball-bearing workshop and experimental cotton plot. Everywhere he went, he chatted warmly with the men and women members.

That same day, Chairman Mao left Chiliying to continue his rural inspection tour. On August 9, he came to Shantung Province. When told by comrades of the Shantung Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party that

some townships there were going to organize big farm collectives, Chairman Mao said, "It is good to set up people's communes. Their advantage is that they combine industry, agriculture, commerce, education and military affairs, thus making the task of leadership easier."

During his tour, Chairman Mao gave unreserved support to the initiatives of the masses, and summed up their experience in creating the people's communes. Soon afterwards, an enlarged session of the Political Bureau of the Party's Central Committee was held under his personal guidance. On August 29, 1958, it adopted the "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Establishment of People's Communes in the Rural Areas."

Chairman Mao's instructions and the resolution of the Party's Central Committee quickly spread far and wide, greatly inspiring the people. They stimulated a surging movement to set up rural people's communes. Within two months, the commune system embraced practically the whole of China's countryside.

Then, Chairman Mao called and presided over the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Its resolution on some questions concerning the people's communes, passed on December 10, 1958, stated, "A new social organization has appeared, fresh as the morning sun, above the broad horizon of east Asia."

The birth of the people's communes was the inevitable outcome of historical development.

Shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a tempestuous land reform movement had been started to free the peasant masses from oppression and exploitation by feudal landlords. Directly afterwards,

Chairman Mao and the Party's Central Committee guided the peasants to organize for collective production, beginning with mutual-aid teams and going on step by step to elementary and then to advanced agricultural producers' co-operatives.* By 1956, agricultural co-operation was the general rule in China's countryside, further liberating its rural productive forces.

Then came 1958. The Great Leap Forward swept the country. Vast masses of peasants set to work on large-scale land improvement and water control projects. A vigorous movement to reform farm tools and push production got under way.

The Great Leap Forward gave impetus to the birth of the people's communes.

Whence the Name?

Situated in central China on the upper-middle section of the Peking-Canton Railway, only forty kilometres from the Yellow River which runs through the country from west

* Mutual-aid teams and the elementary and advanced agricultural producers' co-ops were the three forms of organization evolved in China's agricultural co-operation movement, representing specific and successively higher stages of development.

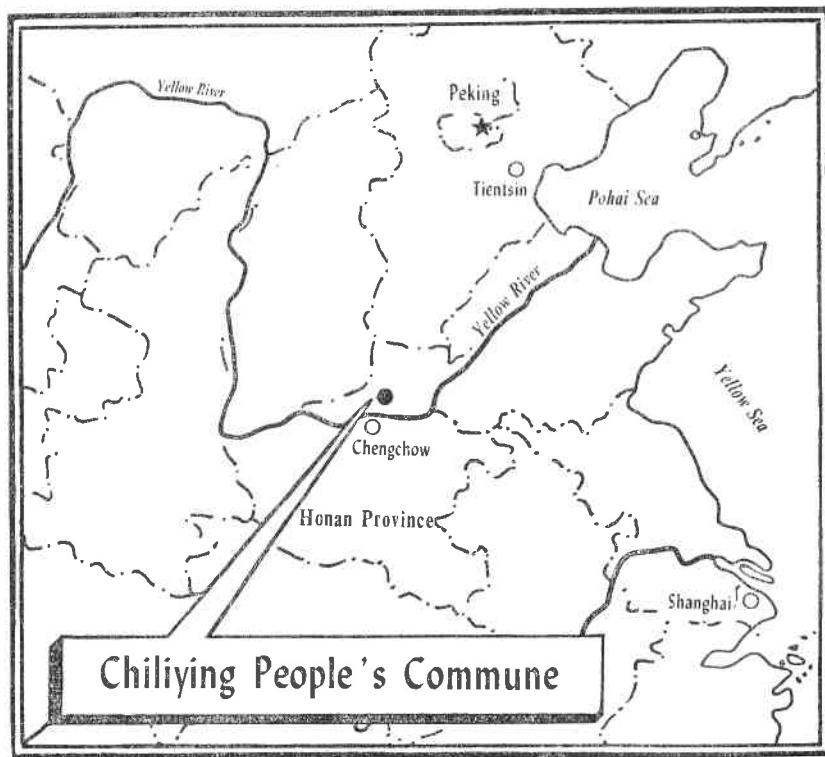
The mutual-aid team, in which the land remained under private ownership but the members helped one another with manpower, draught animals, etc. on an exchange basis, contained rudiments of socialism.

The elementary co-op was semi-socialist. Its members were remunerated for the amount of work they did, and in addition, drew appropriate dividends for their land, draught animals and bigger farm implements which were pooled in the co-op as shares and placed under its unified management.

The advanced co-op was fully socialist. All the income of its members came as a reward for their labour. Land and other principal means of production were owned collectively and no dividends were paid for them.

to east, Chiliying was one of the earliest people's communes born in the years of the Great Leap Forward.

Before 1958, there were 56 advanced co-ops in Chiliying's 38 villages. Because they were collectivized to a higher degree, they were far superior to the preceding mutual-aid teams and elementary co-ops. But this organizational form, too, turned out to be inadequate for the rapid growth of production which came with the Great Leap Forward.



Many key undertakings – including the construction of water conservancy projects, speeding of farm mechanization, building of roads and installation of high-voltage power lines – urgently required that the co-ops combine and co-ordinate their activity. Indeed, four of Chiliying's advanced co-ops had already worked together in close concert to dig a drainage canal.

In the spring of 1958, the township government received applications from many advanced co-ops asking for permission to merge. A number of them did so in July the same year after approval by the higher authorities. The resulting new, bigger organization set up a flour mill and small workshops making ball bearings and other items to meet the demands of production. It also assumed unified leadership over schools, supply and marketing centres and militia units formerly under the township government.

Gradually people came to understand that this new organization was not only larger than the advanced co-ops but also different in nature. Its activities were not confined to agriculture alone. Hence the name "agricultural co-operative" was no longer apt. What should it be called?

Some thought of the Paris Commune of 1871. Others added, "Since our ultimate objective is communism, we should also include the adjective 'communist' in the name."

"But we're still a very long way from that goal," countered others. "So it wouldn't be accurate."

Repeated discussions followed. Several names were tried and the inscription on the wooden sign changed as often. One thing stuck, however. That was the word "commune."

"Our state is called a People's Republic, our government a people's government, and our banks people's banks," some argued, "why not name ourselves 'people's commune'?"

Most people agreed. And on August 4 a brand-new sign went up: "Chiliying People's Commune, Hsinhsiang County."

It was two days later that our great leader Chairman Mao came to inspect the new-born people's commune. He praised it as having great hope for the future.

Thus Chiliying entered a new historical stage in its advance along the road of collectivization.

What Are the People's Communes?

The people's communes are a new creation by the Chinese masses. Evaluating their experience and creation, Chairman Mao said, "**People's communes are fine.**" Under the leadership of the Party's Central Committee and through people's practice over the years, the rural communes have steadily improved and come to form a unified, nationwide system. A look at Chiliying will provide a profile of their nature and characteristics.

Born out of the merger of agricultural co-ops, the people's communes at the present stage continue to be a form of socialist collective ownership. But a commune is larger than a co-op and collectivized to a greater extent. Larger size and a higher degree of public ownership — these are two distinguishing characteristics of the people's communes.

The commune at Chiliying, with a population of 53,200 and 93,000 mu of farmland, was formed by combining 56

advanced co-ops. This exemplifies the communes' bigger size.

Generally speaking, each of the 38 production brigades of the Chiliying commune embraces one village. Every brigade is divided into production teams, of which the Chiliying commune has 298. So the commune, production brigade and production team are the three levels of a people's commune.

But why do we say the people's commune represents a higher degree of collectivization? The answer lies chiefly in its system of ownership as compared with that of the co-op.

In ownership, the people's communes also have three levels, with the production team as the basic one. This means that the commune, brigade and production team each own part of the means of production; but the land, the most important, belongs to the team. Hence the distribution of income also takes place mainly within the team which is the basic accounting unit. (In a number of places, the brigade is beginning to play this role.)

Take for instance the No. 29 Production Team of the Chiliying Production Brigade. It has 310 mu of land and 18 draught animals as well as a thresher, crusher, etc. They are collectively owned by its commune members of 36 households. The members work in the team and the income is distributed among them in line with the socialist principle, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work."

The brigade owns some of the larger means of production, too expensive for the average team to buy. They include such items as tractors and larger irrigation and drainage equipment. All are used in helping constituent teams with their production.

Some Basic Figures

I

The Chiliying Commune — Its Units, People and Land

38	production brigades
298	production teams
53,200	people
9,100	households
93,000	mu of cultivated land

II

Increases in the Commune's Average Grain and Cotton Yields

(In jin per mu)*

	Food grains	Cotton
1948 (Year before liberation)	80	25
1957 (Year before founding of commune)	167	62
1958 (First commune year)	216	91
1965 (Year before Cultural Revolution)	437	102
1969 (During Cultural Revolution)	680	135
1973	1,100	155

* 1 jin = 1/2 kilogramme or 1.1 lb.

* 1 mu = 1/15 hectare or 1/6 acre.

III

Increase of Irrigation in the Commune

	Irrigated area (In mu)	Percentage of total cultivated area
1957	27,000	29
1958	34,000	37
1969	75,000	81
1973	85,000	91

IV

Increase of Schools in Chiliying

	Primary	Middle	Agro-technical
1948	5	1	—
1957	28	1	—
1973	38	17	1

The Chilying brigade, the largest in the commune of the same name, owns several tractors, a flour mill, brick and tile works, farm tool repair workshop and pig-breeding farm. It has six tractors ploughing the land of its 34 production teams, and a pig-breeding farm which sells weanlings to team members at 25 per cent below the regular price set by the state.

Owned and run at the commune level are industrial enterprises and water conservancy projects that are beyond the strength of the brigades.

At Chilying, the commune runs a tractor station, mainly serving those brigades which do not yet have any of their own. Its repair shops service all the 56 tractors in the commune (including those owned by brigades). It has a separate plant which repairs other farm machinery and manufactures some types, such as threshers and crushers. Other commune undertakings are a phosphate fertilizer plant and a spinning mill, some larger-scale irrigation and drainage facilities serving the whole commune, and high-voltage power lines with transformers and other accessories. Besides financing commune-wide projects, the proceeds from these enterprises are used to help the brigades and teams expand production.

We can see from all this that the people's communes, with their three-level ownership, represent a higher degree of collectivization than the co-ops.

Another key feature of the people's communes is that, unlike the agricultural producers' co-ops, they are not merely rural economic collectives. Besides engaging in farming, forestry, animal husbandry, side-occupations and fisheries, they discharge the functions and powers of the former township people's governments. These include the administration of industry, finance and trade, cultural and

educational work, public health work, civil affairs, and public security work within their own confines. Township governments have now ceased to exist, having been replaced by the communes. The people's commune is, in fact, both an economic collective and a basic unit of socialist political power in rural China. This is what is meant by "integration of government administration and commune management."

The Revolutionary Committee of the Chilying People's Commune corresponds to the former Chilying Township People's Government, and comes directly under the Revolutionary Committee of Hsinhsiang County. It administers all activity within the commune area, embodying the combination of industry, agriculture, commerce, education and military work as do all communes today.

Experience shows that the industries of the Chilying commune – its farm machinery repair and building plant, phosphate fertilizer plant and others – have helped greatly to boost its agricultural production.

A trade network under the commune's leadership covers its whole area. It supplies farm tools and machinery, chemical fertilizer and insecticide as well as quantities of consumer goods, promptly meeting the mounting needs.

Under the commune, rural education has made much progress. It now has 17 middle schools and all its 38 production brigades have primary schools. Total enrolment at both levels is 12,500. The commune has also started an agro-technical school which has graduated over 200 students from among the young peasants.

The commune-led Chilying militia regiment carries on its functions and training concurrently with productive labour. It has become an important force in consolidating proletarian dictatorship and helping production.

The achievements of the Chiliying People's Commune during its fifteen years of existence demonstrate the many-faceted superiority of this form of organization which (a) is larger in scale than the co-ops, (b) integrates industry, agriculture, commerce, education and military affairs, and (c) merges government administration with commune management.

High Grain and Cotton Yields

Since its inauguration, the Chiliying People's Commune has strikingly increased its output of grain and cotton.

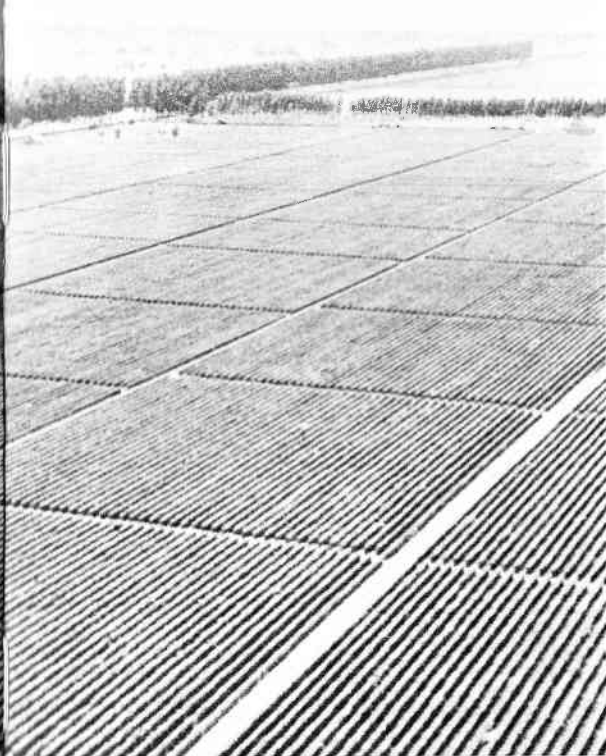
In 1973 the commune's per-mu yield of grain was 6.5 times greater, and of cotton 2.5 times greater than local averages in 1957, the year before it was organized.

Cotton-growing in the Chiliying area began 300 years ago. In the years before the liberation, however, the output was a mere 20-30 jin of ginned cotton per mu. After the land reform and under the co-ops, it rose steadily, and in a particularly marked way since the formation of the commune. By 1973, the average per-mu yield had reached 155 jin.

As a cotton area, Chiliying used to produce little grain. Traditionally the peasants here had to buy it in exchange for their cotton. Even in the early years of the commune, they depended on the state, which purchased their cotton, to provide them with grain. This went on till 1965 when Chiliying became self-sufficient in grain for the first time in its history. From 1966 on, it sold grain as well as cotton to the state each year. Its average grain yield grew from 167 jin per mu in 1957 to 1,100 jin by 1973.



Water from the Yellow River now irrigates practically the whole of the Chiliying area, only a small part of whose land was previously watered by primitive wells.



All-weather high-yield fields built under a unified commune plan.

First Secretary Tien Hsiu-ching of the Commune Party Committee (3rd from left) and Secretary Chiu Chi-yu (5th from left) chat with commune members during a work-break; like all cadres here, they take part regularly in field labour.





Timely spraying of insecticides ensures full cotton harvests.

Yen Hung-en (centre), one of many peasant experts trained by the commune, gives lessons to young wheat-growers in his specialty, the improvement of seed strains.



Since its establishment, the Chiliying commune has sold more than 50 million jin of ginned cotton to the state. And its grain deliveries and sales to the state have totalled close to 30 million jin. The constant rise in its yields of grain and cotton and in the amounts of both it has supplied to the state is a source of pride to everyone in the Chiliying commune, cadres and rank and file alike.

To achieve these impressive gains, the commune has strived hard to modernize its agriculture.

During the past fifteen years, Chiliying has built a comprehensive irrigation and drainage network to regulate the supply of water to over 90 per cent of its farmland. This provides a solid basis for yields that are both stable and high, even in years of drought or waterlogging.

Agricultural mechanization and electrification have been pushed forward here. Over 90 per cent of Chiliying's land is now worked by tractors. Cotton ginning and grain processing are in the main mechanized. This has released much labour power for intensive, meticulous cultivation.

Its extensive water conservancy network and initial mechanization have enabled Chiliying to go in for scientific farming on a mass scale. Experiments are conducted in close planting, breeding of improved seed strains, plant protection and new methods of cultivation. The commune sees to it that successful experience is spread and up-to-date techniques adopted.

All this progress – whether in water conservancy or in mechanization and electrification, or in scientific farming – is inseparable from the commune's superior form of organization.

Take scientific farming. The commune has set up a centre for the popularization of agricultural techniques

which directs an extensive scientific and technical research network serving all its 298 production teams. It consists of about 1,000 agro-technicians and forecasters of attacks by insect pests. During the growing season, the centre meets weekly to pool information and study crop conditions throughout the commune, then proposes to the commune leadership the technical measures that are needed. The centre has been regularly accumulating scientific data and summarizing experience in local agriculture for over ten years. Such planned and organized scientific farming over 93,000 mu of land would have been impossible, indeed inconceivable, in the days of individual or even co-operative farming.

An Arid Plain Comes Under Irrigation

The advantages of the commune system have emerged with particular clarity in water conservancy work, in battles against drought and waterlogging.

Indeed, one of the major forces that propelled the establishment of the Chiliying commune was the eagerness of many of the former co-ops to build water conservancy projects through joint effort.

Curiously enough, although the world-famous Yellow River passes just south of Chiliying on its way to the sea, there is not a single natural watercourse within the commune area. In past history, the Yellow River itself ran here, but later it shifted its course, leaving behind it an arid alluvial plain.

In the old society, the more than 90,000 mu of farmland here were served only by 80 shallow wells. Water from them was raised by human or animal power, and each

well could irrigate only four or five mu. Over 90 per cent of the land was thus left at the mercy of nature. No wonder Chiliying's farm output was so low.

But at times, too, water could become a scourge to thirsty Chiliying, instead of a boon. The old bed of the Yellow River is low-lying, and most of the year's rain falls in heavy concentration, often in violent cloudbursts, in the two months of July and August. When there was no outlet for the copious rain water, often swollen by overflows from neighbouring areas, disastrous waterlogging commonly occurred.

Soon after the liberation in 1949, the state financed the building of the People's Victory Canal which, among other things, brings water from the Yellow River to irrigate land north of Chengchow where Chiliying lies. Several trunk canals for irrigation and drainage were dug in Chiliying itself with state funds. But prior to the commune, differences of interest among the villages and co-ops obstructed the completion of the many branches required. Hence the irrigation network bringing water from the Yellow River failed to reach all the farmland it should have.

The points of superiority of the commune – larger size and a higher degree of public ownership – made themselves felt as soon as it was formed. An overall plan for an integrated system of irrigation and drainage works was drawn up under its unified leadership. Its production brigades, while emphasizing self-reliance, supported one another with manpower and material resources as needed by the work. Between them, they provided over 10,000 people to dig three main canals which cut across the whole commune for a total distance of more than 30 kilometres. The irrigation and drainage network com-

prises no fewer than 320 canals and channels of varying sizes, most of which were completed in six winter-spring periods after the commune came into being. This benefits over 90 per cent of Chiliying's farmland.

Practice and investigation gradually taught the commune members that in conducting water from the Yellow River to irrigate the low-lying land along its old unused bed, care had to be taken not to raise the underground water table, which would make the land saline.

So from 1964 onward, the commune sank a total of 480 power-pumped irrigation wells. Their advantages are that they can both supplement the water from the Yellow River and effectively lower the local water table.

As a result of these measures, Chiliying is no longer defenceless against droughts. It has reaped rich harvests even after 100 days without rain. During the past decade, the commune has suffered no substantial loss of output through dry weather.

Battling Natural Disasters

Waterlogging, however, still remains a menace in Chiliying. Because of the exceedingly low terrain, the commune's drainage system can cope only with a daily precipitation of under 200 mm. Anything more leaves water standing in the fields.

In fighting this evil, too, the commune has shown its superior power and advantages.

In late July and early August 1972, there were continual downpours, amounting to 722 mm. It was the first such concentrated rainfall in many years. To aggravate it, water rushed in from other districts. The water level at

Chiliying rose with dangerous suddenness, far beyond the capacity of the drainage network to run off. Large tracts of land were inundated. Some villages faced total submersion.

As soon as the rainstorm began, the commune Party committee arranged a telephone conference. It called on the masses to unite and self-reliantly overcome the disaster. A centrally-directed emergency drainage plan was worked out. Brigades were asked to co-ordinate their efforts and help one another. Commune leaders went down to the villages to size things up. Tien Hsiu-ching, first secretary of the Party committee, went to the southern part of Chiliying, which was the hardest hit.

There the Fuchuang brigade lay lower than the rest. When this village was already besieged by locally accumulated water, more rushed in through the drainage channels from its neighbour, Tachangchuang.

The secretary of the Party branch at Fuchuang waded up through the flood to Tachangchuang to find out how matters stood there. His heart ached when he saw its cotton plants half submerged.

At the same time the Party branch secretary of Tachangchuang came to Fuchuang, and was shocked at the sight of that swamped village.

The two secretaries conferred. The directive from the commune Party committee was, "First save the villages, then the farmland." They decided on immediate co-ordinated measures and swung into action.

First, Tachangchuang, on higher ground, closed its drainage sluice. With the flow down the channels lessened, the water at Fuchuang, lower down, quickly drained off. As soon as their village was out of danger, the Fuchuang people rushed up to reopen the sluice. This al-

lowed the water accumulating at Tachangchuang to flow off without doing further harm.

Synchronized effort under the leadership of the commune Party committee saved both Fuchuang village and Tachangchuang's cotton. The latter succeeded in keeping its harvest at the handsome level of 130 jin per mu that year.

In the ensuing winter, the two villages joined hands once more to dig a new drainage canal. This removes the danger to Fuchuang when water flows off from the higher land.

Over the years, the Chilying commune has been assailed by almost every kind of natural enemy—drought, water-logging, hail, insect pests, windstorms. . . . In six out of its fifteen years, the danger from one or more of these was the worst in decades. But the advantages of the commune system arm Chilying against such adversities as never before. In 1972, though attacked by an unparalleled excess of rain, it won a fairly good harvest, an average per-mu yield of 124 jin of cotton and 810 jin of grain for the commune as a whole.

Helping One Another

The people's commune also demonstrated its superior ability to help lagging brigades to catch up and advanced ones to keep on going forward. Both are essential for speeding up the building of socialism in the countryside.

At the outset, Chilying's 38 brigades were far apart in their level of production.

In the front rank was the Liuchuang brigade whose per-mu yields had exceeded 100 jin for cotton and 400 jin

for grain even before it entered the commune. After the switch-over to the commune, it became a well-known advanced unit of Honan Province as a whole. Its output kept on soaring by a wide margin each year; the level of political understanding among its members rose notably, and the village became more and more prosperous.

On the other hand, its neighbouring brigades were falling behind in relation to Liuchuang.

In 1964, early in the nationwide movement to emulate the Tachai Production Brigade in Shansi Province, the pace-setter in agriculture for the whole country, the Party committee of the Chilying commune summed up the experience of its own forward unit, Liuchuang. It made arrangements for its other brigades to go there and compare notes. In that year the Party committee put forward the commune-wide slogan "Learn from Tachai, catch up with Liuchuang."

The Sungchuang brigade, the smallest and the most backward economically in all Chilying, responded by learning well and working hard. By 1968, it had overtaken Liuchuang in both grain and cotton. This was an eye-opener for everyone.

Not to be outdone, the Chilying brigade, the biggest in the commune, also made unremitting efforts, and by 1969 had joined the ranks of the advanced.

The commune Party committee laid hold of the experience of the three typical advanced units of the time (Chilying, Liuchuang and Sungchuang). It helped sum it up and spread it further. Its secretaries and members worked out a division of work and set out for the still laggard units to help them catch up.

One was the Chichuang brigade embracing a small village. Having few people and being tucked away in a

far corner of the area, Chichuang was very little known. Nonetheless, in the drive to learn from Tachai, its members exerted themselves and worked self-reliantly until this brigade, too, pulled into the advanced ranks.

Located by the old main bed of the Yellow River, Chichuang had fallen heir to a lot of sand dunes and 400 mu of red clay. Sticky, hard when dry and turning into slime when moist, this soil was hard to cultivate or raise crops on. To change this unfavourable condition, the villagers made a stupendous effort. Carting in sand, they mixed it with the red clay until they finally had a good tilth. It took four years of unstinting labour to do this on all 400 mu of barren land.

In addition, the Chichuang people learned assiduously from the three advanced brigades how to farm by scientific methods.

Chichuang's solid efforts and resourcefulness brought a rich reward. In 1969, it attained a cotton yield of over 200 jin per mu, a record for the whole commune.

The success of the once unnoticed Chichuang in breaking through the 200-jin "gate" in cotton was a real jolt to Liuchuang, which had long been up front but had failed to reach the "200" mark despite years of trying. Now it put on a spurt, did everything possible, and in 1970 also made the grade. It was not alone. In that year, four of Chiliying's brigades reported an average cotton yield of over 200 jin.

In their socialist emulation campaigns, the various brigades supported and helped each other. The advanced ones passed on their experience in grasping revolution and promoting production to those still behind. They explained how they had kept to the correct political course in their work. They sent their own tractors to plough the

fields of brigades which had none as yet, and made interest-free loans to those short of capital construction funds. They sent out agro-technicians to teach brother brigades to get the best results in cotton sowing, field management and pest control. In this atmosphere, all the brigades advanced hand in hand.

With such mutual help, in the hot tide of socialist emulation, the disparities among Chiliying's 38 brigades have greatly narrowed. One-third of them now rate as all-round advanced units. For the commune as a whole, the average cotton yield per mu has run above 110 jin for six years on end since 1968. For wheat, planted on 50,000 mu, the 1973 average was 726 jin, an all-time high for the area.

Adjoining the advanced village of Liuchuang is the Liutien brigade, for a time far in the rear. Liuchuang had all along been aiding Liutien in different ways. From a higher level, the commune also assisted. In 1973, it lent Liutien 17,000 yuan free of interest to buy a tractor and chemical fertilizer.

Thus help from various quarters enabled Liutien to increase its production year by year. The basic factor in its progress, however, was leadership by the commune along the socialist course.

The Keystone, a Correct Line

Liutien is a close neighbour of Liuchuang, with similar natural conditions. Yet for a time it was hard to spread Liuchuang's advanced experience to Liutien. Some said this was because Liutien was bigger, and it was difficult to organize so many people. Tien Hsiu-ching, first secre-

tary of the commune Party committee, thought the cause lay elsewhere. In 1969, he was sent for a time to Liutien to get at the root of the matter.

Tien had long been a familiar figure in Liutien, whose villagers affectionately called him "Old Tien" or "our old secretary." Before liberation, he had been a refugee from famine, forced to beg for his food. Then he joined the revolutionary ranks and fought as a guerrilla. Today, he is a veteran cadre with long years of experience in rural work. Aged over fifty, he suffers from several chronic ailments. Yet he keeps on the move around the commune year after year. Old Tien knows what crop is growing in which field, how each cadre is getting along in his work, and the family histories of many commune members.

One evening he was presiding over a meeting at the commune, which lasted until midnight. But Liutien's problems had not left his mind. So right afterwards, he asked two comrades to cycle there with him in the teeth of a piercing wind. In the dark he lost his balance on the rough road and tumbled into a roadside ditch. Struggling up, he was attacked by nausea. His comrades, supporting him by the arm, urged him to turn back. He refused, saying in a quiet voice, "Every day we repeat the slogan **'Fear neither hardship nor death.'** Should we just apply it to others and not to ourselves?" Then he trudged on, pushing his bike.

In Liutien, he often worked alongside the peasants at hoeing, harvesting or other farm jobs.

Once he saw that Wu Chi-cheng, an old man blind in both eyes, had joined in reaping the wheat, laying it down behind him in neat bundles.

"Why don't you go home and rest, Uncle Wu?" he asked, moved and concerned.

"Oh, it's you, Old Tien," Uncle Wu answered cheerily, swinging his sickle. "Are you trying to drive me home just because I can't work as well as the others?"

Uncle Wu had contracted an eye disease before the liberation and, too poor then to see a doctor, finally lost his sight. Now his needs are covered under the "five guarantees."* Nonetheless, he insists on doing his stint for the collective. One day when other members were off sowing cotton, Uncle Wu repeatedly asked his team leader for work. The latter, unable to think of anything for him to do, parried half in jest, "Well, you can fill in that big pit east of the village if you want to." The old man took this at face value and walked off, feeling the way with his stick. "It'll keep me busy for some time," he mused. "No need to ask for short-term jobs now." Later, when the team leader asked him to stop, he insisted on continuing. In fact, working away for half a year, he filled the one-mu pit, to the admiration of all.

Secretary Tien reckoned that Liutien had no less than thirty front-rank commune members as full of love for labour and socialism as Uncle Wu.

Another time, Tien was working on the threshing ground when it began to rain heavily. Everybody stayed on the job to keep the wheat from getting wet, though they themselves were soaked through. When Tien returned to his quarters, several peasants brought him changes of dry clothes. "How can one person wear all this?" he

*The "five guarantees" are available to the aged, the infirm, the older widows and widowers and the orphans among the commune members. When they have no one to support them and are unable to earn a living, the production brigade or team then takes care of them in five matters: food, clothing, fuel, education (for minors) and burial.

quipped. But what he was thinking was: The commune members are so concerned for us cadres. How much more must we exert ourselves to lead them along the right path under the correct line!

It was no accident that Secretary Tien was thinking in these terms. He had detected an unhealthy trend in Liutien.

For instance, there was an old middle peasant in the village who knew how to lay bricks. Often staying away from collective production, he would do odd jobs for money outside, in fact operating a variety of private business. He raised a donkey on his own, and when it had a foal, sold it at a high price. All this was off the rails of the collective economy, representing a spontaneous capitalist trend. With the money he made, this peasant built himself the fanciest house in the village, flaunting it in the face of the collective. Some old landlords and rich peasants applauded, murmuring in dark corners, "He's the smart one, after all. Doesn't work in the fields but earns more than anyone."

Investigating the spontaneous capitalist tendency in Liutien, Secretary Tien identified it as an adverse current that reflected the revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi. He talked this over with the village Party branch secretary. Together they reviewed the severe struggles between the two classes and the two lines in Chilying both before the commune's founding and since.

Liu Shao-chi and his crew had consistently opposed agricultural co-operation before the communes began. Later, in 1959, they clamoured that the people's communes were "premature" and "in a mess." In 1961, some persons were sent to Chilying to push the "three plus

one"* (san zi yi bao) and "four freedoms"*** advocated by Liu Shao-chi. They tried to get part of the brigade's land "lent out" to individual households and to fix output quotas and rewards on this basis, in fact to re-establish individual farming in another guise. They also tried to distribute collectively-owned draught animals and forests to be looked after by individual households.

But the cadres and the mass of commune members firmly resisted all this. Then came the socialist education movement that swept China's vast countryside in 1964. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, starting in 1966, settled accounts with Liu Shao-chi's crimes. In these movements, the commune members substantially heightened their socialist consciousness.

Experience had taught Tien a deep lesson: Chairman Mao's revolutionary line guides the peasants along the broad road of socialism. But Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line tried to pull them back to the capitalist road.

So he advised the brigade Party branch secretary to take the unhealthy tendency in the village seriously and be active in coping with it. The class struggle rises and falls in waves, he explained. One must not expect smooth sailing all the way just because there have been a few political movements. The unwholesome trend affecting Liutien was no accident but a reflection of the struggle between two classes and two lines.

"Intense class struggle is going on under your nose," Tien concluded incisively. "How can your Party branch

* The "three" meant the extension of free markets, the extension of plots for private use, and the promotion of small enterprises with sole responsibility for their own profits or losses, while the "one" was the fixing of output quotas on a household basis.

** The freedoms of land sale, hiring labour, usury, and trading.

look on without leading the masses to fight back? The root cause of Liutien's lagging behind is failure to grasp the key link – the class struggle!"

The Party branch rectified its own work, and from then on took a clear course. It aroused the masses to relentlessly expose and condemn the disruptive acts of the class enemy, and subjected the adverse capitalist trend to stern criticism. This educated the whole brigade. It also helped to bring back to the collective road the few ordinary members who had strayed from it, and on this basis to build a new unity with them. Such was the case, for example, with the brick-laying middle peasant who had gone out for individual enrichment.

Afterwards, Tien suggested that the Party branch go on to commend and give emphatic publicity to good people and good actions stemming from love for the collective and for socialism. In Liutien, more than thirty advanced commune members were praised for their exemplary deeds. Blind Uncle Wu was commended not only at the brigade level, but throughout the commune. As a result, the capitalist ill wind was overcome and the positive, socialist spirit extensively built up. The Liutien people's enthusiasm for socialism soared.

The following year, Liutien worked out an ingenious method of watering which they called "man-made rain." This removed the technical snag which was preventing them from achieving full stands of cotton – inadequate moisture at sowing time. The brigade also evolved three improvements in cultivation that proved useful to neighbouring villages as well. The commune leadership promptly called four see-it-yourself meetings at Liutien to spread its experience around the commune. This in turn encouraged Liutien to keep forging ahead.

Liutien, helped by the commune, has grasped revolution and promoted production to obtain successive big increases in farm output, overcoming its backwardness. In 1973 its per-mu yield of cotton rose to 165 jin, and of grain to 1,389 jin.

This is an example of how the Party committee of the Chilying People's Commune has carried out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and guided the masses of commune members to march forward along the broad road of socialism.



Science Comes to Farming

One evening, the courtyard of the Chiliying People's Commune office resounded with cheerful hubbub. Commune members from the neighbouring villages, most of them young, were gathered there to see a film on scientific cotton farming.

The entire process, from seed selection to insect pest control and pruning, passed before their eyes. The commentary over the loudspeaker dealt with the natural laws of cotton growth and the methods of its cultivation.

But it was the people appearing on the screen who aroused the most comment among the audience.

"Hey! Isn't that Little Liu from Liuchuang? Look at her big smile!"

"See Old Yen selecting seeds over there!"

"Young Li is talking about pest control. Full of pep as usual!"

The film, in colour, had been produced in 1972 by the Honan provincial studio. As it had been shot in their own commune, and most of the audience were already familiar with the techniques shown, their main interest was in the "performance" of their own kinsfolk and neighbours.

Apart from this nationally-screened film, the experience of the Chiliying commune in scientific cotton growing has been recorded in a book. Entitled "Revolutionary High-

yield Cotton Farming," it was published by the Science Press of the Academia Sinica (Chinese Academy of Sciences). It has 148 pages and has sold about 400,000 copies. As these lines are written, a reprint is on the way.

The "General Staff"

Extension of scientific farming on a commune-wide scale is one of Chiliying's strong points. In 1973, for all the 93,000 mu of the commune's land, the average yield of cotton was 155 jin. Grain averaged 1,100 jin. These records make Chiliying one of the advanced communes in China's cotton-producing area that have attained high grain yields as well.

Scientific farming over a large area has been stressed by the Chiliying People's Commune from the start. Today it has a co-ordinated system of scientific services at all levels. The commune has a centre for the popularization of scientific agriculture. Agro-technical groups in 38 production brigades are organized geographically into six networks. And at the grass-roots, each production team has its own peasant technicians. The entire system involves more than a thousand people. They include old peasants rich in experience, technicians trained in the commune's own agro-technical school or others, local peasant experts in new techniques and educated youth working in the villages.

In running production, the commune Party committee constantly relies on this network for technical information and advice. So people have nicknamed it the "general staff." Having functioned as such with ever-increasing

effectiveness for ten years and more, it is highly regarded by the commune Party committee.

Directing the large-scale farming of a commune is like conducting a big military campaign – any blunder can bring serious losses over large areas. The agro-technical service network performs the important functions of a staff in providing accurate information, lessening the chances of error, and suggesting measures needed for victory.

A Forecast of Insect Pests

On August 12, 1973, the agro-technical group of the Yangtun brigade reported: "Early this morning, moths were found in the black-light trap. Male and female count, 19 each."

This intelligence attracted the immediate attention of Li Wen-sheng, a graduate in agronomy who is deputy director of the commune's agro-technical centre. A technician at Chilying for more than a decade, he knew from experience that when equal numbers of male and female moths are caught by the trap, it means a peak in egg-laying. But he was puzzled that this should happen when the life cycle of the second generation of bollworms was near its end. So he immediately alerted the six agro-technical service networks of the commune to keep a strict watch on the situation.

The next day, an emergency report came in from the network of the Chilying brigade. It said the third generation of bollworms had appeared in the fields ahead of the usual time, and egg counts were high.

Details poured in from various brigades through the telephone. Egg counts were rising rapidly. The highest was 1,000 per hundred plants, a record.

The secretary of the commune Party committee, Chiu Chi-yu, called an emergency conference. After a briefing on the pest menace from the agro-technical centre, it decided to rearrange the commune's production schedule to make pest control the main current task. Local records indicated that the second ten days of August were the end of the life cycle of the second generation of bollworms, and the third generation was not to be expected until the last ten days. Hence that year, the commune had intended as usual to devote this mid-August "slack period" in the cotton fields to preparing for the wheat sowing.

But now, the third generation of bollworms had turned up ten days early. As the weather was hot, the rate of survival of the hatched eggs might well be 100 per cent, presaging a fierce onslaught by the insects. Immediate measures were needed to destroy them while hatching. The commune Party committee, at an emergency meeting of all cadres on August 14, called on the members to take urgent action.

The battle against the pests began. Over the green ocean of the commune's fields, clouds of insecticide dust hung in the air, their smell assailing the nostrils. Sprayers and dusters were put to full use. A reconnaissance in force fanned out through the cotton fields to check on the results and watch for new developments. The "staff" office was swamped with ceaseless telephone calls.

"Yes? How is it going? Getting worse? . . . That's the right thing to do. Hit them hard!"

"What did you say? Situation under control? . . . Fine. Go on forecasting and keep a sharp lookout."

As expected, it was a tough see-saw fight. No sooner were the worms put down than more appeared, and this happened many times. To inspire people to greater effort, the commune put on three separate special loud-speaker broadcasts in praise of outstanding deeds and individuals in the arduous 10-day campaign.

Then the "staff" held a conference. There Secretary Chiu asked, "How do you evaluate the situation now? When should the campaign end? When should we shift the direction of the main blow?"

The network leaders told the meeting how things were going in the brigades. They said the menace was not yet completely over, yet some people showed signs of "battle fatigue." They urged that, in planning the work, strong emphasis on pest control should continue. Otherwise some of the production teams might put away their sprayers and dusters, let matters slide and give the "enemy" a chance to revive.

Party Secretary Chiu, the next day, addressed another meeting of all the cadres on the importance of not letting the fight fizzle out.

The campaign raged on till the end of August. Despite the initial seriousness of the menace, and its unusual duration, the third generation of bollworms was successfully destroyed.

In the old society, peasants in this area did not know how to fight insect pests. When their crops were damaged, they could only look on helplessly. Scientific methods were gradually introduced in the early post-liberation

years. But a lack of unified command limited their effectiveness. Insect pests could simply migrate from localities which were fighting them to those which were not.

After the Chiliying commune was founded, its members gained some idea of the laws of activity of more than twenty different cotton pests. Research was undertaken in both chemical and biological methods of control. But the factor most of all responsible for enabling the whole commune to wage the battle effectively was united action under its unified command, utilizing the information supplied by the agro-technical network. So in recent years Chiliying has had no drops in total cotton output through damage by insect pests.

Better Seed Strains

Selection of better seed strains is one of the ways by which the Chiliying commune has won high cotton and grain yields.

The Sungchuang brigade, which had very low grain yields before 1961, now gets the highest in the commune. Earlier, when commune agro-technician Li Wen-sheng had visited Sungchuang, its Party branch secretary Chi Chiu-wang asked him, "Young Li, our soil's pretty good. Why is it we can't get more wheat?"

"I think it's the seed you're using," Li answered. "The strains have become mixed and degenerated, so yields are low. Why not cultivate your own improved strains? I'll give you a hand."

"Fine. We'll do it!"

That year, 1961, Li Wen-sheng helped Sungchuang set up an agro-technical group with a seed lot of several mu

where a dozen strains of wheat were sown for comparison and selection to fit local conditions.

Just as the seed wheat was earing, a hot dry wind swept the area leaving all the plants dead except for those of the Albanian "Fumo" strain. These grew on as if nothing had happened. When they ripened, everyone admired them.

"See how big the ears are!"

"What superb plants!"

Pure seeds of this strain were selected for another two years' cultivation to further raise its purity and vigour. Extension to the fields in 1963 resulted in a 50 per cent increase in output, to 400 jin per mu.

Then the brigade's agro-technical group went on to select the best stalks of wheat from the fields and cultivate their seed for three more years to further improve its quality prior to extensive cultivation. Since then Sung-chuang has continued, in this way, to solve the problem of degeneration and ensure annual high yields of first-class wheat.

Many of Chilying's brigades, taking their cue from Sung-chuang, began to cultivate their own improved strains. Now there are four high-grade seed farms in the commune. The Litai seed farm, the largest with 610 mu of land, has since 1971 supplied 450,000 jin of cotton, wheat and maize seeds for field use.

At present, the Chilying commune is not only self-sufficient in good strains but supplies them in large quantities to other areas.

Yen Hung-en, head of the Litai farm, is one of the ten local peasant experts formally designated by the commune. With a towel round his head and a hoe on his shoulder, he looks every inch the old peasant. Yet he

writes characters in an elegant hand. And when he instructs the young people in agricultural techniques, his exposition is rigorously logical, and closely combines theory with practice. In these ways he reminds one of a village teacher. In short, he is a peasant-intellectual.

Yet Yen's only formal education was a few years of primary school. His knowledge of agricultural theory came through diligent inquiry and learning from practice. At the time of liberation, when he was 23, the village sent him to a nearby state farm for a short-term course in agricultural science. There his interest in scientific methods began.

Yen is an avid searcher for new strains. In a field in 1965, he spotted a cotton plant which had twin bolls on a short flowering branch. He at once squatted down to examine this new phenomenon, then put in a stick as a marker, so he could come back for further observation.

Returning regularly, he discovered many other unique qualities in this plant. First, it budded more than twenty days before its neighbours, indicating a longer fruit-bearing period. Second, it produced 20 per cent more bolls, and had very few superfluous branches which would save labour on pruning and thinning. Finally, it was shaped more like a Chinese pagoda than an Egyptian pyramid, as was usual, and so took up less space and permitted closer planting. When it ripened, the pairs of bolls, facing upward and ranged tightly along the branches like rows of ping-pong balls, were a striking sight.

Yen gathered all the seed from this plant, which he cultivated and multiplied for seven consecutive years. Today this "twin-boll" strain covers more than 500 mu of the commune's land, and its seeds have been supplied to five neighbouring counties for experimental planting.

Tu Hsing-kai, 23-year-old agro-technician of the Liu-tien brigade, has been conducting comparative experiments with a dozen or so high-yield strains of cotton in one seed lot. An enthusiast in his work, he once invited commune Party Secretary Tien to come for a look. Tien was very happy with what he saw. But before leaving he raised a question.

"Your high-yield strains look pretty good to me," he said. "But if cotton wilt keeps spreading in our fields, what good will they do us? Have you thought about that, young fellow?"

In fact, fusarium wilt had been creeping through the brigade's cotton land since 1966, and the agro-technical group led by Tu Hsing-kai had failed to wipe it out by chemical or other means. Now Secretary Tien's question put young Tu on to cultivating a wilt-resistant strain. After five years of experimenting, he succeeded, with a new strain that was being field-tested in 1973.

Close Planting

In the old society, the practice was to leave enough space between cotton plants for a baby to lie in. As things are today, a small dog might just about manage to run between the rows, but not between two plants in the same row. Chiling commune, after years of testing and popularization, has raised the density of its cotton plants from 2,000 to 7,000, and even 8,000 per mu.

One of the pioneers in achieving this was Tu Fa-ting, head of the agro-technical group of the Kangchuang brigade, another of the ten commune-nominated peasant experts. Enjoying high regard not only in his own village,

he now leads a network comprising the agro-technical groups of four brigades. But over twenty years ago, when he began his experiments in scientific cotton growing, he got little support for it, not even in his own home.

His interest in close planting arose in the early 1950's, in the mutual-aid period following the land reform. After visiting a state farm, he said to his father one day:

"They get their high yields in cotton by planting 4,000 to the mu. Why shouldn't we try?"

Not picturing how close the planting would have to be to get this figure, his father said nothing. But out in the fields, when he saw how densely his son was spacing the plants, he exploded:

"You don't know what you're doing! Who on earth ever planted like that?"

"Let's try it once," said Tu Fa-ting. "If it won't work, we'll drop it."

"You'll have all the neighbours laughing at us. Don't expect me to look a fool along with you," snapped the old man, stopping his work and stalking off home.

Young Tu sought support from other old and experienced peasants in the team. But they, too, didn't believe in close planting. Finally he alone tried the new method, his teammates stuck to the old rule. Dense here, sparse there, the resulting average was barely 3,600 plants per mu.

In the field management afterwards, Tu faithfully applied what he had learned from the state-farm agronomist. When the plants came up, many people gathered for a look.

"So close," some remarked, shaking their heads. "There'll be stalks and leaves, but no bolls."

"Beautiful!" one said, nodding. Tu's heart leaped at this seeming approval. But then the man added, "Like flowers in the mirror, fine to look at but of no use."

Tu was so put out, he almost picked a quarrel then and there. Fortunately, the agronomist had warned him that, at the start, close planting was bound to meet with mockery, as people weren't used to it. Only a rich yield would convince them.

That year, Tu's experimental cotton plot produced a bumper crop of 110 jin per mu, and became the talk of the whole village.

"Young Tu's done it! The yield's really high!" people said to each other.

That was more than twenty years ago. Local Party organizations had often seized on examples like Tu Fa-ting's to show the advantages of scientific farming to the peasants. But its application over large areas became possible only after the formation of the co-operatives.

With the founding of the commune, scientific farming rapidly developed in breadth and depth to become a revolutionary mass movement. More and more members came to realize that this was a fight against the force of habit left over from the small-peasant economy that had prevailed in China for thousands of years. In making sweeping reforms in the old methods of cultivation, they have exploded the myth of predestination spread by Confucius and his adherents through the ages, and established a firm belief in continued revolution and in the truth that man can conquer nature.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that they have learned to apply Marxist dialectics to the solution of many problems arising in scientific farming.

The Dialectics of Farming

The peasant experts and peasant agro-technicians of the Chilying commune earnestly study Chairman Mao's "On Practice" and "On Contradiction." They often use concepts from these works when discussing cotton cultivation. They talk readily in terms of "contradiction between close planting and sufficient air and sunlight for the plants," the "contradiction between the growth of nutritional and reproductive organs of the plants," and so on.

In fact, good cotton farming in Chilying, from sowing to field management, is inseparable from conscious application of dialectics. For instance, in order to get the most bolls on a plant yet prevent them from dropping, one must make dialectic use of two aspects, the hastening and the control of growth. When to hasten and when to control depends on a complexity of factors, in the plant itself and its environment. The commune's agro-technical service networks analyze and furnish advice on these matters.

At crucial periods in the growth of the cotton, they survey the fields once a week to discover problems and suggest solutions. Such "on-the-spot diagnosis" is usually jointly made by the agro-technical groups of several brigades. For larger scale surveys, the commune Party secretary goes out personally with a number of "general staffers," and they range over the entire commune. Wherever they go, the members welcome them as "our experts" and ask them to give advice on the cotton crop.

On one such tour in June 1971, Party Secretary Chiu and the "staff" stopped by at the Kangchuang brigade. In a field tended by a youth team, they saw cotton grow-

ing lush and green but with few buds. The young people, being inexperienced, had allowed too much growth with too few fruits. This was analyzed as "disharmony between the growth of the nutritional and reproductive organs" of the plant. To remedy it, they suggested an immediate deep hoeing between the rows and a chemical spray to control the unwanted growth.

Reaching the Paliushu brigade at high noon, they saw that the tops of its cotton plants did not turn towards the sun while leaves near the base were drooping. This was a symptom of insufficient moisture in the soil, and they saw it again in other brigades visited the same day.

After seeing all the brigades, the group agreed that, in the commune as a whole, some cotton was showing signs of runaway growth while the rest, though growing normally, was beginning to react to low soil moisture. As most brigades were busy preparing for the wheat harvest, they had neglected early signs of drought in the cotton fields. The commune Party committee convened a general meeting of cadres, which called for immediate steps to cope with this situation before switching all forces to the wheat harvest.

Within three days, all the affected cotton fields had been watered. So, while the wheat was being reaped, the cotton grew normally. If action had been postponed, the growing dryness would have caused a drop in the yield.

That year, the commune reached its historic peak in output of both grain and cotton.

How was the Chiliying People's Commune able to push its grain and cotton production up so fast? Scientific farming was a weighty factor. But what made it possible

to apply it on such a mass scale, and over so wide an area? The answer lies in the superiority of the people's communes – their larger size and a higher degree of public ownership – which provide the material conditions for scientific farming. Even more important, their strong leadership and co-ordinated action bring the new methods into play widely, quickly and with outstanding results.



Liuchuang — New Landscape, New People

“... A few desolate villages, void of any sign of life, scattered far and near under the sombre yellow sky.” So Lu Hsun, the great modern Chinese writer, described his native countryside in the 1920's.

Today, youngsters living in a new socialist village, such as the Liuchuang Production Brigade of the Chiliying People's Commune, can learn of the desolate, backward and stagnant old rural China only from descriptions in literature and the recollections of their elders.

Liuchuang is one of the commune's advanced brigades. It has many keen farmers with a high degree of political understanding. Indeed, the changes there have been very marked. Production brigades of this type can be found in many counties in China. Though still not a very large proportion, they represent the direction of development of our new socialist countryside.

A New Landscape

A bird's-eye view of Liuchuang shows 1,900 mu of cultivated land laid out neatly in square fields of 100 to 300 mu. Each square, with its growing crops, is like an em-

erald carpet, framed by irrigation ditches and serried rows of trees. Once this area was a pitted, irregular patchwork of tiny plots. Now it has undergone a “major operation.”

Rows of commune members at work in the green fields typify the collectiveness of present-day farming. Village houses roofed with grey and red tile nestle among clusters of green trees. The whole picture is one of neatness, tranquility and freshness. The formerly mud-walled homes of 187 families in the village have been rebuilt in brick, and more houses are put up every year. The dilapidated thatched hovels of yore have disappeared.

The houses in the village flank two pairs of parallel streets crossing each other at right angles. Brick-lined gutters run along both sides of the streets which are cleaned every morning. The former muddy roads full of puddles of all sizes are now just a bad memory.

Pure running water, pumped from a 50-metre well and stored in a water-tower, the tallest structure in the village, is supplied to the inhabitants. It is free of charge and can be drawn conveniently from taps set out at intervals of a few dozen metres along the four streets. In the past, all water used in the village came from three shallow wells. In rainless periods, one could see right to the bottom of it. Even getting enough to drink was a problem.

The village square, spacious enough for an outdoor assembly of 1,000 people, is the centre of the commune members' activities. In the rural communities of the past, in which the small-peasant economy prevailed, such a centre would have been to no purpose. Now, the peasants of the brigade meet there every morning before going to the fields. And here, on warmer evenings, they gather for various meetings. Located around the square are a

supply and marketing co-operative, credit co-operative, library and a reading-room, exhibition room and broadcasting station. There is also a fine auditorium with a sloped floor which seats 1,500. The wooden stage is equipped with spotlights and can accommodate a 100-voice chorus. During holidays, film-showings and performances staged by the village amateur art group or professional troupes from the city take place here. And there is a TV receiver on which people can see news, art and other programmes relayed from the Peking Television Station through Chengchow.

This handsome village auditorium, the like of which was hardly to be seen even in a county town in old China, was built by the commune members of the Liuchuang brigade in their spare time, within a very short period.

Grain in Store

The brigade granary is the best building in the village. Over its door are painted the words "Be Prepared Against War and Natural Disasters." With a capacity of 1,600,000 jin, it stores the production brigade's seed, food and fodder grains. On our visit, the old store keeper Shih Chuan-li brought out his account book. It showed that besides supplies sufficient to meet all the grain needs of the village's 1,138 people for a year, there is a reserve of 600,000 jin, which could feed them all for another year. This the commune members call "grain reserve against war."

Shih Chuan-li has conscientiously kept this granary for more than ten years. In the old society, he had known starvation, and fled the village as a refugee from natural

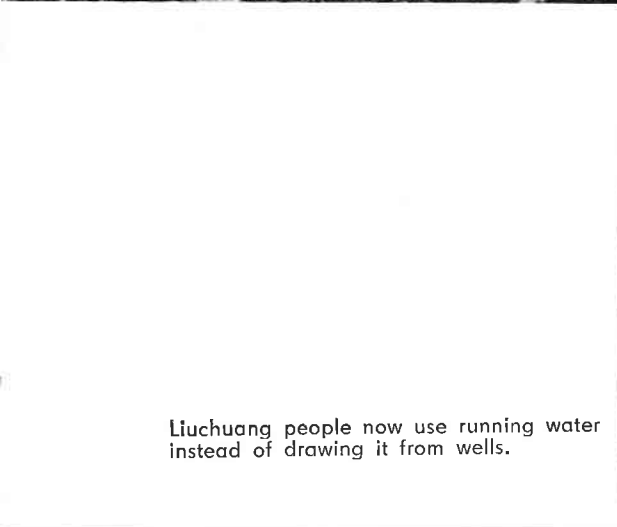


Militiawomen of Liuchuang village pick cotton, a major crop in Chiliying where the per-mu yield is now six times the pre-liberation figure.

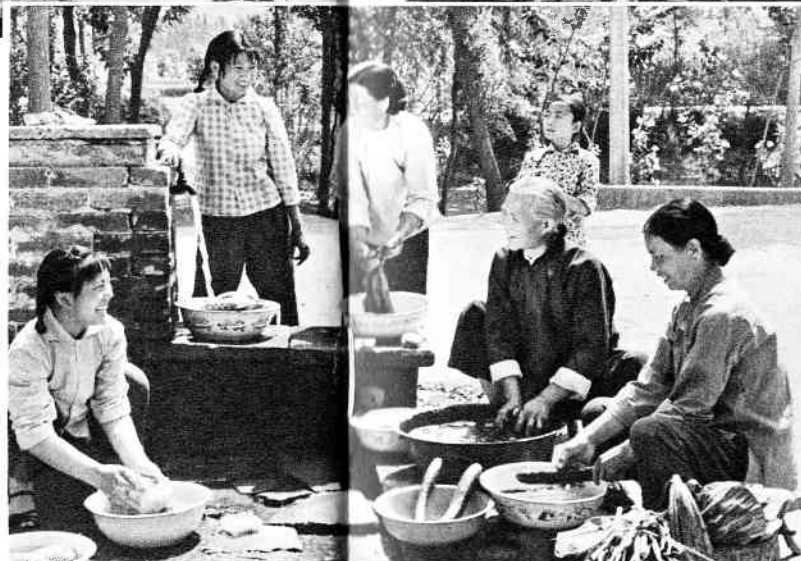


Tile-roofed brick houses have replaced thatched hovels in Liuchuang.

Peasant expert Li An-jen (left) and another commune member study insect pests in a cotton field. The commune's research and technical services (including an effective pest-detection network) has spread scientific farming with fine results.



Liuchuang people now use running water instead of drawing it from wells.





Following the mass line, Liuchuang's Party Secretary Shih Lai-ho (centre) consults old peasants, his favourite advisers, on how to raise cotton yields further.

calamities. He understands full well that to have abundant grain in store, as Liuchuang does today, is a blessing not easily won. Before the liberation, only the ten landlords and rich peasants in the village had surplus grain put away – and that did not amount to 50,000 jin in all. Before harvest season when the poor peasants generally ran short of grain, these bloodsuckers would fleece anyone forced to borrow from them through usurious interest. People to whom they refused to lend were reduced to eating tree bark, leaves, grass, roots or cotton seed husks. In famine years, when all trees were denuded of their bark and leaves, the village seemed to revert from the green of spring to the bleak bareness of winter. Whole families turned their backs on their homes, blocking the doors with mounds of earth, and went off to beg in other counties. Shih Chuan-li had five children. Only one survived those years. Four died of hunger.

Today, every person in Liuchuang, man or woman, young or old, gets an average of 520 jin of grain a year. Most of it they store in the granary. Shih Chuan-li sends sacks of wheat every month to the brigade's mill to be ground into flour. The commune members draw the flour they need on the strength of grain cards issued by the brigade. Nobody has to toil at turning the old heavy millstones any more. Starvation has vanished from Liuchuang for good. Not a single home is short of food grain at any time of the year.

A Big, Prosperous Household

Liuchuang's 187 families, organized as a production brigade under the commune, run their affairs jointly like one

big well-managed household. In area and population, Liuchuang is of medium size. It is one of the three brigades in the commune that functions as the basic accounting unit (in others, the unit is the team).

The working population of 800 or so men and women is organized into three production teams, plus separate groups responsible for the experimental plots, the vegetable garden, cattle and horses, pig-farm and orchard. The brigade owns the land, farm machinery and draught animals. It makes production plans, organizes daily farm work and distributes income. Liuchuang can do all these things on a brigade basis because its three production teams have roughly the same level of productivity and their members want a greater degree of collectivization, believing it will push production further forward.

By present rural standards in China, this "big household" with its public property worth more than 800,000 yuan, can be considered rather prosperous.

Liuchuang's economic strength is not only attested by its abundant stores of grain. Its stock enclosure provides further evidence.

Located at the northern end of the village, it is a yard about half the size of a football field, with stalls on all sides. Here there are over 200 oxen, horses, mules, donkeys and milch cows. A fine Sinkiang-breed horse or a strong mule is worth as much as a tractor. Fourteen stockmen and a veterinarian take care of the animals. More draught animals mean more traction, transport and manure. The 1,000 pigs in the Liuchuang brigade's sties are also small "factories" of organic fertilizer which, used in combination with the chemical product, continuously improves the fertility and structure of the soil.

The brigade has been allotting a considerable portion of its funds to water conservancy equipment — transformer stations, electric pumps, generators, diesel engines, and so on. Now, even if a 100-day drought were to hit Liuchuang, its seven electrically-operated pump wells, working simultaneously, could supply enough water to overcome it in a week. And even if 250 mm. of rain were to fall in a single day, its drainage system could draw off the water within 24 hours.

Another substantial portion of the brigade's funds goes into agricultural machinery. Liuchuang has bought three large tractors and some tractor-drawn farm equipment, more than 200 insecticide sprayers and many threshers, crushers and other machines for processing farm produce. Ploughing and processing are already mechanized. Sowing, hoeing, harvesting and field management still depend on manual labour.

The art of leading this big household includes the ability to organize collective labour in the most rational and effective way.

An Industrial Army for Agriculture

Twenty years of collectivization, first in a co-op and then in the people's commune, have changed Liuchuang's peasants from a mass of economically weak individual cultivators working in scattered family units into an organized and disciplined detachment of the kind of industrial army for agriculture which Marx and Engels envisaged in the **Manifesto of the Communist Party**. In ordinary times, the more than 800 able-bodied men and women villagers work in the three production teams and

other specialized groups. In these, they pursue varied tasks in farming, afforestation, animal husbandry, side-occupations and fish-breeding. But when a major and urgent task comes along, they quickly combine as one force under the unified command of the brigade, to perform it quickly and well.

The 1973 summer harvesting and sowing was an acid test of the combat readiness of this "industrial army for agriculture." Three jobs had to be done simultaneously. First, the biggest wheat harvest in Liuchuang's history, totalling 800,000 jin, had to be cut, threshed, sunned and transported. Second, as soon as the wheat was reaped, 800 mu of the land had to be cleared, ploughed, harrowed, manured and sown with maize. There was no time to lose between the harvesting and the sowing. Third, the 1,000 mu of cotton fields demanded unremitting attention.

To get all this done was a battle in every sense. Liuchuang's 800-strong work force, with its three tractors and 200 draught animals, moved in to fight it. The brigade leaders planned the work well. Immediately after a piece of land was cleared of wheat, manure was carted and spread there. It was then ploughed by tractors, cultivated with animal-drawn harrows, and sown to maize. One step followed another in a smooth, continuous flow. Thus, in eleven days, despite their still insufficient machinery, they successfully completed the arduous summer harvesting and sowing.

The "Big Household" and Small Households

Liuchuang's commune members have their full say in the management of production and distribution of income

within the "big household." All important matters are discussed and decided upon at meetings of all the commune members or of their representatives. The brigade's yearly production plan is adopted only after full discussion by the members.

In 1961, the Chiliying commune asked the Liuchuang brigade to grow 1,000 mu of cotton as its share of the commune's quota under the state plan. When this was brought up in the general meeting, some members were opposed. They argued that since their grain output was low and they still had to rely on the state to make up shortages, the cotton area should be reduced and more grain grown.

In the heated debate that followed, Ma Hsin-ching, who had worked twenty years for landlords as a hired farm hand before liberation, recalled his bitter experience and helped his hearers to see the issues clearly:

"I remember back in 1941, the grain crop here failed and the cotton growers went hungry. They had to trade their cotton for grain weight for weight. So in 1943, the people planted more land to grain. But then they fell short on cotton, and had to trade their grain for cotton, this time at ten jin for one. We peasants couldn't get out of the hands of the rich, and always came out the losers. . . . This must be what our cadres call capitalism. I call it the peasants' dead end."

Ma Hsin-ching's vivid portrayal of how the cotton-growers had suffered in the past stirred up a spirited discussion. Speaking one after the other, the commune members counted up the advantages of socialist production with state planning. Some recalled how, since the liberation, the state has repeatedly raised its purchase prices for cotton and grain and never once forced down these

prices. Others told of how the state unfailingly supplies cotton-producing areas with food grain at a fixed price which has never been raised even in lean years.

They concluded that socialist planned production benefitted both the state and the peasants. Therefore, they decided to plant 1,000 mu to cotton to comply with the state plan and, at the same time, to do everything possible to raise the per-mu yield of grain. After doing this for several consecutive years, Liuchuang started to intercrop grain and cotton. Since 1965, it has produced enough grain for local use, and even acquired a surplus, without adding new grain fields.

The commune members at Liuchuang are happy with the way their "big household" is managed. They have their say on matters of production and livelihood. Cadres have a democratic style of work and listen to the opinions raised. They make sure that the decisions made for the brigade conform to the interests of the members.

In planning work schedules, the cadres see to it that everyone can play an active part in collective labour and take good care of domestic affairs as well. In busy seasons, the brigade calls on all men and women members to go to work in the fields as much as possible, with a few days off to rest and catch up with home duties. In normal times, working time is shortened and there are more rest-days. In winter, when there is less farm work, housewives who have much sewing to do at home are not assigned any. They make the next year's clothing for the whole family then, and so have no need to worry about it in the busy season.

Commune member Liu Ming-kai's family of four, like others, arranges its time to fit in with the collective schedule, and gets along well. The Lius live in a courtyard

on the village street. Liu Ming-kai, an experienced farmer in his early forties, both does his share of work in the fields and instructs thirty young people in agricultural skills. During the busy month of August, he gets up at five, goes straight down to the land with his team, comes home for breakfast at eight and is back at work by nine. The mid-day break is prolonged to avoid the noonday heat. Work resumes at 3:30 in the afternoon and continues until around seven. In the winter months, however, work starts only at 9:00 a.m., and ends at 5:00 p.m., with a mid-day break of one hour. Liu, a man who likes to be busy, often uses the early mornings and late afternoons to do repairs in the house or the pigsty, or a bit of carpentry.

His 20-year-old son, a middle-school graduate, and his daughter also work in the brigade. The mother suffers from chronic illness, stays home and does the housework. She is rearing two young pigs, bought at weaning from the brigade's breeding farm, and about a dozen chickens. The pigs, when fat, and the eggs from the hens are sold to the supply and marketing co-op to help the family funds. In her spare time, she dyes yarn and weaves it on an old-fashioned wooden loom into colourful homespun traditionally used for bedding and bundle-wrappers. She also buys factory-made cotton prints, drills and corduroys, from which she makes jackets, pants and shirts for the whole family. So none of the Lius wear worn-out garments even when they are labouring in the fields, a sharp contrast to the parents' younger days before the liberation when they had only tatters to wear.

For their labour in the brigade, the Liu family gets a share in the distribution of its income in the form of food grain, vegetables and other necessities and nearly 1,000

yuan a year in cash. They have surplus grain, ample clothing and a savings account in the bank.

Talking of his life and its purpose, Liu Ming-kai said, "I'm a peasant, farm work is my duty, and through it I want to make some contribution to the country."

Liu's words gave us much food for thought. Chinese peasants have improved their livelihood greatly since liberation. And the peasants of Liuchuang, in particular, have achieved a standard which is already a far cry from the bitter past. The main reason they continue to work with great enthusiasm for still higher yields is to provide the state with more grain and cotton. Their thinking can be summed up in the phrase now so often heard in the Chinese countryside, "Farm for the revolution."

The Commune Members' New Outlook

This outlook — farming for the revolution — did not take shape in the minds of Liuchuang's peasants all at once. The small-owner mentality dominant for thousands of years has been changing step by step over the past two decades of organized labour and political education. Especially from 1964 onward when the villagers of Liuchuang began to emulate Tachai, the national pace-setter in agriculture, their socialist consciousness sharpened rapidly, and love for the collective, for the state and for socialism has gradually assumed the main place in their thinking.

Fifty-year-old Tu Hsueh-meng, the brigade's poultry breeder, is frail in physique, the result of undernourishment in childhood. But he is very forthright, never mincing words if he sees something wrong. Some people

deride him as a busybody. But the brigade cadres back him up, saying that all commune members should concern themselves with the affairs of the collective. Moreover, Tu Hsueh-meng's concern is not confined to words. He has done a lot of useful work for the brigade that does not appear on the surface. Here is an example. During the cotton-picking season, cotton fluff is often blown into corners or ditches in the course of transport. Tu makes a habit of gathering it up bit by bit. In one period, he collected more than twenty jin, which he handed in to the brigade.

Thrift is the tradition of Chinese peasants, who will not discard even an ear of wheat or a sliver of wood. Though Liuchuang has become well-to-do, this trait is still to the fore there, and collective property well taken care of. In the storehouse of one team we found that the comrade in charge not only kept the farm implements and sprayers in good order and repair, but had also meticulously picked up stray bits of wire, hemp thread, rusty screws and short ends of steel pipe and arranged them in good order for use, saving every cent for the brigade.

Stockman Ma Hsin-cheng tends thirteen animals. They have multiplied every year under his care. The old man is nearly seventy, with a large family of sons, daughters and grandchildren. But instead of listening to their urgings that he stay at home and enjoy some leisure in his waning years, he insists on living in the stock enclosure where he can go on doing useful work for the collective.

When a mare foals, he keeps vigil over it. A new-born foal often cannot stand up to suckle. Ma holds it up to show to the mother, so she becomes accustomed to it, then helps it to find the teat. Once, this startled another mare nearby which kicked the old stockman in the knee.

At first he hardly felt the pain, being engrossed in feeding the foal. But later, limping away with a bad bruise, he stared at the animal and muttered, "Pretty fierce, aren't you? Lucky for you that you kicked me and not the foal, or I wouldn't let you off lightly. Well, you're in foal, too, so I'll forgive you."

Another time, a calf was born with its forefeet bent back and unable to walk. Some people said it was congenitally crippled and should be slaughtered. Ma wouldn't hear of such a thing. He was determined to save it. So he fed the calf with milk and massaged its front legs every day, hoping this would relax the muscles and quicken the circulation. His "cure" finally worked. The calf's cramped forefeet gradually returned to normal and it grew up healthy. In Liuchuang, many stockmen tend animals for the collective as conscientiously as Ma Hsin-cheng.

Liu Kuei-ying, a woman member of the brigade, cares for the cotton crop as painstakingly as Ma does for the cattle and horses. On the night of August 4, 1972, Liu Kuei-ying, listening to a downpour outside, couldn't sleep a wink. There had been so much rain lately, she didn't think the fields would be able to absorb more. The cotton at the north end of the village was growing well, but the land was low-lying. Had the drainage ditches there been unblocked? Would the crop be engulfed? Unable to just lie there, she shouldered a spade and headed for the fields.

Though slender and not strong, Liu Kuei-ying wielded her spade vigorously that stormy night. Others came to join her. Soon they had unblocked the ditches and drained off the water.

At dawn, Kuei-ying wrung out her drenched clothes, wiped her wet hair and got ready to go home. But then

she saw that a plot on the other side of the ditch was still flooded. It was used by the Paliushu brigade to grow improved maize seed. Those people lived far away and would take some time to get to it. By then the plants would be ruined. So Liu Kuei-ying called to her teammates and they waded across and drained that water off too.

Later, the commune leadership learned how Kuei-ying had helped another brigade in heavy rain and commended her on the commune broadcast. But Liu Kuei-ying said, "More cotton and grain means a greater contribution to the state. Are Paliushu's crops of no concern to us, just because they aren't on our land? I did my duty, there's nothing to commend me for!"

The Younger Generation

A generation of educated young peasants, socialist in their convictions and enthusiastic for scientific farming, is growing up in Liuchuang. Li An-jen, known as "Doom to Pests," is typical of them.

Short but muscular, with fine brows and bright eyes, An-jen is respected in Liuchuang for his ability to spot even the tiniest insects.

An-jen finished Liuchuang's senior primary school in 1955 and has remained in the production brigade ever since. He was one of the first educated peasants in Liuchuang. In 1956, when an advanced agricultural producers' co-operative was set up there and draught animals were pooled, there were not enough stockmen to care for them. An-jen quietly asked his team leader to let him have a try at the job.

The co-op members were a bit dubious. "He's merely a kid and what will happen if he sleeps all through the night," someone commented. To keep horses in top condition, it is best to feed them at night as well as in the day. A good stockman gets up several times to do this. As An-jen was only in his teens, his habit was naturally to sleep soundly and without a break.

But An-jen found a way to stay alert at night. He tried to get as much sleep as he could in the daytime. In the evenings, his friends came to him at his post and the time passed easily. Then he would read awhile and, when he became drowsy, pour cold water over his head or swing a whip in the courtyard to rouse himself. Thus he never missed the proper times for night feeding and watering.

Young but strong-willed, An-jen won the respect of the old stockmen so they were glad to teach him all they knew. After a year, all the twelve cattle and horses under his care were sturdy and sleek. The co-op members no longer worried about his immaturity but called him an able lad.

The people's commune was formed soon after. When the county government sent an agro-technician to Liuchuang, leaders of the brigade, appreciating An-jen's quickness to learn, sent the young man to acquire skill from him, to help Liuchuang introduce scientific farm methods. That was how Li An-jen switched from feeding cattle to fighting insects.

Borrowing handbooks on plant protection from the technician, he studied them every night, familiarizing himself with the insects through illustrations. But in the daytime, when he saw bugs the size of a sesame seed crawling on cotton leaves, he couldn't tell what they were, as

the pictures in the books were greatly enlarged. He decided it was useless to learn from books alone.

Determined to recognize the "enemy" at sight, An-jen worked indefatigably at the task.

The cotton plantbug is one of the most elusive of insects, taking flight at the slightest movement of the plants. An-jen saw the damage it did, but never the culprit. But he wasn't going to let the foe escape him. For nights on end, he lay, not moving a muscle, in the cotton field vainly waiting for it to show up. Then he tried to reconnoiter its activities early in the morning, again to no avail. What to do next? Once slipping quietly into the cotton field with a small basin of water before dawn, he abruptly shook a cotton branch over it. Sure enough, some of the bugs dropped in.

After seven years of hard study, An-jen had mastered the habits of more than fifty kinds of harmful insects and devised many effective ways of combatting them. People in the village couldn't help being impressed by his resourcefulness and said, "That's real science!"

Later, An-jen became head of the brigade's agro-technical group, composed of forty-odd young people caring for 200 mu of experimental and seed plots.

Liuchuang has trained more than fifty peasant agricultural technicians of Li An-jen's type. All aged around thirty. They specialize in different branches of work, and have both practical experience and scientific knowledge. Every year, a dozen or so are invited to the other people's communes in Honan and elsewhere to advise on cotton cultivation. They generally stay for a whole year, diligently passing on Liuchuang's experience in increasing cotton and grain output.

We asked the cadres if sending out so many technicians annually affected their own production. They said it did not. The support was mutual. Liuchuang always learned much that was useful from the experience of those it was helping.

Shih Lai-ho — A Grass-Roots Cadre

Shih Lai-ho, secretary of the Party branch of the Liuchuang brigade, was busy cutting wheat. The year 1973 looked good; the average yield per mu would probably exceed 700 jin. But the secretary was already figuring how to get more in 1974.

"Lai-ho," a peasant asked him, "do you think it's going to rain?"

He looked up. On the horizon a black cloud was rising. He consulted a cadre working next to him as to whether they should call back everyone in the fields to rush in the wheat being sunned on the threshing ground. They decided to wait a bit longer.

Suddenly a fierce gale blew up, and the gathering clouds darkened the whole sky. Shih Lai-ho called for an immediate pullback to the threshing ground. But by the time people got there, they were soaked through, and it was already impossible to take in all the wheat. The bottom layer, next to the ground, was ruined by mud.

That night, speaking before the thousand members of the brigade, Shih made a self-criticism, "I erred in judging the weather today and caused loss to the brigade. No one is to blame but me, I alone am responsible."

On his way home, an elderly commune member joined him and said consolingly, "'Victories and defeats are both everyday fare to a general.' Even Chukeh Liang* didn't win every battle."

Liuchuang knows Shih Lai-ho well. Since 1952, when he became secretary of its Party branch, he has closely followed Chairman Mao's teachings and led its people through the co-operative stage into the commune. Once this was an extremely backward and poverty-stricken place. Now it is among the best-known socialist new villages in all Honan Province. Compared with its achievements, the loss resulting from Shih's minor misjudgement was trifling.**

But Shih Lai-ho is strict with himself. In success, he always gives the credit to the collective. When there are errors or shortcomings, he is quick to shoulder the blame. This is why the members trust him and the cadres like to work under his guidance.

The Earliest Militiaman in the Village

Particularly fond of Shih are some old people, who have watched him grow up from a skinny boy. Now, aged over forty, he is not only Party branch secretary of the brigade, but also deputy secretary of the commune's Party committee, a member of the standing committee of the Hsin-hsiang County Party Committee and a member of the Honan Provincial Party Committee. But he still looks the

* Chukeh Liang was a famous strategist of ancient China.

** Both Liuchuang's grain and cotton yields in 1973, as shown by final figures for the year, were high, the former 1,710 jin per mu and the latter over 180.

ordinary peasant. In winter, he covers his head with a white towel, in summer with a big straw hat. He wears cloth shoes made by his wife and smokes home-grown tobacco. Except when attending meetings outside, he is always with the commune members and works in the fields no less than 200 days out of the 365 in a year. The old people say appreciatively, "Even though he's a high cadre now, he's still a Liuchuang peasant like us."

Shih Lai-ho's father was a hired hand in the old society. When Lai-ho was eleven, one of the landlord's thugs came to dun the family for debt. Unable to pay the six silver dollars he demanded, Shih's father shouted in desperation, "Three of us have starved to death already. Where can I get any cash? Search the house! Take whatever you're greedy for!"

Infuriated, the thug beat him savagely. The boy hid behind his mother, unable to bear the sight. But as the blows raining down on the father became more brutal, Shih Lai-ho made a dash at the thug, grabbed his arm and sank his teeth into it. . . .

Patting his head fondly, Lai-ho's mother said to him late that night, "You're the only son I have left. Grow up to avenge us!"

In 1948, an armed work team of the Chinese Communist Party came to Liuchuang. They urged the peasants to help in the battle to liberate Hsinhsiang. Shih Lai-ho, then eighteen, was the first to enter the underground militia unit they organized. Gradually he came to understand, through his own experience, the importance of people's armed forces in seizing and safeguarding political power.

The armed work team was constantly on the move. Every time it left the village, the landlords and rich peas-

ants would try to intimidate youngsters like Shih Lai-ho. "The Communists can't hold on long," they blustered. "Once they pull out, our pistols will taste blood again!"

But the effect on Shih was the opposite of that intended. "I'll stick with the Communist Party and the Eighth Route Army," he pledged with redoubled firmness. "Let's see how long you tyrants can ride high here!"

When Hsinhsiang was liberated, Shih emerged as the head of the Liuchuang militia. Shouldering his newly-issued rifle, he led his men in seeking out and seizing the weapons and ammunition of the landlords and rich peasants. "These guns tasted blood in your hands," he said sternly. "They won't turn vegetarian in ours. You've only one way out now — to behave yourselves and submit to surveillance and correction by the masses."

The worst criminals were later executed. Those landlords and rich peasants who continued to make trouble were struggled against and denounced at public meetings during the land reform. Their land was confiscated. They themselves were compelled to reform through supervised physical labour in the village.

A Jar of Honey

As Party branch secretary, Shih Lai-ho strictly followed the Party's policy with regard to the landlords and rich peasants: punishing them if they tried disruption and subversion, but giving them an opportunity to work for a living.

Liuchuang had a landlord named Liu Ming-chien. After many years of labour under surveillance, his legal class status was changed, and he was given work as a bee-

keeper. But later, the scoundrel took to trouble-making again and was detected by Shih Lai-ho.

That was in 1970. Shih Lai-ho had just been transferred back to the village after two years in the county town. Early one morning, as he squatted in the courtyard shredding tobacco, Liu Ming-chien sneaked up. He squatted beside Shih and tried to strike up a conversation. At the same time, he produced a jar from his pocket, took off the lid and prepared to pour its contents over the tobacco. Shih stopped him at once. With a face hard as iron, he asked, "What are you up to, anyhow?"

"Don't you know, Secretary?" said Liu with a sickening smile. "Honey in tobacco makes it cooler and milder."

"No, we peasants don't know these things," Shih cut him short. "It's time to go to work. I'm off." And he strode out.

But the rebuff did not stop Liu. Forcing a smile, he trotted after Shih, calling from behind, "Come and inspect our work sometime, Secretary!"

"Sure I will," thought Shih. "If you dare play tricks to my face, what won't you do behind my back?"

To give them a better environment, the bees were kept in a village in a neighbouring county. One market day, Shih took a bike and rode there, bringing his youngest son along.

Liu Ming-chien greeted Shih with sham warmth, mouth-ing pleasantries. Shih took a good look at the twenty hives. There seemed to be nothing wrong there. He then went among the villagers. They told him that Liu often mixed with dubious characters. This put him on the alert.

When about to leave the village with his son, he heard the boy cry out behind his back, "Oh, Daddy, look!"

Shih turned to see Liu Ming-chien stuffing a bottle into the boy's pocket.

"Just a bottle of sesame oil, a small friendly token for his grannie to flavour the meals with!" said Liu, flashing his mirthless smile.

"None of that! Take it back at once!" said Shih sternly. Telling the boy to return the bottle, he left without another word.

"The fellow has done it twice in succession," thought Shih. "Obviously he's trying to sweeten me up and get some service in return! Vain hopes! But what dirty game is he playing?"

Back home, Shih told the members of the Party branch committee everything that had happened and asked them to keep an eye on Liu.

Soon Liu Shu-hsueh, one of the committeemen, came with news. Going to his sister's place to visit her sick husband, he had found a jar of honey on the table. His brother-in-law said it was a present from Liu Shu-min, a brigade cadre in charge of side-line production. Could it be that the fellow had given him the honey as a bribe?

Shih thought it possible. But first he asked the committeeman to check whether Liu Shu-min had bought the honey. Investigation showed that no honey had been sold at retail. Shih then asked Liu Shu-min himself. The honey, four jin in all, turned out to have been a present from Liu Ming-chien.

"A jar of honey today, an invitation to a meal tomorrow! Do you think he really considers you his kith and kin?" Shih said to Liu in a spirit of patient persuasion. "Remember that time when you were small? Your starving mother went to this same landlord to borrow grain. He didn't give her a single ounce! Didn't he know then

that you were relatives? But now you're a cadre, and in charge of bee-keeping, up he jumps to fawn on you. He's throwing dust in your eyes so that he can hide behind your back to do some mischief!"

The brigade did some checking up on Liu Ming-chien and found incriminating evidence. Shih Lai-ho interrogated him personally. "You made people gifts of the brigade's honey," he said. "Did you ever pay for it? You've been bribing cadres, attacking them with sugar-coated bullets. What's your motive? You've hobnobbed on the sly with bad eggs from the next county. What's it all about? . . . The masses have revealed a lot of your underhand activities. You must confess, right down to the last thread!"

At first Liu Ming-chien refused to admit anything. But in the face of public criticism and exposure by the masses who knew his misdeeds, he owned up to stealing 240 jin of honey. Further investigation showed that he had made off with 500 jin. On top of that, he had sold a hive of bees belonging to the collective and pocketed the money.

Proved guilty of undermining the collective economy, Liu Ming-chien was once again placed in the landlord category and compelled to reform himself through labour under mass surveillance.

At a meeting of the whole brigade to condemn the landlord, Shih Lai-ho told the members how Liu's crimes had come to light. He took the occasion to speak on the long-term and complex nature of class struggle. "Things are going well in Liuchuang, and getting still better day by day. But a handful of evildoers will never be reconciled to defeat. They're trying in a thousand and one ways to disrupt the collective economy and strike at so-

cialism. We should be guided by Chairman Mao's teaching, 'Never forget class struggle,' stay on our guard, and beat back every counterattack by the enemy."

A Bitter Lesson

In his twenty-some years of work, Shih Lai-ho has tasted both the happiness of success and the smart of failure. In 1956 he met with a setback he will never forget.

It was the time Liuchuang formed its advanced agricultural co-operative. The previous year had seen a leap in its per-mu cotton yield from 30 jin to 50. But a report from the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region said that 100 jin per mu had been gathered there.

Shih Lai-ho called a Party branch meeting to talk over how to learn from Sinkiang and reach 100 jin. But none of the Party members then had had much experience in leading production. So they just tried to copy mechanically everything Sinkiang had done. As a result, their high hopes came to nothing — the yield dropped to 17.5 jin.

Blamed from all sides, many of the cadres could not raise their heads for shame. Shih Lai-ho's heart was heavy — he felt he had betrayed the trust of the villagers. Tossing in bed night after night, he asked himself what to do. His conclusion was: A cadre is the servant of the people. So he must be honest with the people. When a cadre makes a mistake, he must admit it openly and draw lessons to avoid its repetition.

At a public meeting, Shih Lai-ho made a self-criticism and, on behalf of the Party branch committee, analyzed the reasons for the failure. After this, the tone of public

comment began to change. Some said, " 'A fall into the pit, a gain in your wit.' So long as the cadres realize where they were wrong, they can surely do better next time." Others remarked, "It isn't that Sinkiang's experience is bad. The trouble is we've failed to grasp its essentials."

The defeat propelled Shih Lai-ho to diligent study of farm techniques. At a cadres' meeting, he said, "To do your job well, you have to be both 'red and expert.' We've had our setback. Well, let's try hard to learn to do better."

In fact, though a peasant born and bred, Shih was only eighteen at the time of liberation, too young to be a seasoned farmer. Then, for years, he had been busy fighting with the landlords and rich peasants and organizing the agricultural co-op, with no time to master farm skills.

It was only now that such study had become the order of the day. But how to study?

Shih Lai-ho liked to think things through. He saw in his peasant father both the merits and limitations of the veteran farmers. The old man was good at ploughing and sowing. With one glance at the colour of a crop, he could tell when it was time to hoe, or whether it had been hoed well. But he had little belief in science and technology. In 1952 he had had a mild clash with young Shih about how to prune cotton plants. The father insisted that it should be done the old way. The son said the new way was better. Neither could convince the other. At last they divided a plot into two parts, each working his half as he thought best. This was a sort of trial. And the son's method proved better.

Shih Lai-ho urged the Party members, "In studying farming, we should learn not only the valid experience of

the older generation, but also some science and new techniques."

They decided to do some scientific experiments.

A Peasant Cotton-Growing Expert

Just then, the county leadership sent over an agro-technician. Together with him, and several old peasants, Shih Lai-ho set up experimental plots on 8.5 mu of land. From 1957 on, they made trials with close planting, improved seed, pest control and other scientific techniques. Shih also asked the old peasants to teach him the best ways of harrowing, sowing and hoeing.

Working in the experimental plots in the daytime, Shih attended a technical course in the evening. Being a peasant, he did not find agricultural science hard to grasp. Besides, he was a conscientious student, digging into the roots of every question. Applying what he got out of books to his experiments, he learned fast.

On one of the plots at the time, half a mu of cotton was growing too lushly. One morning, to check the overgrowth and secure good bolls, Shih and the old peasant Ma Hsin-ching hoed the crop to a depth of six inches to cut the side-roots.

But at noon, Old Ma came looking for Shih and cried, "Bad news. We've killed the cotton."

Shih Lai-ho went to look. To his dismay, the leaves had either drooped or turned yellow. He felt terrible but did not lose his head. "After all, it's an experimental plot," he said to himself. "Let's see what else happens."

The next day, some of the leaves started straightening out. On the third day, when it rained, all the cotton

revived and looked sound again. The overgrowth had been successfully checked.

Shih Lai-ho continued to observe the further progress of this cotton and noted that it had an abundance of buds and very few fallen bolls. The plot finally yielded 26 jin more than its neighbour.

This experiment led Shih to understand that deep hoeing could check the overgrowth of leaves and branches and promote the growth of buds and bolls. After more years of trial, the method was extended to all cotton fields in the brigade.

In 1965, Shih Lai-ho tried something else, the interplanting of wheat in the cotton fields. Why did he pick on this? Because the relation of the two crops had long perplexed him.

Grain supply was a constant problem in this old cotton area. If the requirements of the state plan were to be met, the land under cotton could not be reduced. But since the brigade's grain area was too small, it had to rely on the state for food. That peasants should buy grain from the state was an anomaly that Shih took much to heart. For years he had been thinking of ways to make Liuchuang create more wealth for the country by producing not only more cotton, but more grain as well. His suggestion to interplant, a child of these thoughts, was approved by the Party organization.

The interplanted wheat grew well in the test plot. Everyone in the brigade, passing it on the way to and from work, was loud in its praise. But when the wheat was cut, the cotton seedlings in the plot looked conspicuously small and thin.

Some people threw up their hands. "The soil has got only so much in it," they said. "You gain in wheat, so you lose in cotton. No way out!"

But Shih Lai-ho was not the man to judge by appearances, or jump to conclusions. In spite of the sharp comments, he wanted to make very sure where the real trouble lay before deciding. Maybe the space between the wheat and cotton was too small, and the overhanging wheat had robbed the cotton of its share of sun and air. Did this explain the feebleness of the seedlings? The space should be increased the next year, he figured. In the meantime, everything must be done to save the present crop.

In farming, as in other affairs, the role of man is decisive. After hoeing, fertilizing and irrigation, the sickly seedlings shot up sturdily. In the end, the interplanted plot yielded 150 jin of cotton, like the fields sown to cotton alone.

The method of interplanting was improved each year. A new system of cultivation was evolved and a whole set of new farm tools designed. Today half of Liuchuang's cotton fields are interplanted with wheat.

Since 1965 the brigade has not only fed itself but been able to sell large amounts of grain to the state. Liuchuang's wish to make a greater contribution in both grain and cotton has been fulfilled.

Ever since 1957, Shih Lai-ho has both led the work on the experimental plots and taken an active part in it himself. Now Liuchuang has an experimental area of 200 mu, one-ninth of its total cropland. Half of these plots are devoted to raising improved seed, the rest to comparing different strains, and tryouts of different ways of close planting, irrigation, sowing and fertilizing.

Through years of such activity, Shih Lai-ho has mastered a whole aggregate of scientific methods. He has become one of Honan's famous peasant experts in cotton-growing.

Struggle Against Nature

Shih Lai-ho is a peasant. But in the handling of daily work, his grasp of detail and ability to make quick decisions resemble those of a military commander.

A cadre from another county once came to him to exchange some food grain for improved seed. "All right," said Shih immediately on hearing him, "we'll give you 1,000 jin. Come and get it tomorrow."

A technician who had been invited to give some help to another county dropped in to consult Shih on his plan of work. Shih was eating supper but did not put him off. Listening carefully as he ate, and putting one or two questions, he remarked, "Your plan sounds all right." And after a moment he added, "I hope you'll often report on your work to the local leadership and ask for their guidance. Take care not to go around just telling people to do this and that."

Shih has become a very effective speaker. At large meetings attended by many hundreds of people, he makes his points sharply and clearly. Audiences listen with silent attention to his reasoning, and respond with hearty laughter to his lively examples. Most popular are his talks to help people study Chairman Mao's works.

When addressing a meeting called to mobilize brigade members to struggle against a natural disaster, he found words that went straight to their hearts. In times of dif-

ficulty, people need encouragement. As a commander on the production front, Shih Lai-ho knows how to point the way forward at the crucial moment.

1963 was a very bad year marked by a whole succession of natural calamities.

In mid-April, just after the cotton was sown, there were two successive cold waves. The sprouts came up unevenly. By dint of great exertion, the commune members managed to transplant enough seedlings to fill in the gaps, only to have the fields again ravaged by a strong wind, followed by a heavy rain and another night's gale. The seedlings were stripped of leaves and only stems remained standing nakedly in the fields.

A suffocating silence pervaded the village. Some commune members squatted by the stricken cotton, tears running down their faces. A few of the cadres lost heart, saying, "No use to try any more. Better plough it up and sow something else!"

Shih Lai-ho did not agree. It was not because he felt less pain at seeing the dying seedlings. Nor because he had any ready-made recipe for saving them. Determining his attitude was the conviction that a Communist, who never yields to the enemy, should not bow before the heavens either.

To arouse the brigade members, he gave them a talk on the philosophy of struggle. "We should fight against nature just as we do against the landlords and rich peasants," he said. "See how it rains when we don't want it to and blows hard when we don't need any wind. So what should we do? Fight, of course! If we win the battle, we'll get our planned output of cotton. If we lose it, we'll get less. But if we just lie down before difficulties, the losses will be far greater. Better fight!"

Convinced and inspired by his argument, the members got ready for action.

But what action?

Shih Lai-ho had already gone for advice to some experienced old peasants, comrades-in-arms with whom he had long shared joy and sorrow. They told him how, thirty years earlier, a severe hail had stripped the young cotton plants to their stems, but one peasant had refused to give up and finally got a good crop. Their story convinced Shih that the plants could be saved. At the meeting, he retold it and said, "If a peasant working by himself in the old society could manage to save his cotton, aren't we, organized peasants in the new society, in a better position to do so?" He was certain that the members of the Liuchuang brigade, brave and hard-working, would find the way to win out once they adopted the correct orientation.

The cadres and members held a number of meetings at which many good suggestions were offered. They decided to do more hoeing, apply additional fertilizer . . . and do everything in their power to assist growth. Before long the dying plants began to rally, and people's faces gradually brightened up too. But the shortage of seedlings was serious. The members put their heads together to find a solution.

Shih Lai-ho led the members in field work during the day and joined them in discussing remedial measures in the evenings. Even more than theirs, his eyes became bloodshot and his face leaner. But the cotton in the fields was looking much better.

By August, the lower branches of the plants began to produce bolls. Shih Lai-ho was overjoyed. But then, on the night of August 7, it suddenly poured with rain, con-

tinuing throughout the next day. The fields were two feet deep in water and the village itself was marooned.

Confronted with this new calamity, the members, without waiting to be urged, went with Shih Lai-ho to drain the waterlogged fields.

To which ditch should they divert the water? The one northeast of the village provided the easiest and fastest outlet. But to use it would make difficulties for the villages lower down. So Shih Lai-ho, after consulting the others, decided against it.

The smaller drainage ditch north of the village was fairly good too. But the villages higher up were already using it. Liuchuang never squabbled over priorities with its neighbours. So that was not the way either.

Shih picked the ditch east of the village, though it could only take the flood water off by a roundabout way and therefore demanded much more work. Never mind, Shih Lai-ho thought, we'll shoulder the heavy ourselves and leave the light to others. When he consulted the members, they all said it was the best plan.

After four days of hard effort, most of the flood water had been drained off. But just when the members could have begun to breathe more easily, the cotton was attacked by its deadliest enemy, the bollworm. Shih Lai-ho, his eyes red and his voice hoarse with fatigue, gave the new battle-cry, "Struggle to wipe out the bollworms in three days!"

Thus, calamity-ridden 1963 was turned into a year of victory for the Liuchuang brigade. The cotton yield was 106 jin per mu, achieved through stupendous mass struggle.

Nine years later, in 1972, another natural disaster hit the area. Between July and August, there was a torren-

tial rainfall of over 700 mm. Again Shih Lai-ho led the brigade in a tense combat against waterlogging. In the end, the yield of grain, instead of being reduced, reached 1,470 jin per mu, an all-time high. The cotton output was 152 jin per mu, slightly less than the year before, but still good.

Many years of struggle for production have led Shih Lai-ho to this conclusion: "To lose heart and lie down before difficulties is no way out. Whoever stands straight and works hard will find means to overcome all troubles. Struggle creates wisdom. Struggle creates ability." Such is the truth he has distilled from his experience.

Shih Lai-ho is a frontline "commander" fighting in the Chinese countryside. There are many thousands of such grass-roots cadres all over the land. Through them, the Communist Party of China keeps its links with the six hundred million peasants and leads them in building socialism in the rural areas. Chairman Mao has pointed out, "**Class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment are the three great revolutionary movements for building a mighty socialist country.**" It is precisely in these movements that ordinary peasants like Shih Lai-ho have been able to develop splendid ability and make contributions of value to the people and the state.

V

The Commune's Industries

In 1958 Chairman Mao, on his inspection trip to Chiliying, visited two small factories run by the commune. One was a flour mill with only four belt-driven grinders, the other a workshop making ball-bearings by hand, using small hammers.

Today, Chiliying has 38 small factories run by its production brigades. They include flour mills, multi-purpose mills for processing farm and side-line products and plants for making and repairing farm tools. On the commune level, the former ball-bearing workshop has developed into a farm machinery plant with five shops, and there are now four other enterprises: a tractor station with repair shops, phosphate fertilizer factory, spinning mill and a transport team operating four trucks. Though also not large, having a total of some 400 workers and staff, they would be beyond the strength of one or even several brigades to establish and operate independently.

These enterprises are run strictly on the principles of self-reliance, diligence and thrift. For instance, most equipment in the farm machinery plant and tractor repair shops was purchased with their own earnings or made by their workers. Only in a very few cases did the commune put in other funds.

The profits from these undertakings, except for a portion set aside for expanded reproduction, are turned over to the commune. They are used to finance new commune-wide projects, or to help the brigades and teams develop production.

The salient feature of Chiliying commune's industrial enterprises is that they are closely geared to its agricultural needs. The farm machinery plant, in recent years, has turned out hundreds of threshers, crushers, fodder-cutters and cotton gins. This equipment, augmented by some purchases, has virtually mechanized the processing of farm and side-line products throughout the commune. Also made on the spot were many cement products used for water conservancy construction. Machine-repair services have been expanded till they can now keep all 56 tractors in the commune and brigades in running order without outside help. This has raised the utilization rate of the tractors, making possible the mechanized ploughing of over 90 per cent of the commune's land. As a result of good maintenance and timely repair, more than 90 per cent of the commune's 5,000 items of irrigation and drainage equipment, machines for processing farm and side-line products and insecticide sprayers and dusters are kept in good shape the year round.

Constantly Adapting to New Demands

Socialist construction in Chiliying has made steady progress in the fifteen years since the formation of the commune. As old tasks are completed, new ones arise, and new factories and new products have successively replaced the old.

The fertilizer factory, now turning out thirteen tons of calcium superphosphate daily, was a plant making cement products up to a year ago. Over eight years, it had supplied the commune's capital construction work with poles for low-tension power lines, pipes for sinking pump wells and slabs for bridging canals and ditches. By 1972, such work had been virtually completed at the commune level, and the production brigades had begun to make some prefabricated cement parts for themselves. At the same time, the brigades, seeking to raise their crop yields further, required more phosphate fertilizer – which makes for heavy-eared, thick-stemmed wheat that does not lodge, and cotton with longer fibres. So the commune Party committee decided in the summer of 1972 to convert the cement plant into a phosphate fertilizer factory, which was completed and began work in just over forty days.

Since the fertilizer made in this factory is much needed, the production brigades and teams have given it enthusiastic support, helping it to increase output and add new equipment for producing calcium magnesium phosphate.

By 1973, the commune's farm machinery plant had turned out enough threshers and crushers to meet the basic needs of all the brigades and teams. But a new bottleneck arose because winnowing, hitherto done by hand, could not keep up with the continuous large-scale increase of wheat output in recent years. Hence the workers decided to manufacture a number of winnowing machines for 1974. To assist pig-raising, they are also trial-producing a fodder mixer that chops up corn-cobs and melon vines, mixing them with other ingredients.

To meet repair needs, the tractor station workshops make a number of spare parts, including water pumps for Model-40 "East Is Red" tractors, an accessory that requires

rather frequent replacement. The commune now produces all the pumps it requires, plus some for sale outside.

Repair, the Primary Task

In recent years, increasing mechanization in the commune has made repairs the primary concern of its farm machinery plant. Those for the brigades have first priority, regardless of the load of other work. When it is difficult to move the defective machine to the plant, a telephone call immediately brings workers to attend to it on the spot.

Repair crews go on regular rounds of the villages to check and fix farm equipment. During the wheat harvest they establish temporary stations in six villages, ready to meet all emergency calls.

During June 1973, a young man of about thirty, hailing from another place, was often seen in Chungtsaotsun village, working from the early morning, reaping wheat, thinning out the young maize or hoeing cotton with the local people. His name was Sung Ching-kuo and they invariably greeted him with affection, often joking, "Here comes our serviceman!" Sung was a fitter of peasant origin charged by the farm machinery plant with checking and repairing all the threshers in 48 production teams. In his spare time, he always went to give a hand with the work in the fields.

One night, when he came back from repair rounds in the villages, it was already eleven o'clock. But he had no sooner gone to bed than he was awakened by a team leader from the neighbouring village. It was having trouble with its thresher.

Sung carried the faulty part of the machine two kilometres to the plant for repair. He had it back on the threshing ground by dawn.

While he was busy installing it, the commune members urged him to eat some breakfast. But Sung, knowing that this team had no experience in running the newly-bought machine, did not relax till he had given a detailed explanation and demonstration on its handling. Only when they had learned did he snatch a hurried bite. Then, with his tool bag slung over his shoulder, he was off again to check the threshers in other villages.

Sung is only one among many workers who have gone to the countryside to give support to agriculture. Their exemplary conduct is often cited by production team leaders to encourage the members to learn from the working class. The farm machinery plant, which sends out such workers, receives many letters of commendation and thanks from the villagers every year.

Training All-Round Tractor Drivers

In recent years, the number of tractors in Chiliying has grown from 11 in 1966, when the Cultural Revolution began, to 56. Ten are owned by the commune, the rest by the brigades. While setting up its repair workshops in 1969, the commune tractor station drew up plans to train all-round tractor drivers for the brigades, able to do maintenance and repairs as well.

So far, it has graduated 60 such drivers. Another 30 are under training. Each teacher-driver coaches two or three learners. Besides practical training, classes are given once a week on essential knowledge and theory.

The first part is devoted to driving, maintenance and repair. Later, the trainees learn to diagnose and eliminate various troubles. Master workman Tu Hsueh-hsing, in charge of maintenance and repair in the station, lectures on these matters.

Tu is only 35. But he knows the characteristics, operation and "chronic ailments" of all types of tractors used in the commune like the palm of his hand. Yet, this same Tu did not even know what a tractor looked like till two years before the commune was formed. In fact, it was only in 1955 that he first heard the name.

That year, a People's Liberation Army unit was temporarily stationed in Tu's native village of Paliushu. He was still a boy of seventeen. At the end of each day's work, he would chat or joke with the young PLA fighters. One of them told him that tractors would soon be tilling China's soil, and each could do the work of 70 or 80 oxen. . . . Tu thought this an interesting tale, but were there really such things? Later he asked the company commander quartered in his house who told him a lot about them and said encouragingly, "Some day you may be driving one yourself."

Indeed, two years later, Tu was sent to a tractor drivers' training course run by the county. He completed it and, when the commune was set up, was assigned to work on one of its first three tractors. Before long he was promoted to chief driver.

In 1969, a group of 25 young villagers from different brigades came to the commune's tractor station to attend its first course. They reminded Tu of himself twelve years earlier. He fully understood their eagerness to master the use of tractors in the minimum possible time, and did his best to help them do so. When they first took the

wheel, he would stand by them, leaning forward, ready to help them avoid stalling in a newly ploughed furrow or spoiling the quality of the ploughing.

Today, Tu and other veterans find great joy in seeing more and more of their former students skilfully operating tractors on the commune's land. Most, including 1971 trainees from the brigades, are now chief drivers.

Returning to production in their home villages, the young trainees bring with them an all-round practical knowledge of tractors. They are able to give them good maintenance, make timely repairs and thus prolong their effective life. Only when special instruments are needed or particularly knotty problems arise do they need to seek help from Tu or the other two teachers. Today all brigades can do medium repairs, while the commune can handle the big jobs. Only in a few cases, when they do not have the necessary equipment, is the damaged part sent to the county plant for repair or replacement. Servicing within the commune saves much time, inconvenience and expense.

A Burden Lifted from Women

The commune started building a spinning mill in 1973. When completed in the spring of 1974, it was to have 2,000 spindles. In the meantime, the machines already installed had begun production.

The mill's main task was to spin cotton owned by commune families, and thus free their women from an onerous domestic chore.

It had long been a tradition for women in China's cotton-growing areas to spend their spare time spinning yarn

on home-made wheels, and then weaving cloth in national designs to their own taste. The weaving, on a wooden loom, is not so hard. A skilled housewife could turn out 10 to 20 feet of cloth a day. But it took four or five days to spin the yarn needed for a day's weaving. The spinning mill has been built by the commune to take this burden off the women.

In a few months, it has processed thousands of jin of cotton. Many women, including some in their sixties or seventies, have brought their cotton themselves, at the same time taking a look at the machines. One grey-haired woman said, "I'm well on in years, and now for the first time in my life, I've seen a machine spinning. It spins so fine, and so fast! Get more machines for us. Then we won't need spinning wheels any more."

In fact, these spinning machines are "retired veterans" from the large state-run textile mills. But in the countryside, they are an immense advance on the old toilsome wheels.

New Generation of Workers

With the development of commune industries, the workers who first joined them have become the backbone of the labour force. And the commune has constantly drawn more young villagers into industrial production. A new detachment of the working class is steadily growing in Chilying.

Liu Shu-heng of the farm machinery plant is one of those who saw Chairman Mao in 1958. That was in the old ball-bearing workshop where he then worked as a politically immature youngster, with hammering as his

only "technique." Today he is a member of the farm machinery plant's Party committee. His skills include those of a fitter, lathe turner and electro-welder. At present, he is the technician in charge of checking on repairs and the quality of products.

Among the very young workers is 20-year-old Wang Tao-hsien, who graduated from senior middle school in Chiling in 1971. After two years in one of the tractor repair shops, he has become a skilled turner.

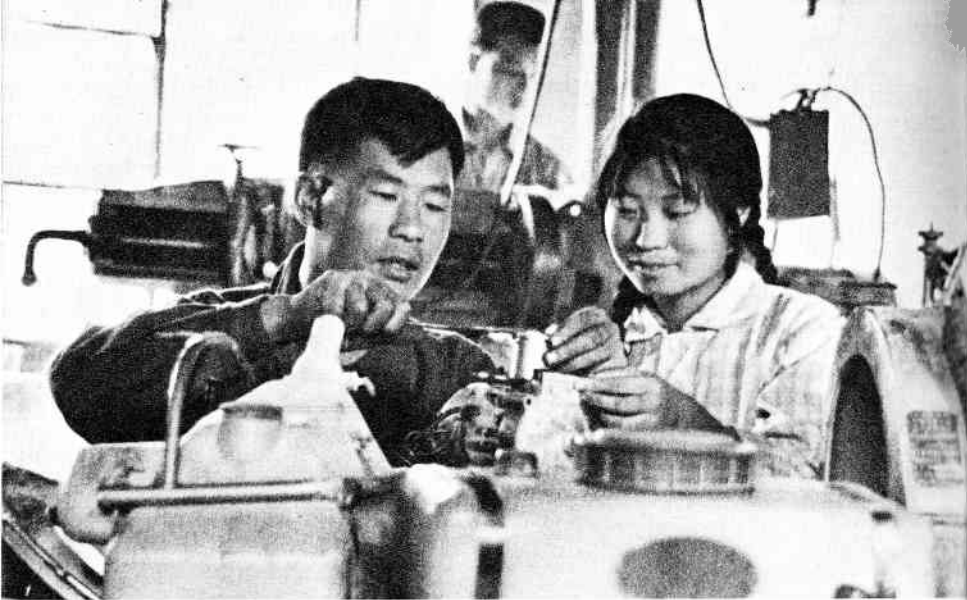
Wang Ai-hua, 23, a village girl good at both study and work, is new to industry, having been transferred to the spinning mill from the Litai seed farm in May 1973. The day after her reassignment, she was sent with fourteen other girls to train in a large textile mill in Chihhsien County 45 kilometres away.

Her tutor, a woman worker in her forties, took great pains to teach the new apprentice, mainly by example and explanation on the job. She herself took on the odd or dirty jobs, such as cleaning the machine, to give the girl all possible time to practise spinning.

One day, Wang Ai-hua made a slip and nearly all the yarn on her spinning frame snapped. She was frightened, thinking this a serious breakdown that might affect the fulfilment of her tutor's production quota. But the older woman, instead of reproaching her, said sympathetically: "Don't worry. When you're just learning to run a machine, it's easy to make mistakes. After a while, you'll know how." And the workers on nearby looms came to help her join the broken ends, getting everything right quickly. Wang Ai-hua stopped worrying. Instead, she was deeply stirred and, for the first time, understood the noble collectivism of the working class.



The commune's tractor station trains competent drivers, who can also attend to maintenance and repairs, for the brigades.



Workers of the commune's farm machinery plant overhaul an insecticide duster for a brigade.



Wang Ai-hua (centre) and her mates belong to the first batch of peasants who have become workers in the commune's spinning mill.

One night, as Wang Ai-hua and her workmates were about to go on night shift, there was a sudden squall. They waited for the rain to subside, then set out. In this, they were following the country practice of not going out into the fields till the end of a downpour. They got to the shop barely in time, only to find that their tutors had arrived twenty minutes earlier as usual, and got everything prepared for a good start. On their return home, the girls told each other how ashamed they had felt at the contrast. Thus they came to appreciate the importance of organization and discipline to a factory, and determined to learn this fine trait of the working class as well.

The tutors also took a warm interest in their apprentices' daily life and outlook. They often invited the girls to their homes on Sundays and festivals, and talked to them about the tremendous changes in the factories and the great contrast with the accursed past. In the dark old society, these old workers had had to toil more than twelve hours a day. Even now the girls could see their deformed legs, acquired from standing too long at the machines in those evil times.

The girls got along happily and smoothly in Chih sien. They had only one heated argument, each claiming that her tutor was the best.

Warmly helped by their elders, Wang Ai-hua and her mates were able to work independently after just one month's training. They were insatiable in learning and, long after knocking-off time, would remain in the workshop to study its every detail. Ai-hua's job was on coarse yarn. But she would stay on to learn to handle fine yarn from a comrade on the next shift.

After nine weeks, these youngsters returned to their own commune factory, bringing their new-learned skills and the working-class virtues they had absorbed. These enabled them to unite better, and to weld the thirty workers in their shop into a combat collective whose members care for, love and help one another.

When Ai-hua and her workmates have made enough coarse yarn to supply the fine yarn section, they give time to other jobs such as carrying cotton, joining broken ends or reeling yarn. Spinner Wang Yu-feng on the night shift taught the new apprentice, Little Kuo, how to join the yarn. When she found her pupil had not quite got the hang of it, she stayed on after the shift, regardless of loss of sleep. Whenever a worker falls ill, her comrades help care for her and eagerly do her work in her absence.

The girls have become strict in their labour discipline. Like their teachers, they go on duty twenty minutes before time, no matter what the weather. They concentrate hard on their work, and have given up their old farm habit of chatting and laughing on the job. They volunteer to work overtime when necessary to ensure prompt delivery of yarn to the commune members.

Rural Commerce

On one of the main festivals in 1973, many thousands of men and women commune members thronged to Chilying town from the surrounding villages. A joyous mood prevailed, as usual on such occasions. The streets were packed with people. Firecrackers boomed and hearty greetings and glad laughter resounded.

It was also the busiest of days for Chilying's trading personnel. Food stalls, ranged along the road, were besieged by buyers of snacks. The shops and restaurant were jammed. Most crowded of all was the Chilying general store, even though it had set out some outdoor sales booths to serve customers.

That day, the general store alone sold far more silks and poplins than in the entire month of August in 1957, the year before the commune's founding. In addition, it sold 900 and 710 metres respectively of two other fabrics, valetin and trueran, which were not stocked in 1957. At the time there was a type of spun silk that cost about the same as trueran does now, but only 20 metres of it were sold in that whole month.

Steadily Rising Purchasing Power

This booming trade was no surprise to Chilying's com-

mercial workers. For over the years, along with rapid growth of production, the commune members' purchasing power has risen steadily. More than 6,000 of its 9,100 households now have savings in the bank or the credit co-op. A sampling taken by commercial workers in the spring of 1973 showed that the commune members not only required large quantities of textiles and other necessities, but were gradually beginning to use more varied and higher-quality goods.

Chang Tse-wu, long a salesman in the Chilying general store, often serves young couples about to be married. They buy sheets, pillow cases, thermos bottles, wash basins and many other household items. Chang recalls, by contrast, his own marriage over thirty years ago when the bedcover was an old wrapper previously used for baling cotton, his bride's entire dowry. Chang's "wedding attire" was a gown of plain cloth his father went into debt to buy. Old custom required that the bride come in a sedan chair, heralded by a small band — and that again had forced his father to borrow from the landlord. The next year, when the old man could not repay the loan in cash, his creditor compelled him to cut down the two big trees in their courtyard to settle it. What's more, that landlord was no stranger but a relative, his own aunt's husband. The very mention of this incident still enrages Chang Tse-wu.

Having worked in the Chilying general store since 1958, Chang knows the trade situation inside out. Below are some figures he and his colleagues supplied, showing how the store's sales have increased:

1. Comparative Average Monthly Sales

(Value in yuan)

	Slack trading season (February — June)	Brisk trading season (January, July — December)
1957*	12,000	21,000
1966**	20,000	49,000
1973	47,000	84,300

* The year before the founding of the commune.

** First year of the Cultural Revolution.

Whether in the slack or the brisk trading season, the monthly average of sales in 1973 was roughly four times that of 1957. And the figure for the slack season of 1973 topped that for the brisk season of 1957.

2. Average Monthly Sales of Some Textiles

(In metres)

	Cotton sheetings, twills	Cotton gabardines, drills	Corduroys, velveteens	Woolen, silk and other high-quality textiles
1957	1,380	950	420	280
1966	2,100	1,830	1,100	620
1973	4,200	5,500	3,000	4,500

Average monthly sales of these four categories in 1973 were from three to sixteen times those of 1957. The figures also show that the increase was greater at each ascending rung of quality.

3. Annual Sales of Some Articles of Common Use

	Clocks (units)	Wool (kilogrammes)	Sheets (units)	Basins (units)
1957	25	19	350	270
1966	45	45	620	410
1973	150	210	2,100	1,150

These were items which, in pre-liberation Chilying, could be seen only in landlord and rich peasant homes. Today their sales are steadily multiplying. As for bicycles, only ten were sold in 1963. In 1973, 105 were sold, which was all the store had that year and far below the demand from commune members.

Rural Commercial Network

In 1949, at the time of Chilying's liberation, there were only a few cotton and grain shops and sundries stores in the area. All were run by landlords and rich peasants. The cotton and grain shops bought up grain, cotton, oil-seeds and other products from peasants at minimum prices, then sold them at high prices to consumers. The sundries stores catered mainly to landlords and rich peasants. The masses, poverty-stricken and living in deep misery, could afford to buy practically nothing. Salt was indispensable, but they bought from itinerant pedlars only a very low grade, coarse and bitter, extracted from saline soil. Some were too poor to buy matches. To light a fire, they would go next door to borrow a burning twig, or use flint and steel.

After the land reform in 1950, the life of the working people improved. That year, supply and marketing co-ops were set up in every village. Sponsored by the government and supported by the small share-investments of peasants, they supplied only a few items such as edible oil, salt, matches and kerosene.

From then on, rural commerce developed fast with abundant support from the state. In 1951, supply and marketing co-ops in neighbouring villages combined into larger ones which merged on an area-wide basis in 1956. Since that time, the assortment of goods has risen gradually to the present 3,000 varieties. The co-op now has five sales branches in the Chilying town specializing respectively in means of production, articles of daily use, food-stuffs, electrical appliances and chinaware, plus a co-op station for buying local products. It also runs another general store and a restaurant. It has opened branch stores in the commune's eight key villages, plus 24 agencies run by the brigades which buy and sell on its behalf.

Commune members can thus purchase articles of daily use in their own villages. Even in the smallest, the agencies stock several hundred kinds of goods. Each agency is served by one or two commune members chosen by the brigade, who act as both salesmen and buyers of side-line products for the co-op.

The regular staff of the Chilying supply and marketing co-op numbers over a hundred. Some were salesmen in pre-liberation private shops. On the surface, they are selling just as they did before. In fact, however, things have changed fundamentally. As workers in socialist trade, with secure wages from the state, they no longer live in fear of losing their jobs. Nor will they ever again

have to take orders from insatiable bosses. Their guiding principle now is, "**Serve the people whole-heartedly.**"

Apart from the supply and marketing co-op network in the commune, rural trade fairs are held under state direction and administration. There, within the scope fixed by the state, individual commune members and production brigades or teams can exchange some of their own farm and side-line products of which they have a surplus for things of which they are short.

How the Commune Leads Trade

Before the commune was set up, the supply and marketing co-op came under the leadership of the county department of commerce. Today, it is still subordinate to this department, but at the same time, like all other activities at Chiliying, comes under the leadership of the commune Party committee. This contributes to the planning of trade, reduces haphazardness, and gears the co-op's work more closely to the development of production and other local needs. It results in better service to agricultural production and to the commune members.

The chairman of the co-op revolutionary committee is a member of the commune Party committee. He annually reports to the latter on the co-op's work in the previous year and its plan for the current one, based on the production plan drawn up by the Party committee and data gathered through investigation. The Party committee holds a special discussion each year on the procurement of goods for the Spring Festival so as to make sure that they are sufficient and that commune members can pass this major holiday happily after their year's hard work.

Cotton is one of Chiliying's main crops. Throughout its growth, the extermination of insect pests is extremely important. The commune Party committee checks regularly to see that the supply and marketing co-op promptly provides sprayers, dusters and insecticides.

At the beginning of 1973, the co-op found that the production teams were short of sprayers. So even before the cotton was sown, it bought over 500 of them.

In August 1973, third-generation bollworms hatched out ten days ahead of the usual time, and the egg count was the highest ever recorded. Faced with this sudden threat to the prospective prime crop of cotton, the commune Party committee rallied the whole commune for battle.

Party secretary Chiu, who frequently went to the co-op and was familiar with its stocks, knew that insecticides on hand were insufficient. He decided to act quickly and, with the consent of the higher authorities, took a group of co-op staff members to Chengchow to procure additional supplies. Two days later, the commune had hauled 50 tons to Chiliying, using 12 tractors and a truck. From that very night, the production brigades began getting the needed supplies.

The commune Party committee also requires the co-op to help the brigades diversify production in conformity with their circumstances. Before liberation, no one in the Chiliying area grew apples, except for a landlord in Nansinchuang village who owned a hundred or so trees. In fact, nine out of ten of the local people had never seen, let alone tasted, an apple. Since the setting up of the commune in 1958, the supply and marketing co-op has purchased large numbers of improved apple, peach and pear saplings under a general plan for expanded fruit-

growing. Now each of the commune's 38 production brigades has its orchard.

In recent years, the state commercial departments have been buying corn-cob powder for export. The co-op staff conducted many experiments to determine what machine would produce the best grade powder. Finally they bought six universal crushers manufactured in Shantung Province and sold them to some of the brigades. As a result, the co-op fulfilled its purchase quota for this export product. It also helped the brigades to develop a new side-occupation and increase their income. The Chungtsaotsun Production Brigade used a year's earnings from corn-cob grinding to buy a tractor.

In giving leadership to commerce, the commune Party committee follows the principle, "**Develop the economy and ensure supplies,**" put forward by Chairman Mao over thirty years ago. The co-op does not operate just for profit, though it makes a substantial one annually. For more than twenty years, a small part of its net profit has been distributed among the members while the greater part has gone into a revolving fund to enlarge the scope of its operations.

A Strong Link in Worker-Peasant Alliance

The prices of goods supplied by the state to the rural areas have long been stable. Some have been reduced as a result of increased output and lowered production costs. The reductions have been particularly notable in the case of insecticides, chemical fertilizers, tractors, diesel engines and other production requisites. At the

same time, the state has raised the prices it pays for agricultural produce.

Below are comparative tables showing how prices for some industrial commodities have declined, while those paid for cotton have been raised.

1. Reductions in Prices of Insecticides and Chemical Fertilizers (1961 = 100)

	1964	1970	1971-73
1059 high-efficiency insecticide	71	26	22
BHC powder	92	71	63
Urea	76	76	68
Ammonium nitrate	81	81	75
Ammonium sulphate	91	91	82

As compared with 1961, these prices were down by between 18% and 78% by 1973.

2. Reductions in Prices of Tractors and Diesel Engines (1953 or 1960 = 100)

	1953	1960	1973
Walking tractor ("Worker-Peasant 7")	—	100	48
Tractor ("East Is Red-28")	—	100	50
Diesel engine, 20 horse-power	100	—	25

Prices of the two types of tractors in 1973 were half those in 1960. The diesel engines were 75% cheaper in 1973 than in 1953.

3. Increases in the Purchasing Prices of
Standard Ginned Cotton
(1963 = 100)

1964	112
1968	124
1970	128
1972-73	129

In Chilying today, the purchasing price of standard ginned cotton is 29% higher than in 1963. That of wheat is 9% higher than in 1961.

Repeated reductions in the prices of insecticides and chemical fertilizers over the past ten years have enabled Chilying's people to save at least 600,000 yuan annually on production expenditures. At the same time, the raising of state purchasing prices for agricultural products has added to their income. In 1973, it accounted for an increase of about 900,000 yuan from the sale to the state of cotton and quota grain (not counting sales above the quota).

Reductions in sales prices, along with increases in purchasing prices for farm produce, have added an average of 28 yuan to annual per capita income in the commune – a sum roughly equal to one month's earnings by an able-bodied man in farm work.

The aim of the state in reducing the prices of certain industrial products and raising those paid for agricultural produce is to change the irrational disparity between high

industrial and low agricultural prices left by the old society. It is to fundamentally eliminate the past antagonism between the town and country by helping the peasants develop production, bettering their livelihood and gradually narrowing the differences between urban and rural areas. As added support to agriculture, the state has set preferential prices for diesel oil and electric power used in farm production. For instance, diesel oil for agriculture is priced 30% below that for industry.

These measures have greatly strengthened the alliance between the two labouring classes – the workers and the peasants.

Between the State and the Commune Members

A substantial part of the trade between the state and the commune members, or their collectives acting on their behalf, is not handled by the commune supply and marketing co-op. It goes through two state purchasing stations, one for cotton and the other for grain and oil. These, like the co-op, are under dual leadership by the commune and the Commercial Bureau of Hsinhsiang County.

Before 1965, Chilying was not able to grow enough grain for its own needs. The peasants sold only cotton and cotton-seed oil to the state. They bought from it large quantities of grain. In the difficult year 1961, the state brought in 5,980,000 jin of maize from other provinces, selling it to the commune members at a loss, if the cost of transport is considered. Chilying's members calculated that this was equivalent to a state subsidy of 1,470,000 yuan. Unhappy at putting such a burden on

the country, they made strenuous efforts to change the situation. By 1965, they were growing enough grain for their own consumption. From 1966 on, they have been able to sell some to the state.

Cotton, grain and vegetable oils come under the state purchasing plan. Apart from amounts retained for use in production and the commune members' household needs, all Chiliying's cotton is sold to the state. For grain, the state sets purchase quotas for each area and commune based on its conditions, and in a normal year buys the specified amounts. The purpose is to put nationwide purchases of grain and its supply to the population on a planned basis. In order to encourage the commune members to sell more as they increase production, the state offers higher prices for grain sales above the quota. The same practice is followed for vegetable oils.

Chiliying's commune members are convinced from their own experience that the state, led by the working class, truly represents their interests. So they do their best to increase production, and to sell it more cotton, grain and oil, thus supporting the urban areas and meeting the needs of socialist construction and the people. The figures below show Chiliying's constantly increasing contributions in recent years.

Increases in Chiliying's Sales of Grain,
Cotton and Oil to the State
(Unit: jin)

	Grain	Cotton	Oil
1967	2,300,000	2,953,300	290,000
1969	3,000,000	4,100,000	370,000
1973	11,700,000	4,650,000	450,000

In the summer of 1972, the Sungchuang brigade sold 10,000 jin of wheat above its fixed quota, for which the state purchasing station paid a preferential price of some 400 yuan above the ordinary rate as a form of encouragement.

But the Party branch secretary Chi Chiu-wang, acting on the unanimous view of Sungchuang's commune members, refused this. He said, "We Sungchuang people ate a lot of the state's grain in the past, and were always charged a low price. Now we've sold a bit more than our quota. How can we regard this as a service entitling us to extra payment?" So he sent the excess back.

The leading comrades of the county praised Sungchuang for its lofty communist spirit. Nevertheless, they insisted that the preferential price be accepted because this was the state policy to encourage the sale of extra grain. "If you don't take it, you're not following state policy," they explained. This finally persuaded Sungchuang to take the extra 400 yuan.

In new China, the Party and government advocate and encourage the communist outlook and style in ideology. In the economic sphere, they stick to the policies for the socialist stage of development. These include the principle "to each according to his work," and appropriate material rewards. Though communism is the final aim of our striving, China is still a developing country in the stage of socialism, and a long way from this final aim.

Chiliying's commune members take care to ensure high quality in all grain, cotton and oil sales to the state. After the bumper wheat harvest of 1973, the commune Party committee again called on every production team to sell only its best. Then, Secretary Chiu heard that the 11th team of the Liutien brigade had sold some inferior wheat.

This amazed him because cadres and members of the Chiliying commune have long shown their understanding of the fact that the quality of sales expresses one's attitude towards the socialist state.

Through prompt inquiry by telephone, Secretary Chiu found that this team had interplanted cotton and wheat on a plot of its land. The cotton did not do as well as the wheat, which was absorbing too much of the water and fertilizer. So to help the cotton grow better, the team reaped the wheat a few days ahead of time. Wanting to complete their sales quickly, they took it to the purchasing station. But its quality was low because of the early reaping. The upshot was that the Party branch of Liutien brigade made a self-criticism to the station and insisted on replacing the low-quality wheat with the best grade.

Quality is even more important in cotton. Present state standards classify it into seven grades, meant for different uses and varying widely in purchase price.

Since 1970, the cotton purchasing station has been working on the principle, "Grading by the brigade, checking by the station." It has trained several commune members in each brigade to classify and weigh the crops there. Afterwards, the station only makes a spot check. This doubles the speed of cotton purchasing. Practice has proved that grading and weighing by the brigades themselves is generally reliable.

In old China, with the exception of direct exchanges between working people, all trade was a matter of exploitation and fraud. In new China, the system of exploitation of man by man has been uprooted. There is still buying and selling, but its nature has completely changed. Profits made by socialist enterprises are used in the people's interests. In China's rural areas today,

A corner of the Chiliying cotton purchasing station, through which the commune supplies large quantities of ginned cotton to the state every year.





Supply and marketing co-operatives often set up mobile stands in village streets for the convenience of buyers.

trade between the state and the commune members, and between the state and the collectives which represent the members, embodies their new relationship of mutual reliance, support and trust based on a fundamental community of interest.

Yang Tseng-mei, accountant of the Chiliying cotton purchasing station, worked for two years in a pre-liberation cotton and grain store. He recalls how its boss, to make more money, had forced down the price of cotton bought from the peasants, playing many tricks to grade it below its actual quality and cheat on the weight. But when selling the cotton to customers, this capitalist used to order Yang and other employees to spray it with water and mix in cotton seeds to add weight.

Contrasting the exploitation and cheating of peasants through trade in the old society with the deep trust in the masses by the cotton purchasing station today, Yang commented feelingly, "How can one compare the two things? They're as far apart as sky and earth!"

Agricultural Technical School

In an extremely simple classroom, with walls of clay on a brick base, more than fifty students were sitting at unvarnished wooden desks, listening to a class given by a young woman. The students, muscular and sun-bronzed, were clearly young peasants. They were paying close attention to the words of the teacher and taking careful notes.

The teacher, Lu Hsueh-jung, was herself only 23, not much older than they. Her hair cut in a bob, a smile dimpling her deeply tanned face, she gave brief clear answers to their questions. Her subject that day was the management of cotton plants in the later stages of growth. But what the students asked about most was an experiment in 1971 in which she had attained the exceptional yield of 358 jin of ginned cotton on a one-mu test plot.

The classroom serves also as a mess hall, besides providing storage for dozens of beams stacked at one end in readiness for the building of new dormitories. Just outside is a basketball court at either end of which stand two willow trees with home-made wooden backboards attached.

This is the agro-technical school of the Chiliying People's Commune. Of its present enrolment of 61, two-thirds come from other communes in the county. Lu

Hsueh-jung herself was among the school's first batch of graduates. For four years after her graduation, she worked as an agro-technician on the "Red Flag" experimental plot, which Chairman Mao had inspected in 1958.

In addition to people invited to teach short-term, like Lu Hsueh-jung, there are thirteen experienced peasants, local farm experts and cadres who teach regularly but on a part-time basis. One of them is Lu Shu-mo, Party secretary of the Chiliying brigade. Accepted as a good leader by the masses, he has headed the peasants for over twenty years in resolutely keeping to the socialist road. Lu Shu-mo was a delegate to both the Ninth and Tenth National Congresses of the Communist Party of China. What he lectures on most often is the class struggle and the struggle between the two roads of socialism and capitalism in the countryside.

Another part-time teacher is Li An-jen, the peasant expert known as "Doom to Pests" in Liuchuang village. His subjects are cotton cultivation and pest control.

A third is Chi Chiu-wang, Party secretary of the Sung-chuang brigade, famed for skill in developing improved wheat strains. Back in 1961, he began growing better wheat with three jin of seed brought from outside. Since then, he has been consistently in the lead in cultivating, propagating, popularizing and trial-growing improved varieties. He teaches not only how to grow better wheat but also how to make Mao Tsetung Thought one's guide in scientific farming.

Chi Chao-sheng, a 63-year-old researcher from the Institute of Plant Protection of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, is invited annually to give lectures. The institute has adopted Chiliying as one of its bases for scientific research. He instructs the students in the laws

governing the life cycle of cotton aphids and bollworms and in chemical control of these pests.

Most of the classes, however, are given by the school's two full-time teachers. The elder, a graduate from the biology department of Peking Normal University in 1937, seasoned in agricultural research and teaching, lectures on scientific cultivation of cotton and wheat and the development of improved strains. The other, a young farmer researcher of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences of Hsinhsiung Prefecture, conducts the course in plant protection.

The subjects taught by the full- and part-time teachers are for the most part the same. But there is a difference. The latter put the stress on local advanced techniques and experience, of immediate practical value to the students. The former give systematic instruction in the elements and laws of agricultural science, supplementing the practical lessons and grounding them in theory.

By old conventional standards, this school seems "irregular." But it has trained the kind of agricultural technical personnel urgently needed here. Old peasants comment that even though the students don't go to school for very long, they learn a lot, so the school is a success. The cadres consider its graduates fine, well grounded in theory and practice, and able to give a good lead in scientific farming.

Born of the Cultural Revolution

Speaking of the history of the agricultural school, people link it with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In fact, it is one of its fruits.

It originated in April 1967 when a small group of young Red Guards from Peking Agricultural University came to Chiliying. A tiny number among the millions then traveling across the country to sow the seeds of revolution and exchange revolutionary experience, they stayed only briefly, then went on. But that November they came back, with thirty or so fellow students and teachers, to make Chiliying an "experimental point" for the revolution in education. They were looking for ways to change the old irrational educational system, which had located agricultural schools and institutes in big cities far from the countryside, prescribed teaching materials unrelated to practice and of no service to the urgent needs of agricultural development, and placed schools under the domination of bourgeois intellectuals. Acting on Chairman Mao's educational policy, they were determined right here in Chiliying to blaze the trail for agricultural schools of a new type.

Lu Shu-mo, the brigade Party secretary, supported them warmly, especially because there was a great local need to train technicians and cadres knowing the theory necessary for spreading scientific farming. After consultation, it was decided to set up an agro-technical school to be run by the poor and lower-middle peasants themselves.* The teaching would be undertaken by commune and brigade cadres, experienced local peasants and teachers from the Peking Agricultural University.

* The term "poor and lower-middle peasants" as used in the present book refers to their class status at the time of land reform and the movement for agricultural co-operation, not to their present economic position. Reliance on the poor and lower-middle peasants and unity with other sections of the middle peasants is the long-term class line adopted by the Communist Party of China in the countryside.

After brief preparation, the school opened its doors in January, 1968. Its first class numbered nearly sixty – half of them young peasants with primary or middle school education recommended by production teams of the Chilying brigade, and the other half, students from Peking Agricultural University. The term was one year, during which the peasant students were to receive their regular work-points from the production teams.

The first two weeks were devoted to setting up the proper motives for study. Party Secretary Lu Shu-mo talked on the aim and principles of the school. Representatives of the poor and lower-middle peasants gave reports contrasting the bitter past with the happy present. A visit was made to the Class Education Exhibition of Paliushu village. Group discussions always followed.

Members of that first class recollect vividly how Liu Fang-wen, one of the poor and lower-middle peasants invited to lecture, encouraged them to study hard and well. With tears in his eyes, he poured out his own experience of hardship and bitterness in the old society. He recalled how the toiling people then had had no chance of education. He himself had never gone to school even for a day. After the liberation, working as storeroom keeper for his production team, he still had to scratch marks on the wall to record the number of farm implements because he could not write.

About half a year later, the commune decided to bring the school under its own leadership to train agro-technical personnel for the whole area. More than seventy additional students were enrolled from the various brigades. Soon after, the teachers and students from the Agricultural University were recalled to Peking to join the forthcoming stage of work in the Cultural Revolution.

Self-reliance and Hard Work

The earliest classrooms and dormitories were in public buildings borrowed from the Chilying brigade. The school then had no house, land or income of its own. This lack of a fixed site was disadvantageous to its teaching, study and scientific experiment.

Lu Ming-ting and Chang Kuei-lin, the poor and lower-middle peasant representatives on its management, along with some activists among the teachers and students, had for some time had their eye on a patch of waste land near Sungchuang village. With the support of the commune leadership, they decided to pioneer here in the spirit of "Kangta," the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yen-an in the days of the War of Resistance Against Japan. They organized the teachers and students to reclaim the place, and built a "base" for the school there with their own hands.

The battle to wrest crops from the barren land began shortly after the spring thaw in 1969. After two weeks of intensive labour with tools borrowed from the brigade, they had opened up some thirty mu and sowed them to cotton and maize. In August, the teachers and students went all out to sink a pump well and build a 10-room school building, also taking a fortnight. Previously, most of them had camped under canvas in three big tents borrowed from the state cotton purchasing station, and held their classes, in fair weather, in the shade of trees.

The hard work and tough conditions were a test for all. A few students began to waver, doubting whether this was the way to conduct a school. They complained that it didn't have most things needed for study, used too many days on labour, and in fact had very little resemblance

to a school at all. Rather than study here, they said, they would pack up and go back to working in the brigade. But the majority thought that the orientation of the school was correct, because it was modelled after "Kangta," relying on its own efforts and hard work. In the long run, it was this kind of school that would train the type of agricultural technical personnel needed by China's socialist countryside and contribute to the well-being of the area's people for generations. The school leadership purposely brought the two views to public debate, both spoken and through big-character posters. Many students voiced high-minded dedication. "We want to be the paving-stones on the road forward," said some. "We must be path-breakers in the educational revolution," said others. Chang Kuei-lin, deeply moved, pledged to a meeting that he would give his whole life to keeping the new school forging ahead.

By 1970, except for some capital construction still financed by commune funds, the school was self-supporting. It had income from farming its 50 mu of land. The present large classroom was built with the proceeds of its 1971 bumper cotton harvest.

Study, Labour, Scientific Experiment

In the last few years, the school has gradually been consolidated. Lu Shu-mo, Party secretary of the Chiliying brigade, and Tien Hsiu-ching, first secretary of the commune Party committee, are concurrently its director and deputy director. Party Secretaries Shih Lai-ho of Liu-chuang and Chi Chiu-wang of Sungchuang are also deputy directors. Chang Kuei-lin, representing the poor

and lower-middle peasants, and another cadre are in charge of day-to-day work.

The relative time devoted to various courses is: politics, 20%; labour, 25-30%; scientific agriculture, 50-55%.

The curriculum, closely linked with production, integrates theory with practice. Studies and work projects are largely determined by the farming season. In preparation for the cotton sowing in 1973, the teachers took the students to Liuchuang where they asked its Party secretary, Shih Lai-ho, famous as a cotton grower, to talk to them on this work. After returning to the school, the full-time teachers gave four classes — on the treatment of cotton seed, checking of topsoil moisture and field-levelling, sowing, and steps to ensure a full stand of seedlings. Then the students plunged into the work of preparing and doing the sowing, both on the school's 50 mu and the land of the brigades.

The school compiles its own texts with the full-time teachers as editors. After a preliminary outline is made, they take the students out to advanced production brigades to ask experienced peasants and technicians for opinions. The first draft again goes to these brigades for further views. A text is finalized only after discussion at meetings with experienced old peasants and technical cadres, where it is read aloud, studied, revised and approved chapter by chapter. Three textbooks on cotton and wheat cultivation and plant protection, compiled in 1971, were re-edited and revised in 1973 in the light of new local techniques and experience.

The school guides and encourages scientific work by the students. In its experimental plot are more than 90 varieties of cotton, including six strains newly selected,

which they have cultivated and hybridized themselves. No less than 100 varieties of wheat have been sown experimentally. Studies of plant protection concentrate on comprehensive prevention and elimination of cotton insect pests by combining insecticides, biological methods of control, trapping and removal by hand. This can cut by more than half the average costs of such work in the brigades.

Developing Peasants of a New Type

The agro-technical school strives to carry out the following principles:

- 1) Service to agricultural production and the building of a new, socialist countryside.
- 2) Stress on political and ideological education; placing a firm and correct political orientation in the forefront in all work.
- 3) Linking theory with practice; carrying out the three-way integration of study, labour and scientific experimentation.
- 4) Persistence in the revolutionary tradition of self-reliance and hard work; industry and thrift in running the school.

Precisely because these principles have been adhered to, the school has succeeded in faster, better and more economical training of large numbers of educated peasants, agricultural technicians and cadres armed with socialist consciousness and scientific knowledge. Its 204 graduates up to 1973 now work in the following capacities:

Leading cadres of production brigades	39
Heads of brigade agro-technical groups, veterinarians	66
Leaders of production teams	21
Agro-technicians in production teams	31
Serving in the People's Liberation Army	20
Agro-technicians in other communes	13
Other work	14

Lu Hsueh-jung, the young woman briefly teaching at the school, was one of the 204 graduates. Before enrolling, she knew little of the whys and wherefores of farming, but simply did what the team leader said. When applying insecticide to cotton plants, she knew only that it got rid of insects. But she couldn't say which insects, what their life cycle was, or when was the best time for spraying. Sometimes, though she sprayed as much as nearby teams, the insects persisted and ruined more of the plants. Not knowing why, she was perplexed and worried.

After studying at the school, Lu Hsueh-jung was clear on problems about which she had previously been hazy, and found ways to solve them. Not only did she prove good at combining the theory she had learned at school with the old peasants' rich experience, she also made some discoveries and innovations in cotton growing and the prevention and elimination of cotton blight. For instance, she devised the "root exposure" treatment for blighted seedlings.

In the spring of 1969, shortly after her graduation, she found some of the cotton shoots in her experimental plot wilting after they were about three inches high. She consulted a number of old peasants, combined their answers

with her newly-acquired book knowledge, and identified the disease. The usual treatment had been repeated hoeing between the rows. But the results had been far from satisfactory.

Pondering on this, Lu Hsueh-jung recalled something learned at the school: Cotton diseases and insect pests could be controlled by raising the temperature of the soil and decreasing topsoil moisture through hoeing in the early stages of growth. This gave her a clue. Wouldn't removing the soil around the roots do the job better?

She tried it on a patch of seedlings blighted to varying degrees, removing the earth around each one till the roots showed. The next day those with droopy leaves had perked up. After several days, the more seriously blighted ones also revived. This method of fighting cotton seedling blight was subsequently adopted by many brigades of the Chilying commune.

One spring day in 1973, the commune's "Red Flag" experimental plot used this technique to control the disease on ten mu of land. In the evening, a strong wind sprang up. Lu Hsueh-jung did not sleep a wink that night, worrying that the seedlings might be blown over before they had had a chance to recover. This indeed was what happened. It revealed a weak spot in her method.

Later, helped by old peasants, Lu Hsueh-jung found a way to tackle blight and at the same time safeguard seedlings against wind. On one side of each ridge, she hoed a shallow ditch close to the roots to expose them to the sun, leaving the earth on the other side intact as protection against wind. This improved method was reported to the commune. Secretary Tien at once called an on-the-spot meeting of cadres and technicians from

the brigades and teams to popularize it. Now it is practised throughout the county.

Lu Hsueh-jung made rapid progress not only technically, but also politically. She has become adept at uniting people around her, especially the youth. She is now a member of the brigade Youth League committee, and holds leading posts in the Youth League organizations of the county, prefecture and province as well.

Training Veterinarians

At the end of 1971, at the instance of the commune leadership, the school started a veterinary course. There were then only thirteen vets in the whole commune. This was far below the number required for successful development of its animal husbandry, which was centred on pig raising.

Young people from all 38 brigades were sent for training. One was Tuan Lai-peng of Hsitsaotsun village, a middle-school graduate who had hoped to go on to college but failed to get a place. At first, he showed no interest in the course. This was partly because of the teasing he ran into from some of his home villagers who called him a "pig doctor" with "four-footed patients."

The reason this stung and offended Tuan stemmed from the fact that veterinarians used to be looked down upon in old China's countryside. Without an inch of land or a roof over their heads, they plied their trade from village to village earning a few coppers here and there, seldom able to marry and often considered too low even to be buried in their ancestral graveyards. After the liberation, their political and social position changed; in the altered social atmosphere their profession became respected.

But the contempt in which it had been held in the old society could not vanish at one stroke. It hung on in some villagers' minds.

At the school, Tuan gradually came to feel that he had been wrong to succumb to these ideas. He came to be guided more and more by Secretary Tien's words at the inaugural meeting — that in revolutionary work, there is no division into "high" and "low," only a division of labour. School was not just for learning skill. The primary thing was to be tempered in correct thinking. A revolutionary should struggle against all wrong ideas, in others and in himself. He should make **"the most radical rupture with traditional ideas"** as Marx and Engels had taught in the **Manifesto of the Communist Party**. Tuan realized that in bristling so at being called "pig doctor," he had simply displayed the vestiges of traditional ideas in his own head.

Soon after, a happening in the school made a lasting impression on Tuan.

A commune member in Chungtsaotsun village phoned Chang Hsien-chi, a student hailing from there, asking for help with a sick pig. Chang, busy all day with classes, decided to go in the evening. By then, a blizzard had blown up. But he thought, if Dr. Bethune, a Canadian Communist, could cross a whole ocean to serve the Chinese people, why couldn't he, a Chinese Communist, go a short way to serve fellow-villagers? Taking some medicine, he set out in the storm to walk the several kilometres to his home village.

The snow, melting when it touched the ground, had turned the road into a sea of mud. Chang slogged through it, arriving half soaked. The commune member was moved beyond words by Chang Hsien-chi's coming

on such a bad night. He took him to the sty in which the pig lay gasping and shaking. Basing himself on his studies, Chang diagnosed pneumonia. He gave the animal acupuncture and a terramycin injection.

Though urged to stay the night, Chang insisted on returning to school. During the noon rest period next day, he made a quick trip to the village for a check. Finding the pig swilling away at the trough, he knew all was well.

Teaching a class that afternoon, Chang Kuei-lin praised the young man for his service to the people and called on the other students to learn from him. They responded with a whole series of good deeds. These were commended by the school authorities to further encourage the good trend.

This affair educated and inspired Tuan Lai-peng and his schoolmates. They realized more clearly how much the commune members needed them, and that they could fill the need only by earnest study motivated by service to the people. "Whatever is in the people's interest, we'll learn and do well," was the conclusion they drew.

The specialized courses are given by a teacher transferred from elsewhere, and several of the commune's own vets. They include acupuncture, Chinese herbal therapy, gelding, clinical practice of both traditional Chinese and Western veterinary medicine, anatomy, livestock breeding and management. Tuan's interest in all these grew apace. After an acupuncture class, he would try, on a quiet-tempered mare in the stable, the 25 major needling points demonstrated by the teacher in class. Strolling together at the day's end, he and his classmates would quiz each other on veterinary medicine and pharmacology. In the school year, the students did class work for four months

in two sessions. The other eight months were spent in itinerant practice in the villages, with a final period back at the school to sum up the whole year's study and practice.

After graduation, Tuan returned to his home village. His main work now is the prevention and treatment of animal and poultry diseases, with remaining time given to field work. He can handle all ordinary ailments among the stock, calling for help from the commune vets only in a few complicated cases. In the last two years, he has successfully treated more than 100 pigs and 30 draught animals. Pigs in his village increased tenfold between 1971-73, from 40 to over 400. Today, some people still dub him "pig doctor," but it has become an affectionate nickname. And Tuan no longer takes it amiss, being proud and not ashamed of his work.

Graduates Go to Other Counties

In the six years after its founding, the school made some achievements, and gradually acquired quite a name. In 1972, two students came all the way from Shensi Province to study there. In 1973, three enrolled from Fangcheng County.

Some of the graduates have been sent, upon request, to other counties as agro-technicians. One of them is Sung Ming-jen of the 28th team of Chilying brigade. He had been sent out on such work both before and after attending the school. From his own experience, he knew that the schooling made a big difference in his competence.



Teachers and peasant-students of Chilying's agro-technical school discuss a comprehensive method of fighting cotton pests; their studies are closely linked to production needs.



The agro-technical school sets out to visit the nationally-renowned Red Flag Canal in Linhsien.



Lu Hsueh-jung (centre), one of the first graduates of the commune's agro-technical school and now a visiting instructor, counsels her students after class.

His first time "outside" was in February 1966. Hsintsai County had asked the Chiliying commune for twenty cotton-growing technicians, and his team picked him as one. Sung was hesitant. With only two years of middle school, and some five years of cotton-growing experience, he felt he knew too little. But the team leader urged him to shoulder the task, and learn and temper himself while doing it. So he went.

Assigned to a production brigade of the Hanchi People's Commune, he had some successes in work that year. So the commune leadership asked him to recount his experience to all its team and brigade cadres. But he was unwilling, saying that he only knew what to do, but not why. His own lack of understanding had often upset him. How good it would be, he thought, if he had someone to teach him!

Then one day in early spring of 1968, after Sung Ming-jen's return home, the head of his production team said, "Ming-jen, the village is setting up an agricultural school. Our leadership has decided to send you there. How does that sound?"

"It suits me fine! When do I go?"

Very soon he was at the school. There he studied avidly and learned a good deal of theory. He began to understand the reasons behind things that in the past he could only do but not explain. Even more important, he learned what serving the people meant.

A few months after his graduation, the neighbouring county of Weishih asked Chiliying for some wheat-growing technicians. Sung's team leader said to him, "The brigade says to send someone who knows the ropes. You've worked outside, and gone through school as well, so you're the man!"

In Weishih, Sung was assigned to a production brigade. From the start, he applied the method of work taught by Director Lu Shu-mo at the school: First, wherever you go, study the local conditions and seasons and work accordingly. Second, follow the mass line and be on good terms with the people; otherwise techniques and skills, no matter how good, will not spread far or bring any results.

Before the sowing, he invited some old, middle-aged and young peasants to a fact-finding meeting to study the causes of the low local yields of wheat. It turned out that a previously good seed strain had degenerated after five or six crops. Another reason was that wheat fields in that area were not irrigated in the winter or spring.

Sung began by persuading the brigade's cadres and rank and file to exchange some of their grain for ten tons of the superior "Fumo" wheat seed from a state farm fifty kilometres away. Then he urged the importance of giving wheat the "five waterings" (before the fields freeze in winter, when the seedlings turn green in early spring, and once each in the elongating, earing and doughing stages). Encountering strong doubts about the first (early winter) watering, he called a special mass meeting to give the scientific reason. He explained that in the period when surface water froze at night and thawed by day, the irrigated young wheat would not freeze to death, as the peasants feared, but would on the contrary be protected against the cold. After most of the masses were convinced, the winter wheat was conscientiously watered.

Average yield on the brigade's 5,000 mu of wheat jumped that year from 289 to 400 jin per mu. On the 20-mu experimental plot under Sung Ming-jen's own care, it averaged 600 jin. The few peasants still sceptical about

winter watering saw the light. One of them said, "We can't plod along the old path in worn-out shoes any more. The road to get high yields is scientific farming."

Now, in many places, good crop strains originating in the agro-technical school are flowering and filling out with fat grain. And new-type peasants trained at the school are striking deep roots in ever wider areas, spreading agricultural science and new techniques, and the sound thinking and style of work they learned there.

VIII

The Commune Militia

A "tank" rumbled forward amidst powder smoke. From behind the mounds on either side of the road, nine young men in peasant clothing suddenly appeared, carrying sub-machine guns and semi-automatic rifles. Quickly they snaked forward on their bellies and vaulted onto the "tank." After depositing packs of "explosives" where they would have the greatest effect, they promptly rolled off and took cover. The ensuing explosions left the "tank" paralyzed.

Actually, this was not a battle, but an exercise by a militia battalion of the Chilying commune in the early spring of 1973. The "tank" was a dressed-up tractor. The explosives were large firecrackers made by the militiamen. Nothing was real except the people, but the whole drill was so lifelike that the commune members and other militiamen who were watching caught their breath, their hearts thumping with excitement. When it was over, they praised the participants for the boldness, precision, alertness and thoroughness with which they had performed their task.

Glorious Revolutionary Tradition

The Chilying militia has a glorious revolutionary tradition. Late in 1948, during the War of Liberation, a Party-

led armed work team had come to these villages and helped the poor peasant youth form an underground militia unit. Soon the militiamen were giving active support to the front by transporting grain and fodder, and serving as stretcher-bearers for the army. Later, they were in the forefront of the struggles to wipe out bandits and overthrow local tyrants. Their only weapons then were broad swords, spears and a few old rifles. But because they were well organized, had the poor people's strong sense of solidarity, and were supported by the Party and the People's Liberation Army, they became a formidable force. Their very approach made bandits, despots, landlords and other reactionaries tremble in their boots.

During the land reform, the militiamen took the lead in mass rallies at which a public reckoning was made of the wealth squeezed out of the peasants through exploitation by the landlords, and in knocking down the latter with irrefutable arguments. They were also in the van in the subsequent distribution among the poor peasants of animals, grain and movable property seized back from the landlords. But it was weapons, those most important and valuable things, that they searched for with the greatest zeal. Thus they completely disarmed the landlord class, and armed themselves more strongly than before.

In the period of socialist revolution and socialist construction, the militiamen have responded to the Party's call and firmly taken the road of collectivism. They also have an important role in maintaining local security, consolidating the proletarian dictatorship and carrying on production.

Today, all 38 brigades of the commune, as well as its enterprises and schools, have their own militia battalions, companies or platoons depending on the number of

available recruits. Together they form a regiment under the unified leadership and command of the commune, which has its own militia work department. The overwhelming majority of the young men and women belong to what is called the core militia. Men of middle age, and women from 26 to 35 are ordinary militia. Ex-servicemen of the People's Liberation Army are the backbone of the entire organization.

Not a few members of the commune Party committee fought as guerrillas in the revolutionary wars or did militia work in the land reform period. They proudly call today's militia "the iron shoulders of the commune."

The Party committee periodically discusses militia work and, together with militia leaders and responsible Party members from the brigades, gives it an annual check-up.

Military Training

Spare-time military training is one of the militia's major tasks. Through such activity in peace time, its members have fitted themselves to undertake many tasks in case of enemy attack, including armed escort for the transport of military supplies, repair of roads and bridges, and guerrilla warfare in support of the regular forces. It is likewise a powerful reserve force for the People's Liberation Army. The building of a powerful militia has always been an important component of Chairman Mao's teachings on people's war.

On September 29, 1958, soon after Chinese peasants in their hundreds of millions had responded to his call and switched over to people's communes, Chairman Mao pointed out: **"The imperialists are bullying us in such a**

way that we will have to deal with them seriously. Not only must we have a powerful regular army, we must also organize contingents of the people's militia on a big scale. This will make it difficult for the imperialists to move a single inch in our country in the event of invasion."

Chairman Mao's instruction gave a powerful impetus to the building of such forces. The militia regiment of the Chiliying People's Commune, inaugurated at that time, quickly expanded from the previously existing 25 village groups to 45 companies and battalions. Its total strength has risen from 1,000 in 1958 to 15,000 today.

In observance of Chairman Mao's teachings on preparing against war, the regiment has kept up its military training over the past fifteen years. Its members have continually improved their skill in marksmanship, grenade-throwing, bayonet fighting, marching in formations, etc. The emphasis in such training is on the core units. The rifle range southeast of Kouwang village is regularly used by a number of battalions and companies.

On August 7, 1973, the militia battalions of the Liuchuang and Chiliying production brigades held a joint military exercise as part of the celebrations on the 15th anniversary of Chairman Mao's visit to the commune.

In the brilliant morning sunshine, the two militia units paraded on the drill ground, their ranks neat, their spirits high. Among those from Liuchuang were the two cousins Wang Ching-chuan and Wang Ching-shui, militiamen since the land reform days; the "three Liu sisters" — young militiawomen from one family; Shih Lai-kuei, a recently demobilized armyman and his bride Liu Tsui-lan. But it was a dozen Little Red Guards at the rear of the column who attracted the greatest attention. The eldest was fourteen. The youngest, Shih Shih-kuei, was only nine and

barely the height of his rifle. On their own and their parents' request, they had been included in the target practice to encourage all the children of the village to hold the militia dear from an early age.

Firing automatic rifles at 100 metres, five men and five women of the Liuchuang militia each hit the bull's-eye or its adjacent ring with every burst of nine shots. When they started shooting at multi-coloured balloons swaying in the breeze, the spectators held their breath, tense lest they miss. But here too the score was high – with 35 rounds they popped all 30 balloons. Eight Little Red Guards shot from 100 metres at sheet-steel targets the size of a man's chest and head and, in less than two minutes, had knocked down all 24 – every shot a hit. Ten militiamen from the Chilying brigade performed impressively in grenade-throwing, their average distance being 52.5 metres, and the best 69.5 metres.

Most of the participants were the outstanding core militiamen or women of their battalions, acting as instructors in the platoons and squads. The commune's militia as a whole has been rated "excellent" in marksmanship every year since 1970.

The Chilying militia are also earnest in political study. Every battalion or company devotes to it two or three evenings a month. The Liuchuang militia over a period used most of this time for the study of three pamphlets – selections from the writings of Engels about Marx, of Lenin about Marx and Engels, and of Stalin about Lenin. Many militia units in other brigades were concentrating on Chairman Mao's works, particularly his theory of people's war and teachings concerning the militia. At the time of our visit, all units were making a conscientious study of the documents of the Tenth National Congress of the

Communist Party of China, and criticizing and condemning the Lin Piao anti-Party clique for its crimes.

The Chilying militia keep abreast of the situation at home and abroad, and are eager listeners at lectures on these subjects. In August, 1969, a few months after the invasion of China's Chenpao Island by Soviet troops, Lu Yin-ling, a former Chilying militiaman serving with the frontier guards in Northeast China, came on home leave. He was invited many times to talk on the battle there, and particularly about the local militia's valiant participation in the defence side by side with the frontier guards. About 10,000 people heard him, and were deeply stirred.

Support by the Masses

One winter day in 1969, Liuchuang organized a warm mass send-off for three young villagers who had newly enlisted in the People's Liberation Army. Amid thunderous applause, their militia commander pinned a large red flower on the brand-new army uniform of each of the recruits. A woman named Tuan Chi-mei, sitting in the audience, watched pensively. She was disappointed that none of her six children, all girls, were going. This saddened her for some time.

A year or so later, two of her daughters, Chun-ching and Chun-yung, came home happy as larks with a semi-automatic rifle just issued to them for militia training. "Ma," they shouted. "You've always regretted that we girls weren't shouldering a gun. Have a look! What's this?"

Tuan Chi-mei was overjoyed to see the gleaming weapon. It wasn't just for consolation, she realized, that the militia battalion commander had said to her, "The

militia too are soldiers of our army, though not uniformed ones."

"My daughters are also preparing themselves to defend the socialist motherland," she thought happily. "How can I help?" She pasted a paper target on a wall at one end of her courtyard and set up a small brick platform at the other for sighting the gun. She also took over more housework so the girls could use more time after farm work for military practice. She helped them to wash and mend, and got their favourite dishes ready after tiring days.

Once, after a 10-day stint of training, young Chun-ching was stiff and sore all over. She had skinned her elbows while firing from a prone position, and bruised her right hip with her rifle butt during bayonet practice. Back at home she burst out, "Before I carried a gun, there was nothing I wanted more. But this is pretty rough going." Tuan Chi-mei was silent for a while, then said gravely to the girl, "Chun-ching, just think again what this training is for. It was Chairman Mao and the Party who saved poor people like your own parents from the ocean of misery. Think why you'll never be given away as a child-bride as I was! Don't forget old wounds after they've healed!"

Tuan Chi-mei's family had been poor peasants in old pre-liberation Chilying. One day when bandits looted a landlord's house in their village, he falsely accused Tuan Chi-mei's father of complicity. Her father was thrown into jail, then shot. In a famine, her widowed mother was forced to flee the village and wander as a beggar all the way to Hopei. And Tuan Chi-mei herself, when only twelve, was given away as a child-bride to a family for which she was compelled to drudge all day at cooking, cleaning and other housework in the day, then spin cotton

late into the night. A year later she was abducted and sold as a concubine to a 60-year-old landlord in a different county. Helped to escape by a kind-hearted maidservant, she returned to her birthplace to rejoin her grandmother and uncle. At fifteen, she married Liu Tien-chin, a poor peasant of Liuchuang. Only after liberation did they begin to live like human beings, and their life has improved year by year.

Tuan Chi-mei had often told the girls of these past sufferings to help them understand why they should shoulder guns and take military training. Now after her mother's reminder, Chun-ching bent her head in shame. She made up her mind to train hard to defend the revolution, and from then on did so with growing zeal. Inspired by her example, the younger daughter Chun-yung did the same. Even the smallest, Chun-ting, still in primary school, made herself a "rifle" out of a wooden stick to which she affixed a notched piece of sheet iron and a nail as a sighting device. This she took to school daily, practising sighting between classes. Her mother, moved by her enthusiasm, asked the brigade militia leader with a smile, "How about taking this wee soldier out with you to drill?"

That was how the "three Liu sisters" came to appear in the militia parade at Liuchuang village.

Chairman Mao's thinking on people's war has struck deep roots among the members of the Chilying People's Commune. From oldsters to Little Red Guards, they love and support their militia.

Enforcing Proletarian Dictatorship

Late on a summer night of 1973, young Chun-ching and another militiawoman, armed with rifles, were patrolling

the streets of Liuchuang. At the end of their rounds, which passed off without incident, they came to the brigade granary at the west end of the village. After a few whispered words to a militiawoman on duty in the guard room, they checked the time by a table clock, and woke three others sleeping there. In a matter of minutes, Chun-ching and her partner were lying down to rest, and the new patrol was off on its beat.

Normally, only the militiamen do night patrols. But this was harvest time, and the women were assigned the task, because the men were guarding the wheat on the threshing ground against fire or other hazards.

Since liberation, social order in this area has been good. Nevertheless, the Party committee of the commune and the Party organizations of the brigades have constantly educated the militia to heighten its vigilance and never to forget the class struggle.

To the question, "How do you do your job of maintaining public order?" Comrade Chen, a commune cadre in charge of public security affairs, gave the smiling reply: "Don't think it's all done by us few comrades in this little office. The work goes smoothly because all 9,000 core members of the commune militia help out."

Here is an example: Late one night in October 1972, Liu Ming-ching, leader of the first platoon of the Liuchuang militia, on patrol with another militiaman at the west end of the village, saw a dubious character wandering around. They questioned him and found his answers inconsistent. Finally, he had to admit who he really was and what he was up to. He turned out to be a runaway landlord from a near-by village who had refused to work under mass surveillance as required, tried to run off under

cover of night, and lost his way. The militiamen immediately escorted this scoundrel to the commune headquarters to be turned over to the poor and lower-middle peasants of his own village.

The Chilying militia regiment has an integrated ladder of command. When need arises, the commune's militia department can alert all the units by signals over the commune's broadcast network. It can also convey orders through other channels. Any enemy, however crafty, would have great difficulty in eluding the dragnet of the alerted militia.

Forty years ago when the Kuomintang reactionaries launched a frantic campaign of "encirclement and suppression" against the bases led by the Chinese Communist Party in Kiangsi Province, Chairman Mao scoffed at the enemy's blockhouses and fortifications, pointing out that they were no indestructible bastion. He said with soaring confidence, **"What is a true bastion of iron? It is the masses, the millions upon millions of people who genuinely and sincerely support the revolution."**

The Chinese people, before their revolutionary awakening, were described by some as "a tray of loose sand," lacking all cohesion. Particularly was this said of the unorganized peasant masses. That state of affairs is gone forever. Today it is no exaggeration to call the Chilying militia a "bastion of iron."

A Shock Force in Production

An unwritten rule prevails in the Chilying People's Commune. Routine farm work is assigned by production brigades or teams among the entire membership. But

urgent and arduous tasks are entrusted to the militia in view of its greater stamina, high sense of organization and militancy. This happens, for instance, in the annual campaigns for the elimination of pests and the building of large water conservancy projects, conducted under the unified command of the commune. The militia gets them done with remarkable speed.

Over the last fifteen years, people of Chiliying have waged four major campaigns to remake nature, in each of which the militia has shown its mettle as a production shock brigade.

The first campaign took up the three winters from 1958 to 1960. The commune mustered a work-army 10,000 strong, with the militia as mainstay, to build water conservancy projects. They dug 170 large and small channels, diverting Yellow River water to the fields of more than 30 of the brigades and ensuring basic security against drought.

Next came an all-out effort to dig 110 drainage ditches which were of great help against waterlogging. This was done in the three years, 1961-63, working through the winter and spring of each year.

The third campaign began in 1964. With the militia led by its cadres as its backbone, a specially organized force worked through five winters and springs to sink hundreds of pump wells.

The fourth campaign, which began in 1969, is still going on. The militia units of all the brigades have set up shock groups for long-term field construction jobs – such as levelling the land, substituting underground pipes for surface ditches in irrigation and drainage, lining earth-banked ditches with cement, and so on. ✓

Many sound suggestions for transforming nature are made by militia battalions and companies which have intimate knowledge of the terrain in their own brigades. They not only advance such proposals, but volunteer for the most arduous jobs in carrying them out. For instance, a reed pond north of Lotan was turned into a 60-mu paddy field at the local militia's suggestion, almost all of whose core members asked to join in the work. The leadership assigned forty crack young militiamen, under two platoon leaders, to the task.

They started by digging ditches two metres wide and one and a half metres deep to drain the pond and give an outlet to excess rain water. This was done in the early spring of 1972 when the ground was frozen to a depth of several inches and so hard that a hefty blow with a pickaxe made only a tiny white dent in the surface. Many trials produced a better way – carving up the frozen earth into squares and prying them loose one by one with a sturdy hooked lever they made specially for the purpose. Another hard job was to dig away the soil beneath the frozen layer, where the reed roots, as thick as a man's finger, reached down two or three feet. By the time the 800 metres of drainage ditches were completed, dozens of spades had been worn down or broken. At the end of this period, the militiamen planted some 2,000 poplars around the pond.

The next spring, 1973, a hundred or so militiamen were back on the job and, within ten days, removed all the reed roots in the pond. A few months later, rice shoots were growing luxuriantly in the 60-odd mu of fields reclaimed from its bed.

Today, the Lotan militia comrades take great pleasure in walking in the shade of the trees bordering those lush, green fields.

Learning from the PLA

The militia of Chenchuang village, like that of Lotan, was recently commended by the commune leadership. Over the past three years, this unit, led by the local Party branch, has kept on learning from the People's Liberation Army and become one of the best companies of the Chilying militia regiment.

Back in the winter of 1970, a PLA detachment on a long-distance training march stayed for a week in the Chilying commune. One company was billeted at Chenchuang. Wang Ching-ting, secretary of the Party branch there, assigned several militia cadres to arrange their quartering, and told the militia to make the best use of its opportunity to learn from the army.

From the moment they entered the village, the PLA men began doing good deeds for the people. Every day they swept the streets and helped the peasants to carry water or keep the fires going in their kitchen stoves. Army medics, as soon as they came, inquired if anyone in the village was ill, and went to treat patients in their homes. The fighters helped the commune members cart manure, and remade a twisting bumpy village street into a straight and well-surfaced one. All this was accomplished in breaks between their military drills.

One day when it was snowing, the militiamen were puzzled to see the PLA taking their cooking utensils into the open and building a makeshift stove-pit. "Why cook



The PLA helps train the commune's militia, which now has over 15,000 members.



A commune cadre briefs a militia unit on the situation at home and abroad.

Three generations in the militia. Ma Hsueh-jang (foreground) on the rifle range with his father and niece. All belong to the Liuchuang battalion.



in the open on a day like this?" they asked. A fighter grinned and replied, "Could we cook indoors on a battlefield?"

Militiamen were also struck by the fact that fighters coaching them in bayonet practice always took off their gloves when demonstrating the movements, despite the biting wind.

Gradually they realized that the army did everything with actual combat conditions in mind. Hence, the rigour and toughness of their training.

It was with tears in their eyes that the Chenchuang militiamen saw off the PLA company, now their close friends. They kept recalling the many good deeds of the fighters and determined to emulate their fine outlook and style of work.

Chiao Ching-chang, leader of the third militia platoon, had been pondering for some time how to do more good deeds for the people on the model of the PLA. In the spring of 1971, with Chiao in the lead, the platoon decided to use its spare time to reclaim some waste land near the village, plant it to cotton and look after the crop. The entire output was delivered to the production brigade. On the strength of their example, other men and women of the militia, elderly commune members and even children also reclaimed every available small patch of waste land. In 1972, 2,000 jin of ginned cotton from these plots was added to the regular harvest.

The Chenchuang militia also followed the example of the People's Liberation Army by stressing hard and tenacious training. At the height of the summer heat, they persisted in drilling out in the sun, where a few minutes were enough to make one sweat all over. In

winter, they chose places covered with snow to practise marching, fighting from a prone position or crawling along the ground.

Among their stiffer exercises was an emergency assembly followed by a forced march in the dark. One winter night when every family in Chenchuang was fast asleep, a whistle sounded over the loudspeaker system. Three minutes later, the 110 core members of the militia had lined up on the village square. The deputy instructor announced, "An order has just come from the County People's Military Department. We are to proceed at once to an assembly point on the road between Chenchuang and Kouwang to prepare for an emergency mission." It took them only seven minutes to cover, in pitch darkness, the 600 metres to the designated place.

The county military cadre had phoned his order from the Kouwang brigade office. Replacing the receiver, he had dashed to the assembly point. But the militia had got there first, and its commander ran up and said snappily, "Chenchuang militia company reports arrival in good order."

"Where are they?" asked the cadre.

"Fall in!" the commander shouted crisply. In an instant, the militiamen and women, 110 in all, emerged from cover in the fields and formed in neat ranks on the road. The company was commended for its high sense of organization and speed in action. The drill was rated a success.

Back in the village, the militia commander turned on the light at the entrance to the production brigade office and lined up the men once more. Only then could it be seen that Party branch secretary Wang Ching-ting, who was ill at the time, was in the ranks.

In Chenchuang every militia member, from the Party secretary down to 16-year-old recruits, had put into action the fighting slogan: "Learn from the People's Liberation Army, make the drill ground our battlefield!"

IX

“Little Sungchuang,” No Longer Poor

Lively, sociable Yen Feng-mei moved over to live with her in-laws in Sungchuang village when she was married in 1968. At first she felt queer in this place. It was so small that wherever she stood on its only street, she could see the fields at either end. One day, noticing her standing there lost in thought, her neighbour, an old woman, said jokingly, “Our village isn’t like your old home. Just this single street, and one breath of wind blows right through it.”

People called it a street though it was less than a hundred metres long. Sungchuang had thirty households, tilling 320 mu of land. It was the smallest of the 38 production brigades of the Chilying commune, somewhat slightly referred to as “Little Sungchuang.”

Feng-mei was among the first few girls from outside to marry into Sungchuang. The hamlet was not only tiny but known for its poverty. Even the natives wanted to move to some better place, so who could expect girls from other villages to choose it for a home?

Before the liberation, a big landlord in Chilying township had run a vegetable farm here, known as “East Kitchen Garden.” The hamlet was made up of the households of his cruelly exploited labourers, nineteen of

which were still there when the land reform got under way in 1949. From its origin, the place was also sometimes called “Farmhand Village.”

In the old society, the village was sunk in utter poverty. Sometimes the only way to survive was to flee. In 1942, eight families left as famine refugees, and four others were forced to sell their children. For a time, less than ten households remained in the village.

After the liberation, Sungchuang moved forward much more slowly than other places. But this changed after the commune was set up, and especially after 1961. Some villagers who had left came back, and now there are 31 households, with 190 people.

Today, Sungchuang is the top production brigade in the Chilying People’s Commune in per-mu yield of grain and per-capita contribution to the state in both grain and cotton. Its fame has spread throughout Hsinhsiung County.

Rising Curve

Chi Chiu-wang is the secretary of the local Party branch which has led Sungchuang’s transformation into a new, socialist village. He himself is a well-known peasant expert in the growing of wheat. As such, he is a part-time instructor in the agricultural technical school of the Chilying commune and the Paichuan Agricultural Technical College of Honan Province, and has often been invited to lecture in other provinces. Only recently he addressed a meeting of 1,000 people at Peking’s famed Shuangchiao People’s Commune on ways of getting high wheat yields.

In 1961, when he was transferred back to Sungchuang from the commune's farm machinery plant, Chi was a carpenter with only a run-of-the-mill knowledge of farming. After seeing the rapid progress of Liuchuang, Chiliying and other villages in the commune following its formation, he applied to be reassigned to his own hamlet. "Why shouldn't our little Sungchuang achieve as much?" he thought, burning to play his part in helping it do so. The commune Party committee understood his feelings and admired his determination. So it acceded to his request.

Under the commune Party committee's leadership and relying on the initiative of all the Party and Youth League members, Chi led the commune members in Sungchuang in an all-out effort, sustained over more than ten years, to put an end to its backwardness. In the struggle, both the cadres and the rank and file developed their ability. Take Yen Feng-mei, mentioned earlier. Now a deputy secretary of the Party branch, she has become a good political worker. She leads the women in farm production and meticulously attends to problems of the villagers' everyday life. And it is largely due to her that Sungchuang has achieved rather good results in family planning.

Sungchuang's grain and cotton output has steadily risen year after year.

Overall, in the thirteen years from 1961 to 1973, its average per-mu yield of cotton increased threefold, and of grain six and a half times. Particularly noteworthy is the soaring leap in its wheat yield, from 100 to 1,120 jin per mu.

Increases in Grain and Cotton Yields
in Sungchuang, 1961-73
(In jin per mu)

	Cotton	Wheat	Food grains (wheat included)
1961	60	100	291
1962	80	155	354
1963	40	230	330
1964	81	280	610
1965	130	303	807
1966	143	355	812
1967	132	503	902
1968	176.8	613	1,322
1969	183	573	1,301
1970	190	751	1,318
1971	208	1,000	1,513
1972	145	1,050	1,500
1973	180	1,120	1,910

The constantly rising curve is convincing evidence of the villagers' uninterrupted revolutionary spirit. Revolution is a manifold struggle against class enemies, erroneous lines and ideas, and also against nature. Although there is not a single landlord or rich peasant in Sungchuang, class struggle and the struggle between the two lines still exist. They manifest themselves in various ways and at times become very acute.

The Sungchuang Party branch has done a good job of educating the villagers in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, guiding them in a continuous advance along the socialist road in accordance with Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

The First Step

It was in the autumn of 1961 that Chi Chiu-wang returned to his home village. Immediately afterwards, he met with its other Party members for several evenings on end in a small hut. Together they recalled the path Sungchuang had traversed. The main reason for its lagging behind, they concluded, was that the village Party organization had failed to carry out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in earnest.

In the spring of that year, Liu Shao-chi sent some people to Chiliying to push his line. Under the pretext of stimulating greater enthusiasm for production, they allotted some of the best land owned by the collective to individual families, introduced material incentives everywhere, and encouraged reclamation of waste land for private use. This evil wind also blew to Sungchuang, seriously undermining the consolidation and development of the collective economy. Under its influence for example, a middle peasant, while refusing to do work for the brigade, went to open up five mu of waste land to grow crops for himself.

The Sungchuang Party branch, with Chi Chiu-wang as the secretary, stood firm in the teeth of this foul wind. Party members and poor and lower-middle peasants gathered together to study Chairman Mao's theses: **"Never forget class struggle"** and **"Only socialism can save China."** On the basis of these studies and recalling the bitter past, they realized that only by sticking firmly to the socialist road would Sungchuang be able to shake off completely its poverty and backwardness. Later, a few members who had departed from the collective road re-

turned to it, and several of those who had reclaimed waste land turned it back voluntarily to the brigade.

The Party branch organized its members to visit the other villagers for heart-to-heart talks. They made big efforts to publicize among them Chairman Mao's teachings on self-reliance and hard struggle, and his thesis **"Poverty gives rise to the desire for change, the desire for action and the desire for revolution."**

Citing the examples of the Liuchuang and Chiliying brigades, the Party members reasoned with their fellow villagers, "They are production brigades and so are we. How is it that in the few years since the commune was formed, they've turned its advantages to good account and taken on a new look, while we haven't? Surely the superiority of the commune can work in our favour as well as in theirs. This superiority produces rich fruit provided people are willing to work and go all out along Chairman Mao's line."

But some villagers, influenced by Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line, had fallen into the wrong thinking of relying exclusively on help from the commune and the state. These people's lack of confidence was reflected in the comment of one person who said that with only forty able-bodied workers, seven draught animals and no machines, he couldn't see what could be accomplished.

"We mustn't bow before poverty," Chi answered. "With forty pairs of hands, we can certainly get something done by doing as Chairman Mao teaches. The other brigades' tractors didn't drop from the sky, after all. What we need is more spirit. It doesn't help to rely on others – self-reliance is the best way. You have some doubts, but why not try it and see?"

Gradually the revolutionary drive of the masses was aroused, and they prepared for battle. The Party branch decided on the first target, the 48 mu of weed-choked waste north of the village. For years the local people had been unable to muster sufficient strength to open up this piece of land, overgrown with rushes whose roots went deep underground. No crop could be grown there while those roots remained.

Early in 1962, the attack was launched, the villagers dug away at the grass roots in the bitter cold, not giving up even when the wind rose to a gale and the ground froze solid as rock. Party members Tung Fu-yun and Chi Chiu-fa were always in the lead. None of the villagers wavered or complained even when their feet were frost-bitten and their hands deeply cracked from the constant jarring impact of the spades against the granite-hard earth. Lu Yen-mei, a woman commune member already in her fifties who was slight in build but strong in resolve, announced she would stick with the task till it was finished. She was as good as her word, and kept on the job from dawn to dusk for over forty days.

Thanks to such determined effort, fully 25 tons of roots were dug up and the newly reclaimed land was planted to cotton that same year, producing the very fair yield of 70 jin per mu. Following on this effort, the Party branch organized the villagers, now full of enthusiasm, to improve a dozen mu of saline land, and bring all their land under intensive cultivation.

The first success came in 1962 when per-mu yields in the Sungchuang brigade rose to 80 jin for cotton and 354 jin for grain. Today, such figures would be considered low there. But at that time, after years in which things had moved very slowly, it represented real progress and

kindled high hopes. It also enabled the brigade to begin accumulating a public fund and buy some machines and draught animals.

In the next few years, Sungchuang put a great deal of effort into building water conservancy works, levelling land and other field construction. The village became a hive of activity.

Confidence Plus Modesty

Though advancing more rapidly than before, Sungchuang was still far behind Liuchuang.

To help the ordinary brigades and especially those that lagged behind, the Party committee of Chiliying commune raised the slogan, "Learn from Tachai and catch up with Liuchuang." It organized visits for their cadres to Tachai, the national pace-setter in agriculture, and for the rank and file to Liuchuang to look and see what they could apply in their own brigades.

Most of the Sungchuang villagers, with the successful experience of reclaiming the waste behind them, responded favourably to the commune's call. But a few still lacked confidence. "How can we think of catching up with Liuchuang?" they asked. "If we can follow a certain distance behind, that'll be pretty good already. Why, even the average run of villagers there outmatch our cadres."

These were pretty harsh words, but there was some basis for them. The Liuchuang brigade had been in the front ranks for years and its rank-and-file members stood high in socialist consciousness and revolutionary zeal. Every year, a dozen or so of them were invited by neigh-

bouring counties as technicians to pass on their experience in grain and cotton growing. By contrast, even the cadres at Sungchuang had no successful experience to hand on.

"It's true we've been behind all these years," Chi Chiu-wang said. "So it's inevitable that some people here should doubt their own ability. But let's not give up or slow down. Sure there are things we don't know, but we can learn. Especially if we are modest, like beginners in school."

Fortunately, Liuchuang was only three kilometres off. Chi Chiu-wang and the other Party cadres often went there to earnestly acquire knowledge. The cadres and villagers in Liuchuang willingly shared their experience. Sungchuang studied it continuously, adapting it to conditions at home. Over the next few years, Sungchuang's grain and cotton output rose rapidly. By 1967, its per-mu yield of grain was up to 902 jin, or 7 jin higher than Liuchuang's.

Little Sungchuang's advance from the rear to the forefront shook the whole commune. Citing Sungchuang's success, the commune leadership encouraged other lag-gard brigades to do the same.

People from other places began to come to Sungchuang for a look. Merit banners and certificates of commendation awarded by the commune, county and prefecture covered the wall of the Sungchuang brigade's office.

Sungchuang by now had got over its lack of self-confidence. But the opposite evil, complacency and self-satisfaction, began to raise their heads. Some people kept saying that its grain yield was not only ahead of Liuchuang's, but no lower than Tachai's. Others harped on the fact that its per-capita contribution of cotton to the state also exceeded Liuchuang's. Their tone was smug.

The Party branch promptly organized a general discussion among Sungchuang's commune members as to whether enough had really been done to "learn from Tachai and catch up with Liuchuang."

Here is what they concluded: Tachai lies in the mountains, Sungchuang on the plains. Tachai has a short frost-free period, and can grow only one crop a year. Sungchuang's climate allows for two crops a year. But even with double-cropping, Sungchuang got only about a dozen jin of grain more than Tachai from each mu of land. There was no reason to be conceited, rather the contrary. Moreover, the basic thing to learn from Tachai was the way it kept to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and its exemplary spirit. In this respect, how could one ever learn enough?

As for comparison with Liuchuang, there was still much to be learned from its more meticulous and effective work in cotton sowing and field management. In fact, Sungchuang was still thirty jin behind it in the yield of cotton per mu.

Summing up the discussion, Secretary Chi said, "We have no cause at all to be complacent. Chairman Mao teaches, **'Modesty helps one to go forward, whereas conceit makes one lag behind. This is a truth we must always bear in mind.'** Everyone of us, I dare say, knows this quotation by heart. Now let's make it our guide in action."

Soon afterwards, groups of cadres and members went to observe Liuchuang's cotton fields. They found the average number of bolls per plant to be greater than in their own fields. Since the density in both villages was 5,000 plants per mu, Liuchuang's cotton output was naturally higher.

Analysis showed that where the same method of cultivation was used, the smaller number of bolls per plant in Sungchuang was due to lower soil fertility. They decided to try and make up the difference by putting on more fertilizer and increasing the number of plants per mu from 5,000 to 6,800.

In August 1968, when the cotton was ripening, the commune arranged for exchanges of visits between the various brigades, for a mutual check-up of work. It was still true that each plant in Liuchuang bore, on the average, two bolls more than in Sungchuang. But the latter brigade was growing over 1,000 more plants on each mu. That autumn, the per-mu yield in both villages was 176 jin of ginned cotton. To be very precise, Sungchuang's averaged four-fifths of a jin more than Liuchuang's.

But even though it had overtaken Liuchuang in both grain and cotton, Sungchuang kept on searching for weak points where it still lagged behind and taking the necessary measures for further advance.

Revolutionary Optimism

Chi Chiu-wang is a cheerful man not given to dizziness with success or frustration over setbacks. His face never appears clouded with worry. Whenever the commune Party committee confers how to cope with some difficulty, he has positive suggestions to offer. "Troubles shrink before Chiu-wang" is how people describe the effect of his revolutionary optimism. This remark first gained currency during the battle against the 1969 cold wave.

The Chiliying commune had gathered a bumper harvest in 1968. But in the early spring of 1969, a strong cold wave moving down from Siberia brought temperatures to 15° C. below zero. Most of the commune's wheat was seriously affected.

Chiu Chi-yu, secretary of the commune Party committee, cycled through all its brigades to investigate. He was very distressed by the obvious extent of the damage. But he brightened up at seeing the Sungchuang brigade vigorously hoeing its wheat.

Going up to brigade Party Secretary Chi Chiu-wang, who was working alongside the other villagers, he asked, "Is your wheat badly frosted?"

"Yes, some plants have been killed."

"But everybody's spirit seems pretty high!"

"Sure, our Party branch called a general meeting of the brigade to boost it."

"Good! Tell me how you did it."

It turned out that when Sungchuang was first hit by the cold, some people there, too, had become disheartened. But most kept their heads, and Chi Chiu-wang was as high-spirited as ever. When the Party branch met to discuss what to do, his suggestion was: Raise mass morale and take the right steps to remedy the situation.

At the mass meeting that followed, Chiu-wang told the villagers how Tachai had beaten a hailstorm in 1968. Though half their crops were ruined, the people there never wavered, but found ways to overcome the crisis. No one had ever heard of transplanting millet, but they had the courage to try, using seedlings which other communes had thinned out from their fields. As a result, their crop that year averaged 800 jin per mu, about 30 per cent higher than in a normal good year. Moreover, developing

the lessons of this experience, Tachai began to transplant millet seedlings to fields from which wheat had just been reaped, making them yield two crops annually instead of one. "We should thank that hailstorm," said Chen Yung-kuai, then Tachai's Party branch secretary. "It gave us courage to reform our whole system of farming."

"If the Tachai people could turn such a bad thing into a good thing, what about us?" asked Chi Chiu-wang. "The greater the difficulties, the more we have to learn from Tachai's unyielding spirit."

Seeking clues from local experience, he and his fellow villagers recalled a spell of bad weather in 1953. Then, too, Sungchuang's wheat had suffered from severe cold. But some of the frozen plants had put out new side shoots as late as May. This showed that so long as the roots of the seedlings remained alive, there was still hope for them.

The decision of the meeting was to try and save the stricken plants by loosening the soil and applying quick-acting fertilizer.

Commune Party Secretary Chiu Chi-yu was very satisfied with what he had heard at Sungchuang. Cycling back to the commune office in soaring spirits, he immediately arranged a telephone conference to pass the word to other brigades and urge them to learn from Tachai the way Sungchuang had.

That year (1969), despite the unseasonable frost, Sungchuang's per-mu yield of wheat came to 573 jin, only 40 jin less than in 1968. The commune as a whole also got a fairly good harvest. Chi Chiu-wang said he had learned much from the struggle. "Though people call me an optimist," he confessed, "I, too, thought we'd be doing all right if we could reap 200-300 jin per mu and feed

ourselves after a cold wave like that. Well, things turned out a lot better. Truly, the masses are the real heroes. So long as we cadres can steer a firm course in the storm, they'll always break through the waves and keep advancing."

The Power to Climb New Heights

Mountain climbers know from experience: the higher you climb, the harder the going. It's the same with farming. When output has risen to a certain point, it takes more work and greater tenacity to boost it a notch higher.

By 1970, Sungchuang's per-mu yield of cotton was up to 190 jin, of wheat to 751 jin, and of all grains (including wheat, maize, millet, etc.) to 1,318 jin. These were fairly high figures. But the commune members were not content; they wanted to go much higher. This called for more strenuous effort. It also meant that, like mountaineers, they would have to set up a camp first, making proper preparations, and then throw all their energy into the new ascent.

Accordingly, before embarking on its plan for even higher yields in 1971, the Sungchuang Party branch called a joint meeting of the Party members and Communist Youth Leaguers. They were asked to say plainly what they thought, list the real difficulties in the way and discuss how to deal with them.

One of the problems was that the higher the output, the more manpower would be needed. Sungchuang had already bought some machines — a tractor, threshers, crushers and water sprayers for "man-made rain." But with the wheat crop double what it was four years before,

the amount of labour needed for reaping and sunning, threshing and storing the grain had also doubled.

Besides, any new rise in output required new farming techniques and more careful management. The Sung-chuang people were already very meticulous in their wheat growing. Their practice was to harrow the fields as many as twenty times before sowing, something unheard of elsewhere. Even more intensive work, and consequently more manpower, would be needed to push production up further.

Discussion among the Party and Youth League members brought the realization that to get constantly higher output, more was needed than just hard and ingenious effort. The main thing was to be clear on the aim, which was not just to live better oneself but to make ever greater contributions to the socialist motherland and to the revolution.

Then, the brigade leadership proposed a plan for increased production in 1971. It set goals of 200 jin per mu for cotton, and 900 jin for wheat. This was discussed by the entire membership in several groups. The discussion was smooth, except in one group made up mostly of young people, some of them rather quick-tempered.

Chi Chiu-kuan, a middle-aged member of this group, burst out after hearing the planned figures. "Why do we set them so high? Aren't we just looking for trouble?" The young people argued back, almost to the point of quarrelling. Party Secretary Chi Chiu-wang came in and suggested that the meeting adjourn to another day. He asked the doubter to go to his home for a heart-to-heart talk.

He knew that Chi Chiu-kuan was a hard worker, but that he was not keeping abreast of the developing situation. So he praised him for his good work, and at the same time patiently helped him to look farther ahead.

Together they recalled how things were in the past. Their village had remained poor up to the establishment of the commune. No wonder that some people's main motive in raising productivity was to secure their own livelihood. "But now things are different," said Chi Chiu-wang. "One year's harvest brings two years' food – we wouldn't starve even if we rested for a year. So what should be our motive for still higher yields? Like our worker brothers, we are working to build our great motherland into a powerful socialist country and give support to all labouring people in the world who are not yet emancipated. Sungchuang is just a small place. But we, too, should do our bit. . . ."

That night, Chi Chiu-wang explained many things to this peasant. He helped him to broaden his vision from his own family to the commune, the country, and the entire world. Seeing him off, he said, "Chairman Mao teaches us, '**China ought to have made a greater contribution to humanity.**' Study the meaning of this when you get home."

That year, the targets for increased grain and cotton output were not only fulfilled but overfulfilled.

The idea of farming for the revolution is taking ever deeper root in the hearts of the people of Sungchuang. With the lofty aim of making an ever greater contribution to the motherland and all mankind, they are working unceasingly to conquer new heights in the production of grain and cotton.

X

A Young Team Leader Matures

One day four years ago, Lu Shu-mo, Party secretary of the Chiliying Production Brigade, ran into 21-year-old Liu Wan-chen, work-point recorder for the 29th Production Team. Young Liu turned out to be dissatisfied with conditions in his team. "But," he said, "I'll never believe our team can't do better!" Lu Shu-mo gave the lean, energetic youth a smile that deeply creased his weather-beaten face.

Fiftyish and of medium height, in a homespun jacket and with a pipe in his mouth, Lu Shu-mo looks the ordinary straightforward, unaffected peasant. But people well acquainted with him know his keen political insight. He has been a cadre since the land reform movement that followed the liberation. He was among the pioneers of the movement for agricultural co-operation in this region, and served as the first chairman of the Chiliying commune when it was set up in 1958. Throughout the quarter-century since the liberation, he has firmly upheld Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, leading the local people in struggles against class enemies, wrong political lines and natural disasters. All this has given him high prestige among the commune members.

Today, Lu Shu-mo is concurrently deputy secretary of the Chiliying commune Party committee and a member of the standing committee of the Revolutionary Committee of Honan Province. He was a delegate to both the Ninth and Tenth National Congresses of the Communist Party of China, in 1969 and 1973.

Though Lu Shu-mo holds several concurrent posts, he gives his main attention to the work of the Chiliying brigade. This brigade carries great weight in the whole commune, being its largest and accounting for one-seventh of its land and population. Its grain and cotton output is naturally a considerable factor in the commune total.

To run such a big brigade is not easy. It cannot be done without a group of able and politically dedicated cadres. An important success of the Chiliying brigade in the past few years has been the speedy maturing of such good cadres, especially from the ranks of the local youth. Its general Party branch now has a deputy secretary who is only 25, and is also the youngest member of the commune Party committee. Most of the Party branches giving leadership to its 34 teams also have from one to three people under thirty serving as secretary or deputy secretaries. Generally, about a third of the cadres in the leading bodies of both brigade and teams are in this age group.

Under the guidance of Lu Shu-mo and similar cadres, the Chiliying brigade leapt into the advanced ranks in 1969.

However, in all things, "one divides into two." Whatever is advanced also contains backward aspects. "Even one's ten fingers can't all be the same length," as the Chinese adage says. A few of the 34 production teams in the brigade continued to lag behind, and the 29th, to which

young Liu Wan-chen belonged, was one of them. Because it had long lacked a strong leading body, and especially a good team head, its production was low. After the setting up of the commune, its crop yields had increased, but rather slowly. In 1969, when the average cotton yield in the brigade was already 150-160 jin per mu, with the highest over 200 jin, the 29th team was still getting only 97 jin.

Lu Shu-mo had often gone to the 29th team, trying to help it forward. It was on one of these trips that he met Liu Wan-chen. Afterwards, his mind resounded with the words of the determined young man, "I'll never believe our team can't do better!" How precious was this revolutionary enthusiasm for change, as compared with the flat passiveness of some cadres! Lu Shu-mo cast his mind back to his earlier encounters with Wan-chen. Though the youngster was still in senior middle school then, his comments on persons and events showed that he had not lost his bearings in the complicated class struggles during the Cultural Revolution. Clearly, he was fairly high in political consciousness.

At the beginning of 1970, the Party branch drew up a list of people to be promoted to cadre posts. It was compiled on the basis of investigation by Lu Shu-mo and others, including a canvass of mass opinion. Liu Wan-chen's name was put first, as most members considered him straight, disinterested and bold in thought and action. Only a few worried lest he might be too inexperienced for a team leader, having left school only the year before. But foremost in Shu-mo's mind was Chairman Mao's repeated stress on the principle of selecting and training new cadres and revolutionary successors from among the youth. A good sapling should be encouraged to mature,

he concluded. Let Wan-chen grow in ability and political consciousness on the job.

When Wan-chen proved hesitant about his own fitness to lead a team, Shu-mo warmly encouraged him. "You're better equipped than I was when I became a cadre during the land reform," he said. "I couldn't read or write then. In fact, I could hardly understand what speakers at district or county meetings were saying. After listening to them for half a day, I could only report back a couple of sentences to the people at home. You've got the advantage there. Just learn through practice, and be ready to correct any mistakes you make. What's there to be scared of?"

Wan-chen said he was afraid only of messing up the team through inexperience. Shu-mo smiled. "Inexperience can be overcome by learning modestly from others," he said. "Don't worry if you make some mis-steps at the start. The team's in such a bad state now, you won't make it any worse."

When Wan-chen took over the team, its collective property was pitifully small – six old oxen, two sick mules and two rickety carts. It had no accumulated funds at all. Instead, it had borrowed over 7,000 yuan from the credit co-operative.

Lu Shu-mo came personally to chair the new team committee's first meeting. He had brought a copy of **Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung**, and asked Wan-chen to read out the article "Introducing a Co-operative." In it, Chairman Mao commended the Yingchu Agricultural Producers' Co-operative in Fengchiu County, Honan Province, which had relied on its own strength, brought collective wisdom into full play in a bitter struggle against natural disasters and achieved a

radical change from its former backwardness within a short two years.

When Wan-chen had finished reading, Shu-mo asked him, "What's the main point?" The young man answered with a phrase from Chairman Mao, "**Poverty gives rise to the desire for change, the desire for action and the desire for revolution.**"

"Correct!" said Shu-mo, and called for discussion. It proved lively and the general opinion at the end was: "That co-op changed its situation in two years. Why can't we change ours in three or five?"

Shu-mo, in conclusion, advised the new committee to rely on the masses, welcome expression of views by the rank and file and practise self-criticism. He asked the older members to help Wan-chen, as he was young and inexperienced. The meeting infused the committeemen with confidence and zest.

Democracy and Reliance on the Masses

It was spring, and time to irrigate the wheat sprouts. Wan-chen, bursting with energy, led a group of commune members out to do this job, joining the night shift. In the daytime, after assigning work to the commune members, he helped to cart manure and level the fields. In those months, he was always out in front doing the hardest work and he made fairly strict demands on the others as well. However, he soon became aware that some commune members lacked enthusiasm, and many complaints came to his ears.

What was he doing wrong? In a search for the defects in his own work, he called a meeting to ask the team



Chi Chiu-wang (2nd from right), brigade Party secretary, makes an estimate of the coming wheat crop with fellow villagers in Sungchuang, which had miserable harvests before the liberation but now leads the entire commune in grain yields.



Party Secretary Lu Shu-mo (front) of the Chiliying brigade, a delegate to the Ninth and Tenth Congresses of the Chinese Communist Party, goes out to work with young commune members.



These young commune farmers still remember how, as toddlers in Chiliying's kindergarten, they welcomed Chairman Mao during his visit in 1958.

Liu Wan-chen (left foreground), 25-year-old team leader in the Chiliying brigade who matured under the personal guidance of older cadres, is now studying at the Institute of Agricultural Mechanization, LoYang.



All Sungchuang's fields are now irrigated or sprayed with "man-made rain."



committee. At first, nobody replied. Only after more requests for criticism by Wan-chen did Tu Fa-tai break the ice.

"As a team leader, you should be more thoughtful. The other day when people were out loosening the soil to help the cotton seed sprout, you didn't suggest that they knock off till two in the afternoon. You've someone at home to cook for you, but there are people who haven't. Why didn't you think of that?"

"Another thing, pay attention to how you criticize. Don't bawl people out," added the store-room keeper.

When most of the committee had spoken, the leader of the women's group suggested a prompt general meeting of the team to discuss and arrange the work, since the busiest time for summer harvesting, planting and field management was approaching. Wan-chen accepted both the criticisms and this suggestion in a modest spirit.

At the general meeting, Wan-chen summarized the team's recent work and sincerely criticized his own shortcomings. The members were satisfied. Some said that Wan-chen and other cadres had done a lot for the team, and everyone in it should work better and give them more support. Following Wan-chen's example, some members made self-criticisms of their own.

In discussing the shortage of labour power for the approaching busy season, many good suggestions were made. It was proposed that a nursery be set up during the harvest period, so more women could go to the fields. Several women said they would arrange their housework better so as to have more time for participation in farming. That year, the 29th team gathered in its wheat crop quickly, and followed up with thorough gleaning. The cotton fields were better managed too.

Through these two meetings, Wan-chen came to understand the necessity of promoting democracy and relying on the masses. He began to make frequent visits to team members' homes, to talk with them and ask their opinions about the work. They spoke with him freely and enthusiastically, warmly supported him, and helped him to give effective leadership.

That year, thanks to everyone's hard effort, the 29th team's grain yield rose from the previous year's 540 jin per mu to 728 jin, and ginned cotton from 97 jin per mu to 140 jin. Annual average income per capita went up by 18 per cent. The team not only managed to pay off its debt to the credit co-op, but bought a mule and a new rubber-tyred cart.

The situation in the 29th team kept on improving. Wan-chen, however, had grown thin and gaunt from long-sustained hard work. The spring of 1971 found him confined to bed with a frost-bitten leg. But his thought never left the work of the team. He talked constantly with the members and asked a comrade to pedal him out on a tricycle to see how the crops were growing.

Learning Modestly from Others

Whenever Wan-chen ran into difficulties or problems, he would seek Shu-mo's advice. In the early spring of 1971, the team needed chemical fertilizer but was short of money. Wan-chen asked for Shu-mo's opinion. The latter inquired about the team's recent expenditures, then said, "Your team isn't rich, and just starting to improve. Better not to overspend. It seems to me you've bought

too much lately. It won't do not to lay something by for emergencies." He suggested more careful budgeting.

On overcoming the lack of fertilizer, Shu-mo gave concrete advice suitable to this poor team's situation. It had little money but plenty of labour power. Why not go to work and tear down some old village houses that needed replacing anyhow? Their clay walls, permeated with potassium, would make fine fertilizer. If their owners agreed, the team could also assign people to help them build new ones. This suggestion was carried out, providing the team with 400 cartloads of potassium-rich clay. With the bone meal bought the year before, and compost prepared by the members, the team met its fertilizer needs without any cash outlay.

Wan-chen learned just as earnestly from the old, experienced peasants. Before liberation, most people in the team had grown vegetables and melons, only a few were skilled grain farmers. Liu Chuan-tsung, now a stockman, was one of these, and Wan-chen made a habit of consulting him. Each year, when the wheat was ripening, old Liu would find some free time to cycle around the wheat fields, look at the crop, then advise Wan-chen on which field to harvest first and which to leave for a few more days.

The 6th team was one of the foremost in the brigade. Its leader, Lu Ming-ke, was concerned about how the 29th team was getting on. He was eager to give help but didn't know how to offer it. So when Wan-chen came to consult him, he was only too glad to give a hand. Lu Ming-ke, who had been organizing and leading farm work for twenty years, shared all his experience with this eager young man.

Firmly Grasping Class Struggle

The 29th team had only 36 households, but in a few of them there were one or more class enemies of various kinds — old landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements or Rightists.

In the spring of 1970, talking with Wan-chen about the work in his team, Shu-mo asked how these elements were behaving. Wan-chen, who had been concentrating on the sowing, answered offhand, "Nothing seems to be up."

"Nothing?" Shu-mo queried, then added gravely, "It won't do to neglect class struggle or relax your grasp on it. As a team leader, you ought to keep an eye on class enemies and know who among them is creating trouble."

After being thus alerted, Wan-chen paid close attention not only to production matters, but also to the trends in class struggle brought to his attention by the members.

One day towards the end of May 1970, a cart belonging to the 3rd team, pulled by a big newly-bought mule, sped past the cotton field where the 29th team was at work. Liu Ming-chen, an ex-landlord in the latter, remarked sarcastically, "Look how smart they are, buying such a beautiful mule! Our poor team'll never be able to do that!"

This happened soon after the membership meeting called by the new team committee, in a situation in which most members were enthusiastic about improving the team, but a few still lacked confidence and took a wait-and-see attitude. Liu Ming-chen's sneer was clearly a deliberate attempt to dampen enthusiasm. "This crafty landlord is trying to deflate us," some members said angrily. Investigating, Wan-chen found that this class enemy had

behaved badly several times in the past. He called a mass meeting the very next day to denounce him.

In fact, Liu the landlord had never stopped playing tricks. Way back in 1953, he had spread lies and slanders in an attempt to sabotage the planned purchase and marketing of grain by the state* and sour relations between the state and the peasants. And as late as the spring of 1966, he had gone crying to the Party branch secretary that his family didn't have enough grain to eat because they lacked labour power, and the team had given him a grain allotment from stores kept for help to the few families encountering such difficulties. In fact, he had been faking. Not long after that, when the Cultural Revolution began, and the Red Guards were denouncing the crimes of landlords and rich peasants, a check-up disclosed 500 jin of grain cached away in Liu's house.

Wan-chen did not know of these things. He had either been too young or away at school when they happened. So the denunciation meeting was a good lesson in class education for him as well as for other members, especially the young people of his own age.

In the autumn of 1970, the team assigned some members to cut grass for green manure. Turning out one early morning, they were surprised to find the cart of the women's group leader, Wang Teh-ying, already filled. She had worked all night by the light of the moon. The members were deeply moved to see a cadre so devotedly taking the lead to improve the team's situation. From that day, they too started work early and knocked off late, collecting as much grass as they could. All except Liu Chuan-wu, whose father had been a landlord. He

* See "Rural Commerce," p. 102 of this book.

used the time to gather rushes which, according to a team member, he used to take home in the evening to his father to make rain capes for private use. Wan-chen first checked the facts, then criticized Liu Chuan-wu. He urged the young man to draw a line between himself and the old landlord, not to fall in with the latter's reactionary political thinking. At a general meeting, Liu Chuan-wu admitted his mistake and the team members severely criticized the landlord, holding that though the son had made the mistake, the root lay with the father, who had set him on the wrong track. At the same meeting, the members praised Wang Teh-ying for her exemplary action of cutting grass at night.

Such meetings not only exposed the class enemy. They also educated the cadres and members. As a result, healthy attitudes flourished, bad trends declined, and the members became more enthusiastic in work. Previously, a man would take a day to hoe a mu of land. Now the daily average rose by half or more, and the hoeing was deeper.

The Line Is What Counts

The 29th team began without a strong mule or a decent cart. Its fields were rather far from the village, and the rickety oxcarts which were its only transport took half a day to deliver a load of manure there. It really made people burn up with impatience.

In the spring of 1970, the team bought a mare and her foal from the state, at the low cost price of 700 yuan. But the members thought a horse was weaker than a mule for carting, so several months later the mare and

foal were sold at a rural fair for 1,480 yuan. Wan-chen used the money to buy chemical fertilizer and insecticide. His plan was to purchase a mule after selling the cotton crop.

Hearing about these transactions, Shu-mo criticized Wan-chen severely, "You're always talking about Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. But what line were you following when you bought cheap and sold dear?"

"But we fed those two animals for months and the mare was much fatter and the foal much bigger when we sold them," Wan-chen retorted.

"Sure you fed them, so what?" Shu-mo asked. "Our Chiliying was inspected by Chairman Mao. People say, 'Learn from Chiliying.' If we do such things, what'll they learn from us?"

Shu-mo spent some time patiently explaining to Wan-chen that whenever questions arose, it was necessary to analyze them with the ideological and political line as the main criterion. Any ideas, words and actions deviating from socialism were wrong. His buying cheap and selling at a profit, for instance, was a capitalist tendency, and wrong. So were any actions that sacrificed public interest to the private, or injured others for one's own benefit. All were at odds with Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

Wan-chen took this lesson to heart. Afterwards, before making a decision, he would first think carefully which course conformed to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

In 1971, a team member kept suggesting that it should use more land for squash because it fetched a high price. Wan-chen refused, insisting on planting the assortment of crops required by the unified plans of the commune and brigade.

In rural China today, the areas allotted for different crops are based on the overall national plan. The state proposes such figures for each region in conformity with the nationwide needs of socialist construction and the people's livelihood and with local conditions. The figures are finalized after considering amendments suggested by the regions. After that, though minor local adjustments are still permissible, the planting plan must be carried out at all levels from the provinces and counties down to the communes, brigades and teams.

Wan-chen knew that if every production team should choose to plant crops other than those required by the state, going simply by what would bring in more money, the country's socialist planned economy would be disrupted. He explained to the man who had pushed the wrong suggestion, that whether one supported socialist planned economy or went in for anarchic capitalist production was a fundamental question of line and of choice between the socialist and the capitalist roads. "It's a major issue of right or wrong," he said, "on which we must not be muddled!"

Headed by Wan-chen, the members of the 29th team eventually overcame its backwardness. By 1971, its yields were above the median in the brigade. In a period of just over three years, it bought three mules, a donkey, three rubber-tyred carts, and some farming machines and processing equipment. In its newly built granary were 10,000 jin of collective reserve grain.

In the meantime, Wan-chen had been accepted as a member of the Chinese Communist Party. And, in the summer of 1973, on the recommendation of the poor and lower-middle peasants and with the approval of the

brigade, he was enrolled at the Loyang College of Agricultural Mechanization after passing an entrance examination. The team members saw Liu off with mixed feelings. They were glad that such a fine young man would get further training in a college. But they hated to part with him when the team had just taken the first steps to prosperity under his leadership. Lu Shu-mo said, in persuasion, "Let him go. Of course, the team needs him. But the country needs him more." As always, though living and working at Chiliying, Shu-mo had all China and the world in his mind.

On many a night over the years, he has pondered Chairman Mao's words, "**In order to guarantee that our Party and country do not change their colour, we must not only have a correct line and correct policies but must train and bring up millions of successors who will carry on the cause of proletarian revolution.**"

In August 1973, this old cadre went to Peking as a delegate to the Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Joining the vote of approval on the Congress documents, he was very happy and moved – particularly when the necessity for training successors for the cause of proletarian revolution was included in the new Party Constitution.

Today, with the help of the older generation of revolutionaries, millions of young people like Liu Wan-chen are maturing in China, working actively in every sphere. They are like the sun at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, full of hope and vigour. On them socialist China's future depends.

XI

Peasant Art Group

China's traditional Spring Festival was near. The telephone in the Chilying brigade office rang incessantly. By contrast with ordinary times, most of the calls concerned stage performances, ball games or film shows by the commune's film projectionists. During the festival period, recreation, entertainment and sports are at their peak. It is not unusual for local teams to play two or three basketball and table-tennis matches a day against those of nearby brigades, factories or People's Liberation Army units. Things are even busier for the brigade's amateur art group. It not only gives a variety of performances on the spot, but also goes out to PLA units, factories and brother brigades.

Doing It Themselves

One night in late 1973, in the pre-Spring Festival period, the brightly lit commune auditorium was packed with 2,000 avid spectators. Besides commune members, they included a detachment of troops passing through Chilying on a long-distance training march. What held them spellbound was a short Honan opera newly composed and staged by the group.

An old woman came on stage, patting down her hair and straightening her tunic. Her walk, gestures and manner were like those of any old mother in the village. Only the face, though carefully made up, betrayed the youth of the actress. She walked to the edge of the stage and, smiling, sang:

The rain is over, the sun is out,
My son's coming home to get married;
With his wedding my happiness'll be complete,
Preparing it I've run myself off my feet.

She sang in a melodious, high-pitched voice, every word clear and ringing. This, with her expressive eyes and movements, held the audience. Suddenly someone broke into applause. It was a young PLA fighter sitting near the stage, unable to contain his appreciation of the way she sang his favourite Honan opera airs. Only when a comrade tugged at his sleeve did he realize he was clapping at the wrong time.

In the role of the old woman was Ma Yen-chin, aged 21, who had joined the art group at 16 as one of its earliest members. In these few years, she has become a skilled cotton and wheat grower, as well as a good actress, singer and dancer. She renders Peking opera, Honan opera and other styles with a professional touch. Hardly a performance by the theatre group takes place without her participation. Her father, an ordinary commune member, is an opera-lover. Often, after seeing her perform, he points to her where her acting has lacked form, or where she could have conveyed more feeling.

The operetta she appeared in, "Borrowing Bricks," dealt with a peasant family and the struggle within it between the old and new attitudes towards public and private interests. The plot was simple but the theme deep. The

performance was a success. "Well done!" the 50-year-old political commissar of the PLA detachment said cheerily to the commune and brigade cadres. "We saw an opera by a professional troupe a few days ago in a county town. Your amateurs aren't second to them."

Indeed, the Chiliying brigade's art group is one of the best among the ten or so in the commune. It is also popular among other communes in the area.

It has 29 members — leaders, actors and actresses, musicians, script-writers and stage designer. Except for the last, a middle-school teacher who once studied at an art college, all of them are ordinary commune members without professional training. Most are in their early twenties or younger. Yet their performances are always a big draw. People walk miles from their own villages to see them.

The group was founded in 1968 during the high tide of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In the ensuing years, it learned diligently and accumulated a varied repertoire of dramatic works including selections from the nationally popular model revolutionary Peking operas such as "Shachiapang," and "The Red Lantern." And on the basis of ideological and technical progress achieved through study of these models, the group's members themselves composed more than 200 songs, dances, operas, plays, ballads and dialogues.

Its performance of one of these compositions, "The Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants Celebrate the Party's Ninth National Congress," a musical recitative for women's voices, was transmitted on nationwide programmes by the Central People's Broadcasting Station in 1969. In October 1973, it took part in the Hsinhsiung Prefecture Theatrical Festival. There, two of its creations, "The East Wind

Brings Rain" and another short Honan opera, won wide approval.

Source of Art: The People's Life

Items composed by the group, having themes closely linked with the current situation and class struggles at home and abroad, are thus living and vital. Inquiry revealed that almost all originated from real happenings in the village.

Preparation against war is the theme of "The East Wind Brings Rain." Its young heroine, Hai-hua, is a typical member of the commune's militia who responds warmly to the call of the Party's Tenth Congress and trains hard against any war of aggression by imperialism or social-imperialism. But her brother, Hung-cheng, an outstanding militiaman in the past, is lulled by a false sense of peace, becomes conceited and is often absent from training. Here are some lines from this operetta:

Hai-hua: Where's your dummy rifle, Hung-cheng?

Hung-cheng: Rifle? (Hurries into his room and returns empty-handed.) I'm sure I put it at the foot of my bed. Why isn't it there?

Hai-hua: Here it is!

Hung-cheng: When did you take it?

Hai-hua: Found it this morning, under your bed, covered with dust.

Father: (sings)

Hung-cheng, wake up,
Rub your eyes clear

.....
Athwart our path of revolution,
Many still are the rushing torrents, the mountain barriers.

We should see not only the red flags waving everywhere,
But the continuing class struggle, and never relax in it.
Hai-hua: (sings)

The enemy is not willing to lay down his butcher knife,
How then can we allow our weapons to lie neglected?

The father urges him to follow the example of his sister. But Hung-cheng thinks that would be degrading. Didn't he himself teach her bayonet fighting? He challenges Hai-hua to a bout, feeling sure of victory. Instead, she wins, and pointedly tells him that he has lost because he is no longer aware of the existence of real enemies whom one must keep in good trim to fight.

The father tells them both once more the story of their two dummy rifles, mementoes of their revolutionary mother.

More than twenty years earlier, during the land reform movement, the father had joined the army, leaving his wife and the two children behind at home. One night, some reactionary landlords and rich peasants came to the house to murder the mother, an activist in the land reform. She fought back with a stout wooden pole but was overpowered and slain. Later the father had made that pole into two practice rifles so that the two children would never forget the class struggle.

Hung-cheng corrects his mistaken thinking. Helped by his father and sister, he throws himself into militia training with renewed enthusiasm.

The script was written by Lu Yin-ting, a young man of 24, who is a drum player in the amateur group's orchestra as well as its playwright. In everyday life he is a clerk in the militia battalion of the Chiliying Production Bri-

gade. This battalion, high in morale, is one of the best in the commune. It excels in anti-tank exercises, grenade-throwing and bayonet training. But there was a time when some of its members slacked off. Once, for example, after a squad got through machine-gun drill early in the morning, its members returned home for breakfast, leaving the gun untended in the brigade office yard, which was against the rules of safe custody of weapons. Another time, the barrel of a militiaman's rifle was found to be uncleaned and rusty in an inspection. Lu Yin-ting stored up such small incidents in his mind. Superficially, they seemed to be the slips of a very few individuals. But he saw in them the early signs of a dangerous tendency—relaxation of vigilance in a peaceful environment. That was why young Lu decided to compose a piece to spread the message of the Party's Tenth Congress, sing the praises of the healthy majority in the militia, and sound the alarm for those slipping into wrong thinking. The brigade Party organization encouraged him to try.

The operetta begins with Hai-hua asking her brother to engage her in sham bayonet combat. He refuses, thinking her no match for him. After a few exhibitionistic passes with his dummy rifle, he tosses it over to her, boasting, "This alone'll take you a month to learn." Lu Yin-ting did not invent this scene of vanity. He had seen it enacted in real life. Writing the opera, he refined and generalized similar living incidents. The result was a character personifying the self-satisfaction of some militiamen. And the treatment brought home to the audience Chairman Mao's saying, "**Modesty helps one to go forward, whereas conceit makes one lag behind.**"

Powerful Weapons

At first, many of the amateur art group's young members joined just for fun. Only after they had studied the relevant Marxist theory and the model revolutionary Peking opera, and done stage work themselves, did they gradually grasp the truth that revolutionary literature and art are **"powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy."** To illustrate, they like to tell a story.

One evening before 1971 Spring Festival, the group was presenting "Buying Wedding Presents," a short Honan opera it had just written. Among the spectators was Sung Ching-yu, a 50-year-old member of the 25th Production Team. Halfway through, he got so excited he couldn't sit still, but rushed home and told his wife, "Come quick. You must see it. They're acting an opera about us!"

The following afternoon, Sung took his wife to the second performance, which they both watched from beginning to end.

This work's hero is a model stockman in a production team piggery. When he is setting off for a rural fair on business, his wife keeps on talking about getting a long list of wedding presents for their future daughter-in-law. He doesn't approve and grumbles a bit, but hasn't the time to argue. Coming to town, he finds that a state sales outlet has piglets of an excellent breed, just what the team has been looking for. He buys a piglet on the team's behalf and, with the money left over, gets a piece of ordinary cloth material as the only wedding gift. On his return, his wife is furious and they quarrel, both refusing to give in. Just then, the daughter-in-law arrives,

agrees with the old man and patiently explains to her future mother-in-law why developing the collective economy is important and why needless expense at weddings is wrong. The older woman is finally convinced, and peace returns to the family.

At this performance, the mood of the audience rose and fell with the ups and downs of the plot. In one scene, the mother-in-law eagerly uncovered her husband's basket to see what he had bought. Out jumped the little pig and dashed all over the stage. The old woman stamped her feet in rage, her husband raced around after the animal, while the audience roared with laughter.

But very different was the emotion when, towards the end of the opera, the father-in-law sang the passage beginning, "When the big river is only half full, the small streams dry up." In it, he explained to his wife that individual commune members could prosper only to the extent that collective production grew. Contrasting the happy present with the dark past, he reminded her of their own pre-liberation sufferings and how on the eve of one Spring Festival, the landlord had demanded immediate payment of a debt, which had forced her to go begging with her daughter. When he sang, "A cold snowstorm raged, and the landlord set his dogs on us," many in the audience wept.

Sung Ching-yu and his wife sat watching, their feelings merging with those of the characters. Now and then, they whispered to each other, struck by parallels with a problem in their own life. In order to increase grain and cotton crops, the commune and brigade leaders had called on members to raise pigs and so get more manure. Sung wanted to buy and fatten a pig, but his wife refused. She wanted to buy presents for their prospective daughter-in-

law, and for their daughter who was also to be married soon. But that night, after seeing the opera, she said to him quietly, "I've put the money in a drawer. Take what you need for the pig. About the weddings, do as you think fit. I won't object."

The change in Aunt Sung was an eye-opener to the young art group members. Encouraged by such responses, they are constantly on the look-out for local themes to produce more short plays of topical interest.

But what helped them most to a deeper understanding of the tremendous power of literature and art in raising people's political awareness was the commune members' warm response to revolutionary model operas. In the summer of 1972, when continual downpours posed a serious threat to Chiliying's cotton and other crops, the art group staged "The Song of the Dragon River." This model opera tells how members of a brigade, inspired by the spirit of communism, built a big dam to divert water from the Dragon River to irrigate 90,000 mu of parched fields belonging to other brigades, in spite of the fact that this would flood some 3,000 mu of their own crops.

In fighting the 1972 waterlogging, the worst in many years, cadres and commune members at Chiliying followed the example of Chiang Shui-ying, heroine in this opera, and voluntarily subordinated the interests of their own brigades and teams to those of the whole commune. By pooling their efforts in line with the principle of "sacrificing a pawn to save a castle," they minimized the damage.

Following a Correct Principle

Over the years, in the busy farm season, these amateur artists have made it a rule to give their days to field work

and rehearse in the evenings or when it rains. Only during the winter slack season do they spend half the day on farming and the other half in rehearsals. They do not lag behind other members in pitching in when heavy and urgent jobs need to be done, such as building wells, canals and bridges or baking bricks. Much as they love the stage, they take care to remain hardworking peasants. In October 1973, they worked in the fields right up to the day they left to take part in the Hsinhsiang Prefecture Theatrical Festival.

In order to enrich and vary its programmes for the commune members, the group seizes on every chance to learn from professional theatrical workers who come to the village to give performances or gain experience of rural life, as well as from touring PLA propaganda teams.

Twenty-six-year-old Lu Yin-ching, a flute player in the amateur orchestra, worked hard at learning to play the chinghu fiddle to enable the group to perform model revolutionary Peking operas, which require this instrument in the accompaniment. He practised whenever he had time, imitating records or radio broadcasts and learning bowing techniques from professional musicians. Often he practised deep into the night by a pond outside the village, so as not to disturb others. Today, he is rated a good performer.

Adhering to the principle of thrift, the group's members make most of their own costumes and stage props. For the jacket worn by the character Aunt Sha in the Peking opera "Shachiapang," they bought some cloth remnants which they dyed and sewed themselves. When rain prevents work in the fields, they use the time to make stage accessories — for instance, they have whittled more than fifty wooden rifles, pistols and swords. Commune members

are enthusiastic about providing them with other needed items. A retired worker gave them his railwayman's cap. An aged woman contributed a pair of new cotton-padded shoes of an old pattern worn by village grandmothers. Such things would be difficult for the group to acquire by itself.

For a time, the members differed in their ideas of how amateur art groups should be run. Some wanted to do things in style, stage full-length operas and plays and spend freely on costumes, properties and instruments. Absorbed in such ambitious schemes, they began to be slack in farm labour.

Perceiving these unhealthy signs, the brigade Party organization brought the art group together to study Chairman Mao's "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art." Followed by discussion, this helped correct the wrong ideas, and led to clearer understanding of the principle that village amateur theatre activities should be spare-time, small-scale, varied and thriftily run.

Serve the People Whole-heartedly

Despite the group's merits, it would be untrue to say that all its shows were successful. One Spring Festival, when it performed in a nearby village, the audience applauded but the actors were aware of many flaws. Afterwards, they sat down and discussed them. One actor acknowledged that he was at fault in twice forgetting his lines. But he complained that the fiddler had played the interlude too softly, causing him to miss a cue. The fiddler in turn blamed the drummer, who was also the conductor of the orchestra, for not giving the right lead.

"It's no use blaming each other," said Liu Fa-chung, the 25-year-old deputy leader of the group. "We know all these numbers by heart, that's not the trouble. We should seek reasons for the slip-ups in our own thinking."

There was a brief silence. Then the discussion began to warm up. Many members agreed that they had performed poorly because of low spirits. These flowed from dissatisfaction with the place where they had performed: the stage was makeshift and the backdrop swung in the wind, . . . and so on.

This discussion made one thing plain. When the same actors performed with a flair on a well-equipped stage before large audiences and turned absent-minded or half-hearted on a poor stage with a small audience, the cause lay in vestiges of the revisionist line on literature and art in their own thinking. They concluded that the amateur group must base itself firmly on the actual conditions in China's countryside today, and **"serve the people whole-heartedly"** whatever the local circumstances.

Normally, a touring theatre would hardly visit the Sung-chuang Production Brigade, which was the commune's smallest and had fewer members even than some teams. For just this reason, the group took the initiative to perform there during the 1972 Spring Festival. They came on foot, pulling the stage-properties in a handcart, and gave their show in the open air, "with the ground as the stage and the sun as a floodlight." The audience hardly outnumbered the cast. But every performer and musician was in high spirits and did his or her best, winning a heartfelt response.

The group sometimes comes to perform right in the homes of commune members too old or too weak to go out. Li Hsueh-cheng, an old bachelor in his eighties, is supported

and cared for by the brigade. When the group's artists gave some Peking opera arias and songs especially for him, he was moved beyond words, and could only show his appreciation by frequent nods and applause.

"Art belongs to the people. Its roots should be deeply implanted in the very thick of the labouring masses. It should be understood and loved by these masses. It must unite and elevate their feelings, thoughts and will. It must stir to activity and develop the art instincts within them."

These were Lenin's words more than half a century ago. Chiliying's peasant amateur artists, by their artistic work, are helping to change his great thought into reality.

XII

Women Shoulder Half of Heaven

A new issue of a wall newspaper devoted to revolutionary mass criticism, written up in bold characters, appeared on a wall facing the street in Paliushu village. One article was entitled "Women Shoulder Half of Heaven." It began like this:

"Confucius spouted such nonsense as, 'Women and mean men are the most difficult to keep.' His meaning was that women and slaves were hard to handle and manage. All the reactionary ruling classes of the past inherited Confucius' viewpoint. In order to restrain and hold down the masses of toiling women, these rulers shackled them in all kinds of mental fetters, prettified by names like 'guiding principles,' 'ethics,' 'morals,' etc."

After criticizing Confucius, the article cited facts and figures to refute similar fallacies spread by Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao who had branded women as "backward" and "incompetent."

The author was Tung Hsiu-chin, a young village teacher. Using few words, she struck accurately at the basic stand and viewpoint of all apologists of the reactionary ruling classes, from Confucius on down, with regard to women.

Before liberation, the peasant women in Chiliying, as in all China, were not only ruthlessly oppressed and ex-

ploited by the landlord class, but in addition dominated by the "authority of the husband." "Before marriage, obey your father. After marriage, obey your husband. After your husband dies, obey your son." Such was the feudal ethic forced on them as a guide to conduct for thousands of years.

Women's Great Role

The revolution, destroying the rule of the landlord class, also shattered the old ethical code and some of the old customs. Chilying's women today are playing an increasingly significant role in the three great revolutionary movements: class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment.

Land reform was the first great revolutionary battle in China's countryside after the liberation. In this vast movement, many women of the poor and lower-middle peasantry, the lowest and most oppressed strata of old China's rural society, stood up at mass meetings to denounce landlords for their crimes. Thereafter, in response to Chairman Mao's call, "**Get organized!**" the multitudes of peasant women advanced resolutely along the road of mutual aid and co-operation. Since the start of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, they have plunged into the struggle to smash the two bourgeois headquarters headed by Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, and been active in revolutionary mass criticism to eradicate the pernicious influence of the revisionist line in all spheres.

About 90 per cent of the Chilying commune's able-bodied women engage regularly in farm work, constituting



Chilying brigade's peasant artists perform for commune members in the fields.

Musicians of the art group consult during a rehearsal. Lu Yin-ting (3rd from left) is both the drummer in the orchestra and the group's main playwright.





Tung Tao-jung (1st from left), who toiled for a landlord's family from the age of nine before the liberation, is now a deputy Party secretary of the Chiliying brigade in charge of women's and public health work.

an essential force in production. They do most of the field work on the commune's over 30,000 mu of cotton, from planting to harvesting. Not only can they handle most jobs as well as the men, but they excel in some, such as pruning the cotton plants and cotton picking.

They are also active in scientific experimentation. Women comprise one-third of the commune's 700 or so insect pest forecasters and are among the members of all scientific experiment groups in its 38 brigades.

In 1966, Pien Hsiu-ying was a representative from Liuchuang at the National Day celebrations in Peking. She met our great leader Chairman Mao on the rostrum of Tien An Men. Upon her return, she organized the "Red Women," a scientific experiment group. Its members, in their spare time, made a trial planting of cotton on some alkaline waste land. Experimenting continuously until 1970, they attained the exceptionally high yield of 250 jin of ginned cotton per mu. Inspired by their example, every production team of the Liuchuang brigade now has an experimental plot tilled by "Red Girls" or "Red Women." Two new cotton seed strains they have developed, Liuchuang Nos. 1 and 3, are being tried out on a large scale in 17 of the commune's brigades.

To ensure attention to the special problems of women, there is a women's group leader in every one of the commune's 298 production teams. One of her duties is to assist the head of the team in the rational assignment of work to women members. During pregnancy and menstruation, they are given lighter work, while nursing mothers are put on jobs near their homes. Many brigades and teams have established year-round and busy-season crèches, so that the mothers can work without worry.

Training Women Cadres

In the course of collective labour and various political movements, the Party organization has discovered and trained a great many women activists and cadres. By the end of November 1973, in the Chilying commune, 243 women had joined the Communist Party and 1,387, the Communist Youth League. Nearly 700 women had become leaders at various levels in the brigades, teams and people's militia.

Tung Tao-jung, deputy Party secretary of the Chilying brigade, is one of the oldest women cadres in the entire commune. In the old society she had suffered untold misery. Following the liberation, she began a new, happy life. People still remember how, after the land reform, she would get up early every morning to beat a drum, calling on the emancipated peasants to attend the new spare-time literacy school. She herself set a good example of diligent study, and can now read and write fairly well. When she gives talks on any subject, her words are convincing and to the point.

She has been a pace-setter in many political campaigns. In 1953, when the planned purchase and marketing of grain came into effect, the government called on peasants to sell their surplus grain to the state. She was one of the first to respond with more than a thousand jin. Moreover, she took up the cudgels against the actions of some well-to-do middle peasants who thought only of self-enrichment, not of the interests of the country. In subsequent movements for mutual aid and co-operation in the village, she became the first elected leader of a mutual-aid team. Later, when the teams amalgamated

into a co-operative, she was chosen as one of the area's earliest women co-op chairmen.

Tung Tao-jung has gone through many violent storms in the past 24 years. Her calibre was put to a severe test in 1964 when Liu Shao-chi and company were desperately pushing a reactionary bourgeois line in the socialist education movement then going on in China's vast countryside.

This line, which was "Left" in form but Right in essence, aimed at diverting the movement from its correct course by shielding a tiny number of capitalist-roaders while directing the attack at revolutionary cadres and rank-and-file poor and lower-middle peasants. Under the influence of this reactionary line, the movement in Chilying, as in some other places, went badly for a brief period. Trying hard to fish in troubled waters, class enemies trumped up many charges against Tung Tao-jung and other good cadres. Along with these comrades she bravely fought back, refuting all sorts of false accusations and slanders, not yielding an inch no matter how great the pressure.

Chang Hsiu-chen, deputy secretary of the Liuchuang Party branch, is one of the many women cadres promoted since the Cultural Revolution. She married into the village in 1960. The next day the word went round, "The bride who came only yesterday was out working in the fields early this morning. She's all right!"

Because she was progressive in her thinking, hard-working and had had two years of junior middle school, the Party branch decided, seven or eight months later, to send Chang Hsiu-chen to study medicine at the village health station. During the day, she learned from a traditional Chinese doctor how to identify medicinal herbs, administer acupuncture and injections and diagnose some

common diseases. Then she would pore over medical books late into the night. Within a few months, she was treating patients and dispensing prescriptions on her own, her skill steadily improving with practice. Conscientious and warm-hearted, she was trusted not only by the people in Liuchuang, but also by those in neighbouring villages who often consulted her. In 1961, at the age of 21, she joined the Communist Youth League. Four years later, she was admitted into the Communist Party.

One day when Chang Hsiu-chen had just come down with a bad cold and had a temperature of 40°C, an old man of poor peasant background came from another village to look for her. His grandson, born just a few days earlier, was desperately ill. Hearing this, Chang Hsiu-chen immediately got up from bed and went to examine the infant boy. Finding he was suffering from acute pneumonia, she gave him an injection and drew the sputum from his breathing passages. She stayed on at the baby's bedside till he was out of danger. At dawn, she stumbled home, weak and exhausted.

Chang Hsiu-chen is active in Party life and bold in making criticisms and suggestions to the leadership. A Party member of twenty years' standing, who had joined during the land reform, made some serious mistakes. Chang Hsiu-chen, deeply worried and saddened, requested the branch to give him adequate education and help, and urged the older members not to be soft in fighting the errors of a long-time comrade. Thanks to the principled criticism and warm help given him by the branch, this old Communist eventually saw where he had been wrong and corrected it.

In 1970, the Party members of the Liuchuang brigade unanimously elected Chang Hsiu-chen deputy secretary.

She was made responsible for leading political studies, the Communist Youth League, the village health station, women's work and the people's militia.

Busy as she is and with four children to care for, Chang Hsiu-chen is still invariably in the van in militia training. On March 8, 1973, International Working Women's Day, she made a suggestion for afforesting the village, then led the militiawomen in planting 2,500 poplar saplings around its perimeter and along the irrigation channels.

In giving leadership to the Communist Youth League, she scrupulously carries out the Party's policy of uniting with and educating the broad masses of the youth. This includes drawing into the Youth League landlords' and rich peasants' children who show up well politically. Together with other cadres, she has done an excellent job of work among women, on which she recently reported at the women's congress of the Hsinhsiung Prefecture.

The Liuchuang health station, which is directly under her charge, is an advanced unit on the commune-wide scale. Despite her many duties as deputy secretary of the Party branch, she often squeezes in time to treat patients. For ten years and more, she has insisted that her family leave their courtyard gate open at night. Anyone coming for medical help can knock directly on her bedroom window and she is up at once.

Democratic and Harmonious Families

Revolution has enabled the 10,000 working women members of the Chilying commune to give ever fuller rein to their wisdom and ability in production and other

public spheres. At the same time, it has brought about profound changes in their domestic life.

Before liberation, women toilers enjoyed no rights in the family, just as they had none in society. The man was the master. A husband might beat or abuse his wife at will, but she was not permitted to offer resistance. Since the liberation, radical changes have been brought about by the promulgation of the Marriage Law in 1950, the increasing participation of women in productive labour and the unprecedented elevation of their social status. Marriages arranged by the parents, child betrothal and other unjust practices have long been outlawed. Equal status and rights for husband and wife in the home are laid down by law.

In the old semi-feudal and semi-colonial China, to put into effect the principles of equality and democracy between man and woman in the family would have been inconceivable. But in Liuchuang today, household chores like cooking, washing and baby-care, formerly regarded as a wife's "natural lot," are often shared by the husband. Two-fifths of the brigade's cadres are women. If a woman cadre's husband is a rank-and-file commune member, he does what he can to help and encourage his wife to carry out her duties well.

Liuchuang still has many families in which three generations live together. But the old patriarchal system has long since been shattered. Each household still has a head (in particularly large families, two members sometimes share this function). But he or she is chosen through consultation among the adults in it. Generally the choice falls on the member who is most fair-minded, best able to manage the household industriously and thriftily, and

enjoys the highest esteem. It may be the father, the mother, a son, daughter or daughter-in-law.

Commune member Liu Tien-chih, 44 years old, has a family of twelve. It is now headed by his eldest daughter-in-law, Shih Shih-lan. Each member, while keeping a part of his or her income for clothing and other personal items, hands the rest over to her to be spent on food and other household items. The proportion of the division is decided annually through consultation and geared to the family's circumstances at the time. Major outlays, such as for house-building, bicycles and sewing machines, are usually included in the family budget drawn up at the beginning of each year.

Shih Chuan-pi, now nearly sixty, is the eldest member in a large family of seventeen. His daughter and three of his four sons are married. His wife and eldest son have served as joint heads of the household for many years. They manage its affairs impartially and never fail to consult the others, so everyone is satisfied.

Most adults in Liuchuang attend the brigade-run "political evening school," divided into classes, each consisting of three to five families. These meet three evenings a month. The main subject is politics, but they also study farm techniques and raise their level of literacy. With all members of the household taking part in work and study, there is a broad range of topics to discuss when gathered at home — from the international situation and the current criticism of Lin Piao and Confucius to methods of insect pest control.

Family members, men and women, are concerned for and assist each other's political development, show mutual consideration in the home and help each other to learn

better farm methods. These are the characteristics of the family life of the working people of Liuchuang today.

A Long Struggle

However, neither the training of women cadres nor the general application of the principle of equality between men and women has proceeded unobstructedly. Apart from surmounting interference by the revisionist line, a protracted and persistent struggle has had to be waged against the vestiges of Confucianism and all feudal attitudes of looking down on women.

In one of the Chiliying brigade's teams, there are more working women than men. But its leader formerly failed to see or give play to the productive force represented by these women members. Moreover, it did not carry out the policy of "equal pay for equal work" for men and women.

A few young women complained to the team leader against this unfairness. He retorted, "Men are the treasure of the team. It's true we have more women, but where would they be without the men? For example, could you girls irrigate the fields at night?"

The brigade Party secretary, learning of this, criticized such male-supremacy tendencies at a meeting of all its team leaders. He laid repeated stress on the need of giving play to the role of the masses of women and strictly observing the policy of "equal pay for equal work." The Party organization sent Wang Chih-jung, chairman of the brigade women's association, to help that team solve the problem.

Wang Chih-jung began with agitation and propaganda among the team's women. She told them, "We women should exert ourselves and prove our worth. We must

use hard facts to convince the team leader and help him get over his wrong ideas."

The women responded with high enthusiasm. During the 1971 wheat harvest, sixty of them went to the fields at two o'clock one morning. Working quickly and thoroughly, by breakfast time they had brought in the wheat from sixty mu. Outstanding among them were eighteen girls, who were everywhere in the lead. After a day's harvesting, they stayed on to help the threshing at night. They also asked for jobs that used to be considered purely for men. Entrusted with irrigating at night, they did it even more meticulously than the men, leaving the fields well and uniformly watered. Their exemplary deeds were a big inspiration to the entire team, which did all its farm work better than ever before.

That half year taught the team leader a profound lesson. His views on women began to change. He was especially loud in praise of the eighteen girls. During discussions for the adjustment of work-points, he was the first to recommend increases for many of the women.

Party organizations in many villages also worked painstakingly to educate those peasants who still prized sons at the expense of daughters.

The Party committee of the Chiliying People's Commune and the Party branches of its many brigades know very well that the survivals of feudal ideas from the old society cannot be wiped out in a day. The fight against ideas of looking down on women has to be waged on a long-term basis. As organizations of the proletarian vanguard, they bear constantly in mind the truth stated by Lenin:

"The proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women."

XIII

Medical and Health Service

One early winter morning in 1973, Grandma Cheng of the Kouwang Production Brigade was sitting at her doorstep enjoying the sunshine. Still in good health at 79, with hearing and eyesight unimpaired, she was talking and laughing with her granddaughter, or greeting neighbours as they dropped by.

Three years earlier, Grandma Cheng had come down with an illness that brought her to death's door. In fact, her two sons and their wives were preparing for her funeral. But Wang Chung-wen, the "barefoot doctor"* at the village health station, was determined to fulfil the responsibility Chairman Mao had placed on China's medical workers – **"Heal the wounded, rescue the dying, practise revolutionary humanitarianism."** He himself did everything in his power to save her. He also urgently called in Dr. Sun of the commune clinic, who gave her an emergency injection, and hospitalized her in the clinic infirmary. A fluoroscopy and blood tests revealed toxic pneumonia. She received intensive treatment for two days and nights. After a further fortnight of careful nursing, Grandma Cheng recuperated and went home.

* "Barefoot doctors" are peasants trained as para-medical workers. Originating in the rice-growing areas of eastern China, they got the name through carrying their medical kits with them when working barefoot in paddy fields.

The Bitter Years

Some years before liberation, this same Grandma Cheng had lost four members of her family from illness in the space of twenty days. Her husband died of cholera. Measles took her twin children. A disease whose nature is still not clear to her carried off her mother-in-law. Not a few families in Kouwang knew similar bitterness in those evil times.

Han Hsing-yun, a commune member now 68, had borne eight children. All died of diphtheria, scarlet fever or infantile tetanus. This last was known to the local people as "four-to-six spasm," because many babies developed it four to six days after delivery by old-style midwives who did not use sterile methods. Villagers over forty remember the sand dune east of the hamlet where the tiny corpses were disposed of.

Were there no doctors in the area then? Yes, there were. Chiliying's 38 villages had a dozen traditional Chinese physicians and five small herbal medicine shops (mostly owned by those doctors). Landlord Wang Feng-to of Kouwang village was himself a doctor.

Early every morning, carts drawn by mules or horses would line up outside his house. Most were sent by landlords and rich peasants in neighbouring villages, with invitations to the "learned gentleman" to attend them. At nine or ten o'clock, after Wang Feng-to had breakfasted and smoked his fill of opium, he would swagger out, climb into the first cart and ride off, with the others trailing closely behind, awaiting their turn.

But could the poor peasants ever get this landlord-doctor to treat them? He showed no mercy even towards Wang Pei-tung, his own hired hand for almost a lifetime.

When the farm hand got old and sick, this exploiter simply ordered him to be carried to an old temple and there left to the "disease demon."

"Barefoot doctor" Wang Chung-wen, now responsible for medical work in the village, was only ten at the time. Passing by the temple, he would go in occasionally. A dreadful picture etched itself deeply on his young mind — swarms of flies buzzing over the dying old man, feasting on blood and pus from his bedsores. . . .

Though it seems incredible today, such was the hard reality of the medical and health conditions of the working people of Chilying in the old society.

After Liberation

Those horrors have vanished like a nightmare. Today, Chilying has a complete network of medical services at three levels. Each team has a public health worker, each brigade a health station, and the commune a clinic. Every village has established co-operative medicine. Commune members can be treated on the spot for common ailments at minimal cost. More difficult cases are sent to the commune clinic or, if necessary, to the county or prefectural hospitals.

Smallpox and cholera have long since disappeared. So, in the main, have once prevalent diseases such as encephalitis, kala-azar and typhoid. What a contrast with before the liberation when more than a hundred people died here of typhoid in 1942 alone! Measles, influenza and dysentery are also under control. Young mothers with healthy babies, listening to older people's stories about the past, often ask curiously, "What's this four-to-

six spasm you keep talking about?" They themselves don't know, because as a result of the general adoption of modern delivery methods, no infant here has died of tetanus for many years.

But these transformations did not come easily.

For a long time, medical and health progress at Chilying was held back or slowed down, as elsewhere in the country, by Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line. Before the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, about half of the commune's 38 brigades were still without doctors or medical supplies. From some of them, commune members had to travel several kilometres to get treatment. The commune clinic was short of trained personnel and equipment. Its only surgeon could handle no operation more complicated than a routine appendectomy.

Stress on Rural Areas

In 1965, Chairman Mao declared pointedly that the Ministry of Health was then in fact a "**Ministry of Health for Urban Overlords,**" and issued his great call, "**In medical and health work, put the stress on the rural areas.**" Afterwards, and especially as a result of the Cultural Revolution, which brought a nationwide settling of accounts with Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line, China's rural medical and health work advanced by leaps and bounds. Chilying's medical workers, in repudiating Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line, accused it of "four wrong stresses and four neglects." The wrong stresses were on the town to the neglect of the countryside, foreign methods as against indigenous ones, cure over prevention and technique in disregard of politics.

In 1967, Dr. Tuan Wang-chin of the Chilying commune clinic graduated from the North Honan Medical College. It turns out about 120 doctors each year. Prior to 1966, most were assigned to cities and towns, from county seats up. Since the Cultural Revolution, the opposite is true. Dr. Tuan's whole class, with very few exceptions, was assigned to various commune clinics in Honan Province. In recent years, six medical graduates, plus other personnel, have been posted to Chilying. This has doubled its medical staff as compared to before the Cultural Revolution.

The funds the county health department allots annually to the commune clinic for capital construction now run to about twice the average before the Cultural Revolution. In 1972-73, the clinic built 29 rooms, each with 3 or 4 beds for in-patients, set up an operating room, X-ray room and dispensary, and added a 200-milliampere X-ray machine, universal operating table and other major items to its equipment. Instead of one surgeon, it now has five. All are able to perform hysterectomies, gastric resections and similar abdominal operations.

Responsible personnel from health departments, both central and local, often go to the countryside to inspect and assist the work there. They also organize city doctors into mobile medical teams serving the rural areas.

In only two days in the autumn of 1971, the Liuchuang brigade's health station discovered infectious hepatitis in six children. They at once phoned the commune clinic and the county anti-epidemic station, which in turn passed the report upward. Next day, the director of the Prefectural Health Bureau came to Liuchuang with two doctors, bringing ample medical supplies. These comrades joined four county and commune doctors in examining all the

children in the village and found a total of 27 infected in varying degrees. They left only after completing the survey and initiating measures of prevention and cure. The county and commune medical staff remained, arranging home nursing and proper isolation for the little patients. They administered a Chinese traditional preventive to all the other youngsters under sixteen for fifteen successive days. After three months of careful treatment, all the 27 sick children got well, and no new cases occurred.

The commune clinic is under the dual leadership of the county health department and the commune Party committee. As directed by them, it instituted measures to get away from the old practice of "waiting for patients to come to the door." It sent people out regularly to the brigades to give instructions in preventing disease, train local "barefoot doctors" and help set up and consolidate their co-operative medical service.

In 1969, the clinic dispatched thirteen doctors to do such work in twenty production brigades for a year. It also took in trainees, whom it taught itself or sent to county and prefecture medical units to learn. In recent years, numerous medical workers were thus created for the brigades, including 139 "barefoot doctors" and midwives. In addition, the clinic, in co-operation with brigade health stations, has trained 303 health workers for the teams. They work in the fields with other commune members and assist with preventive and health propaganda work. Able to administer ordinary acupuncture and treat minor illnesses, they are the reserve from which new "barefoot doctors" are drawn.

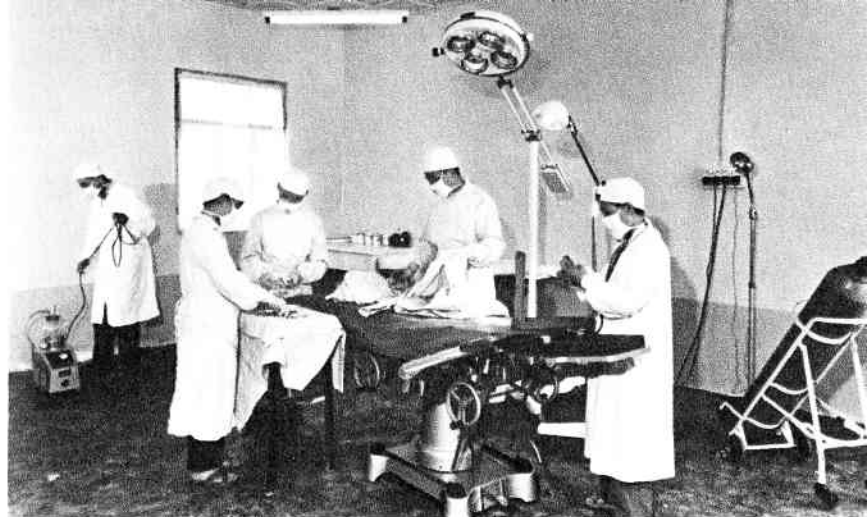
This varied corps of trained personnel provides an excellent basis for the further development of co-operative medicine.

Co-operative Medicine

Co-operative medicine is one of the new things that came out of the Cultural Revolution. It is one of rural China's collective welfare services, based on the principle of voluntary participation and mutual benefit. The specific ways in which it works out vary between different villages and regions.

To finance this service, most of Chilying's brigades or teams allocate from their funds a sum of two yuan per year per person, while households pay one yuan for each of their members. All this goes to the brigade health station as its collective medical fund. For medical attention, commune members pay five fen (about the price of an egg) called the registration fee. Prescriptions are filled free of charge in twelve of the brigades. In the other 26 brigades, the patient pays from 30 to 50 per cent of the medicine's cost. When members have to be treated at the commune clinic or a city hospital, the health stations of most brigades cover 50 to 100 per cent of their medical or surgical fees involved.

Before co-operative medicine was set up in 1969, a number of peasant households used to go into debt annually because of sickness. Now, this is rare. In Kouwang brigade six years ago, the unborn child of Wang Ping-yu's wife died in the womb. Her bill at the county hospital for surgery, hospitalization and blood transfusions was 600 yuan, and the family had to borrow to pay it. At that time, at least one in fifteen families at Kouwang used to get into such a position each year. Co-operative medicine has changed this. For instance, Wang Ping-yu's wife, who is still weak, has continued to require frequent treatment and medication. But with co-operative health



New operating room in the Chilying commune clinic, which is the centre for a comprehensive medical network embracing co-operative health services in all villages.

"Barefoot doctors" give preventive service and treat ailments in the course of farm work, in which they themselves participate.





Chiliying's coming generation.

care, the family has saved money every year, and in 1973, added a new five-room wing, roofed with tiles, to their house.

To ensure the constant progress of co-operative medicine, the commune Party committee has instructed each brigade Party branch to put a deputy secretary in charge. Many branches also give active leadership to "barefoot doctors" and the mass movement to collect, plant and process medicinal herbs. They encourage the fuller use of acupuncture and the collection and prescription of local folk remedies to cure illnesses at little or no cost.

The Kouwang brigade's health station now processes traditional Chinese herbs, many of them gathered or grown by the members, into sixty medicines in the form of ampoules for injection, pellets, plasters or powders. This is convenient to the people. It also saves funds, so the health station's budget is generally balanced from year to year.

Prevention First

One reason co-operative medicine constantly works better at Chiliying is that Chairman Mao's policy of "**prevention first**" has been applied conscientiously in recent years under the unified leadership of the commune Party committee.

In some villages, one occasionally hears the ringing of a bell followed by calls to the people to get their doses of preventive medicine. Men and women commune members come out with bowls to dip and drink from buckets of steaming-hot Chinese medicinal brew. Many take bowlfuls home for their children. The herbal ingre-

dients are distributed by the brigade health station to each production team which appoints a special person to brew them. There are preventive draughts against heat stroke in summer, enteritis and dysentery in autumn, and influenza in winter. In spring, medicine to guard against measles is given to children.

This is only one of the "**prevention first**" measures in Chiliying. In its annual immunization programme, the county health department supplies large quantities of vaccines or preventive medicines against such diseases as smallpox, epidemic meningitis, encephalitis B, undulant fever, tetanus, measles and typhoid, malaria and polio. These are distributed free of charge by the commune clinic to the brigade health stations.

Malaria is common in the area. In 1972, the commune clinic found eight villages in which the incidence rate was over 2 per cent. In 1973, preventive medicine was issued to every person there, and to everyone in other villages who had a history of malaria. These vigorous measures brought the incidence sharply down. In 1972, it was 55 per cent below 1971, and in 1973 fell by a further 59 per cent as compared with 1972.

Chiliying's medical workers persist in the mass line. Through publicity and organizing on a large scale, they move the people to consciously put into effect Chairman Mao's directive, "**Get mobilized, pay attention to hygiene, reduce disease, improve health conditions.**" The brigade health station at Kouwang is among those which have done it well.

Wang Chung-wen and three other "barefoot doctors," with five public health workers from the production teams, take advantage of various meetings for mass propaganda of elementary hygiene and disease prevention. Citing

typical people or cases, they use both positive and negative examples to stress the importance of sanitation. Preventive medicine is also popularized through ballads mimeographed on red paper and posted on doorways to be read and remembered. All youngsters in middle and primary schools are organized for active propaganda work of this type. In summer, they carry fly swatters wherever they go, leaving flies no sanctuary.

In 1971, the Kouwang brigade's medical workers, supported by the Party branch and led by the commune clinic, launched a mass campaign to make "five improvements" (in latrines, pigsties, wells, stoves and the general environment). The campaign helped make excreta harmless to health, ensure the purity of drinking water and keep kitchens hygienic. Besides cutting down disease, it helped the commune members to accumulate fertilizer and save on fuel. Kouwang's effective lead was followed by the whole commune.

In the two following years, Kouwang, with 1,000 people, did not have a single case of malaria, dysentery or other major infectious diseases. Other illnesses, too, greatly decreased.

The commune members say that prevention is best — "to avoid a wound is superior to the best salve," as the saying goes. "**Prevention first,**" the policy put forward by our beloved Chairman Mao, is lauded by all.

Family Planning

Family planning was introduced here in 1964. But it was popularized on a large scale only from the winter of

1972. Formerly behind neighbouring communes in this respect, Chilying is now catching up.

In the spring and winter of 1973, a special work team was formed, composed of the obstetrician and gynecologist of the commune clinic plus some "barefoot doctors," midwives and women village cadres. Its members went in smaller groups into every community to popularize family planning and fit applicants with contraceptive rings. By mid-December 1973, these had been issued to half the commune's 5,696 women of child-bearing age. A quarter of the women were using other devices or taking precautions by injection or orally. Three per cent, mostly those who already had many children or for whom child-bearing was dangerous, had tubal ligations at their own request. On the other hand, a few women still childless after years of marriage were helped by treatment to become mothers.

Chilying's cadres and commune members scoff at the stupid nonsense peddled by imperialists and modern revisionists concerning a so-called population "problem" in China. The reason is their own experience. In 1957, the year before the commune was set up, the local population numbered some 36,000. It is now 53,200, an increase of 47 per cent in fifteen years. But in the same period, the average per-mu yield of grain increased by 559 per cent from 167 jin to 1,100 jin. In the latter half of the 1950's, Chilying was buying several million jin of grain each year from the state. In 1973, it sold 11,700,000 jin to the state. These figures are a convincing refutation of all Malthusians, both old and new.

Why then should people here want family planning? One answer was provided by Wang Chao-lan, a woman

member of the Kouwang brigade, in her talk at a recent meeting on the subject.

Wang Chao-lan is a sturdy, capable woman of 32. Ten years ago, at the time of her marriage, she led the women of the 5th Production Team and was a member of the brigade Communist Youth League committee. She was an activist in farm work, labour on irrigation projects, and in the militia and Youth League. But after being married for five years and bearing four children, she was weaker in health, burdened with household chores and got out much less often for collective labour. She had a constant backache, was unable to go on heading the women's group, and found it hard to participate in any public activities. Not wanting to lag politically or in collective labour, she became very unhappy. Each time she talked of this to the Party branch secretary, she wept.

Four years ago, the commune clinic fitted her with a contraceptive ring. After that, she had no more babies, and her health improved steadily. Soon she resumed leadership of the women's group and came to the fore again in labour and public activity. In 1972, Wang Chao-lan was accepted into the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party. Now she is deputy director of the brigade women's association and a member of its family planning committee.

"Barefoot Doctors"

Whether in the popularization of family planning, or the prevention and cure of disease, the "barefoot doctors" are indispensable. In fact, they are the mainstay of rural medical and health work. Most of them are young people of poor and lower-middle peasant background, with a

fairly high degree of socialist consciousness and at least a junior middle-school education. They are accepted for training on the basis of nomination by the masses and confirmation by the Party branch.

"Barefoot doctors" participate in farm work in the busy seasons and have an income consisting of work-points, like other members, plus a small subsidy for incidentals. Locally born and bred, they know best who is ill and what diseases to watch for at various seasons. Fellow commune members open their hearts to them without reserve.

Often, calls for their services come at mealtimes. Ignoring urgings to finish eating, they lay down bowl and chopsticks and leave at once for the patients' homes. At night, too, they need only hear someone at the door to be up and out. One of them told us, "All 24 hours of our day belong to the commune members." Though said half in jest, it is the truth.

The young "barefoot doctors" are free from conservatism and easily accept the new. They work hard to learn medicine in order to give the best possible service to the commune members.

One of them, Liang Tseng-hsueh of the Lungchuan brigade, became quite skilled in acupuncture after years of diligent study. He used it successfully on many cases of facial paralysis, newly contracted hemiplegia and infantile bronchitis. Commune members with stubborn ailments come scores of kilometres to seek treatment from him. Liang has also carried out more than fifty painless tooth extractions using acupuncture anesthesia.

When Li Liang-tung, a "barefoot doctor" of the Liuchuang brigade, treats patients who were poor and lower-middle peasants in the old society, he acquaints himself

not only with their case histories, but also with the past bitterness of their life. This helps him see that many chronic diseases are the result of toil as human beasts of burden in the old society. An old woman who used to eke out a livelihood by fluffing cotton has suffered from bronchitis ever since. She said to young Li, "Before the liberation, there was nothing but worry over food and clothing. Since liberation, life is good. But old ills linger, and I'm not able to do my full share of work. That's my worry now."

Moving words like this are a great spur to Li Liang-tung to dig hard into both Chinese and Western medicine and give every ounce of strength to relieving the sufferings of class brothers and sisters. Among the commune's "barefoot doctors," he is now known for relatively all-round knowledge and skill. Others, working in neighbouring villages, often consult him in difficult cases.

A year ago, the 65-year-old peasant woman Shen Huating of Liuchuang was in danger of her life from chronic bronchitis complicated by heart disease. Her pulse was weak, her respiration difficult, and some medical workers had given her up. When Li Liang-tung, who had just then returned from a trip, heard of the situation, he ran with his doctor's bag to her home. Applying many means of resuscitation, he fought for her life until two o'clock in the morning, and left only when she had revived. Then he nursed her for a week, till she was again up and about.

Every one of the 38 production brigades of the commune has "barefoot doctors" like Li and Liang. They are welcomed and loved by the members. Yet they themselves are not satisfied with what has been achieved so far. Like hundreds of thousands of other "barefoot doctors"

in China, they are determined to take Dr. Bethune* as their example and devote their lives to the cause of incessantly improving the people's health.

* See the article "In Memory of Norman Bethune," **Selected Works of Mao Tsetung**, Vol. II.

Afterword

On December 8, 1973, I came for the third time to the Chiliying commune, which I by now knew quite well and felt very close to. I came alone, staying three weeks to collect material for this book's final chapters and verify certain facts and figures.

In the two brief months of my absence, more big changes had taken place. Indeed, something new seemed to have been born every day here.

At the commune centre, two factory buildings, each bigger than a basket-ball court, were being erected to expand the tractor station's repair shops. The agricultural school had a row of brand-new buildings of red brick, constructed in just two weeks, they proudly told me, by the teachers and students themselves. Around the corner, another substantial structure was going up, an extension to the supply and marketing co-operative's general store.

In the villages, too, I saw many new signs of vigorous growth.

On the outskirts of Paliushu, when I was last there, there was a 600-mu stretch of sand dunes. Now, under the guidance of a special reclamation committee, almost half of them had been levelled. A plan was afoot to divert water from the Yellow River to irrigate the area by early spring. Further improvements to convert it into fertile farmland were in prospect, including a wind-break

of mulberry trees that would also help the village develop sericulture.

The cadres told me of other fresh developments.

The Hsiyanghsin brigade had forged to the lead of the whole commune with its 1973 yield of 204 jin of ginned cotton per mu. It had done this despite its poor, sandy land. "A golden phoenix has soared up from the sand dunes," the peasants said in praise.

In 1973, the whole Chilying commune added to its remarkable successes, and increased its contributions to the country. It sold to the state 1,170,000 jin of grain, or thrice its set quota. Its doings were reported by newspapers and radio from time to time. As its fame spread, the number of visitors coming to see and learn also increased.

Having chalked up these accomplishments, the commune's cadres and members faced a fresh challenge. To go forward and do still better? Or to rest on their laurels?

In November 1973, the commune's Party committee and revolutionary committee devoted ten unbroken days to the campaign to criticize Lin Piao and rectify their own style of work. During three of these days its first secretary, Tien Hsiu-ching, took some forty cadres around several advanced communes and brigades in nearby counties to learn from their strong points. It turned out that Chilying was still behind them in certain ways – particularly in the extent of its cadres' participation in collective physical labour and adherence to the style of plain living and hard struggle. Returning home, they studied the documents of the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of China and went deeper into the criticism of Lin Piao's counter-revolutionary revisionist line. They compared their own work in detail with that of the visited units. And, in vehement

discussions, pinpointed and commented on its shortcomings. Summarizing the year's work, the meeting proposed measures for a yet greater leap forward.

Rank-and-file members also battled their own tendencies to conceit and self-satisfaction, and pledged to learn modestly from other communes. In mid-December, more than 400 men and women members of the Liuchuang brigade went by truck to neighbouring Huihsien County to see at first hand some of the achievements there. Then, the teachers and students of the agricultural school made a study trip to the nationally renowned Red Flag Canal in Linhsien County.

During my summer in Chilying, I had seen how its brigades earnestly compared their work and learned from, caught up with and helped one another. Also I had witnessed the steady flow of visitors from all corners of the country, coming to learn from Chilying. This commune, I thought, was indeed a school of communism.

Now, what impressed me was that people here were not satisfied with studying on their own 93,000 mu. They were going out in great numbers to learn and learn again in many places. I asked myself – was not our whole great motherland of 9,600,000 square kilometres an incomparably vaster school of communism?

Ours is a developing socialist land and still economically poor. But no one can deny the magnitude and speed of its forward movement. Even some persons with past records of hostility to the new China now testify that our countryside, stagnant for centuries, has changed beyond recognition and is progressing by leaps and bounds.

Most significant and moving is the fact that rank-and-file peasants organized in the communes have come to understand the integral relation between their own day-

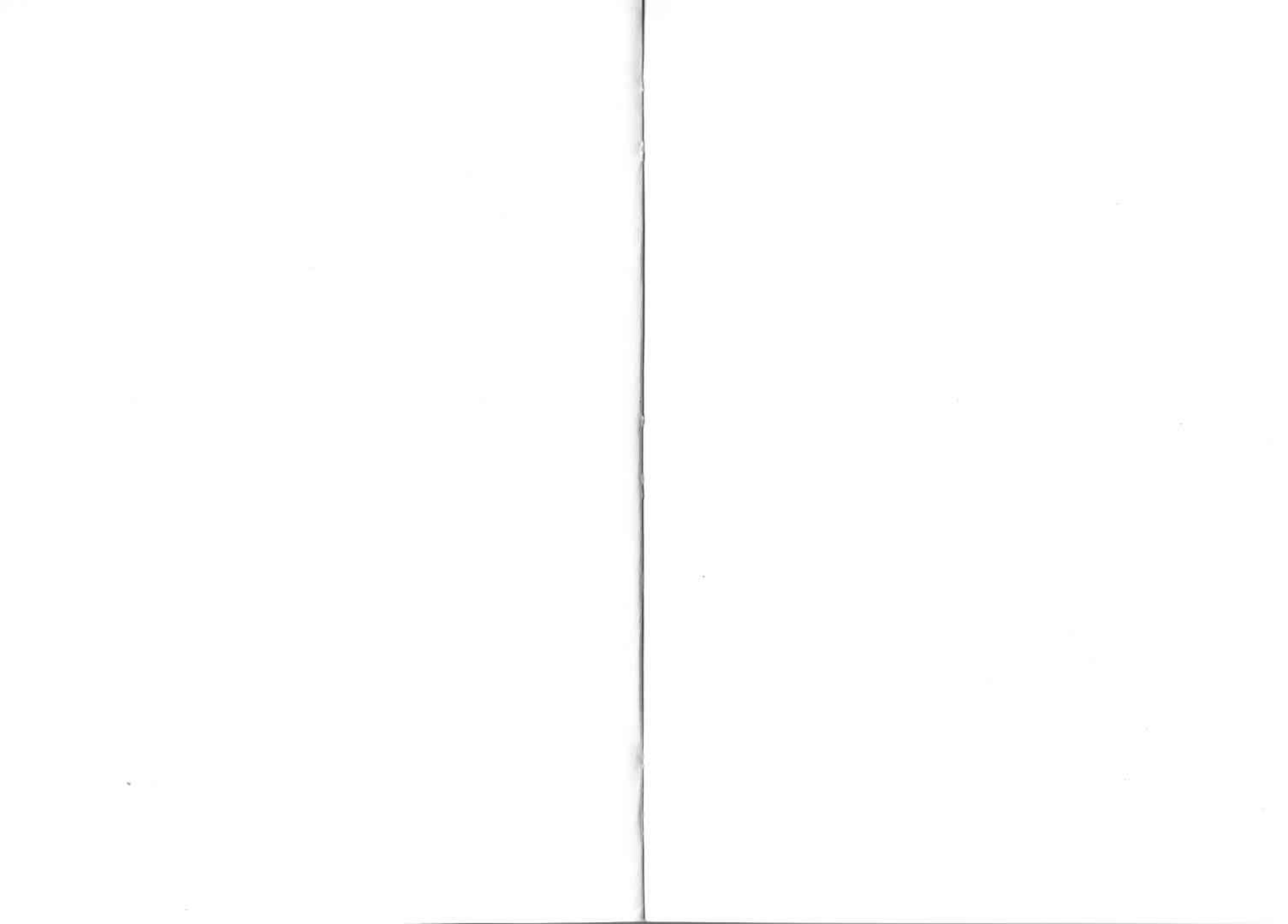
to-day work, the entire country's socialist revolution and socialist construction, and the lofty goal of communism. In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the present nationwide campaign to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius, they have shown themselves to be incisive critics of the old world, and of all representatives of the reactionary classes. Their heightened political understanding has generated an inestimable force for the building of the new world.

Long ago in August, 1958, the "Resolution on the Establishment of People's Communes in the Rural Areas," adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, declared, ". . . the people's communes are the best form of organization for the attainment of socialism and gradual transition to communism. They will develop into the basic social units in a communist society."

In its first fifteen years, under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, our system of people's communes has not only speeded socialist revolution and socialist construction in China's countryside. It has also created conditions for the appearance and growth of communist-minded rural cadres and peasants.

The people's communes, this new phenomenon, will go on developing. Between our present conditions and the communist future, the road is still very long. But the great goal will surely be reached. All we saw and heard at the Chiliying commune fortifies this conviction.

Chu Li



在七里营人民公社里
朱力、田洁云 著

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(continued from front flap)

The story is told in historic sequence, both on a commune-wide scale and in terms of separate villages and spheres of work—agriculture, industries, trade, education, people's militia, the youth, women, culture and recreation, medicine and health.

Building socialism is a struggle against class enemies, erroneous lines and ideas, and nature. Waging it, people transform both the world and themselves. We learn through living episodes and portraits how the Communist Party of China leads her peasants forward in conformity with Chairman Mao Tsetung's revolutionary line, and how socialist ideas take ever deeper root in countless hearts and minds.

The book will also appear in French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Vietnamese and Arabic.

Sketch of the commune centre on jacket and end papers by Tsu Cheng-tsai of Chibiling

