

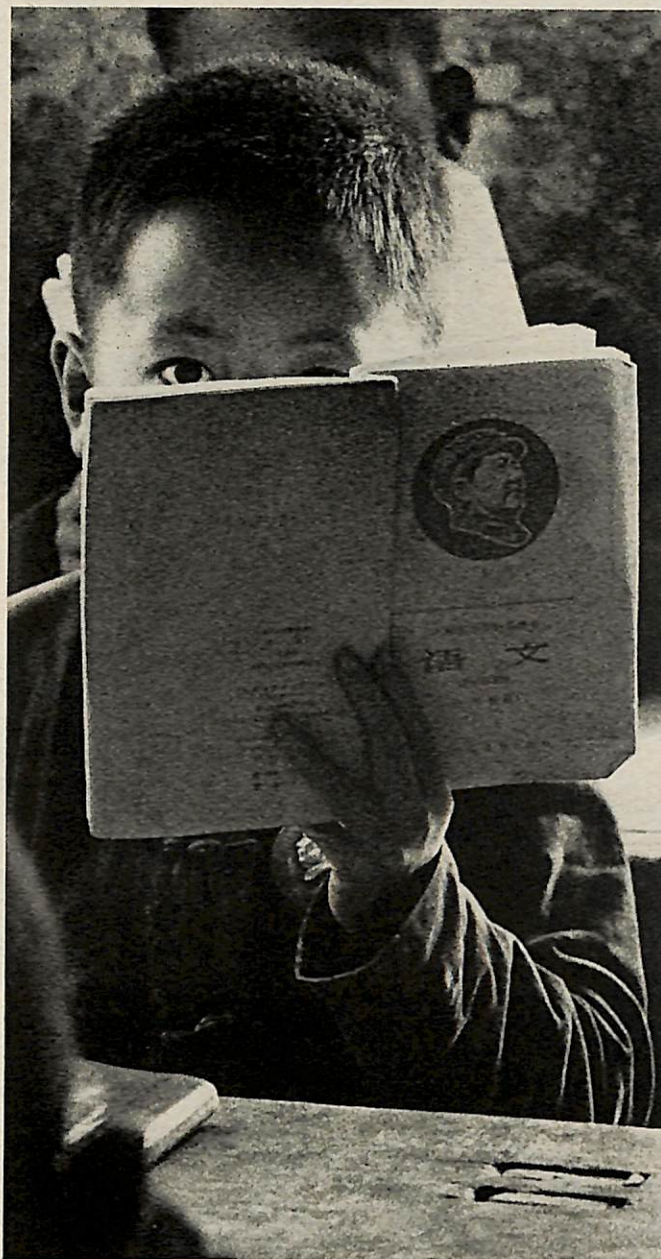
A new look into MAO'S CHINA

LIU LING is a village buried among the hills of northern Shensi Province. It is small—37 families live there. It is the seat of the Liu Ling Brigade of the Liu Ling People's Commune. The brigade consists of 161 families.

Economically, northern Shensi is a poor and backward part of China. Politically, it was a revolutionary center during the thirties and the war against Japan. Yanan, where the Chinese Revolution was nurtured, is close by Liu Ling, and the Yanan spirit of hard work and simple living is a model for all of China now, after the Cultural Revolution. But Liu Ling itself is not a model. Liu Ling is not one of the best brigades in the Yanan area. Neither is it one of the worst. It is considered to be slightly above average.

Down to the smallest village, China is clearly in a period of rapid economic development based on self-reliance and internal resources. China does not accept any foreign aid. The development loans from the Soviet Union have been paid back. China has even paid for all the war material the Soviet Union delivered to the Chinese during the Korean War.

My wife Gun and I were in China from April, 1962, to January, 1963, and have just returned from another visit. We stayed this time for more than six weeks. Since we visited large cities and industries, universities and scientific institutions, perhaps it would seem normal if we described—for instance—the new automatic satellite tracking station outside Nanking, where young Chinese scientists check on the movements of United States



and Soviet satellites over China.

That is important. But given the history of China, plus the industriousness and scientific achievements of the Chinese, I have no doubt that the often-quoted words of Mao Tse-tung—that China will achieve everything the foreign countries have achieved and that China will surely achieve things the foreign countries have not yet achieved—are correct. After all, the Chinese are a quarter of mankind.

But decisive for the development of China is what is happening in the great hinterland. As we had lived in Liu Ling village in 1962, we asked for permission to go back after seven years. We stayed for two weeks—13 days to be exact—in Liu Ling.

There is nothing very spectacular about what is happening in the villages, such as had been reported from the big cities during the Cultural Revolution; but the revolution is plowing very deep. The developments in the countryside, the revolution among the many hundreds of millions of Chinese peasants, are of critical importance not only for China, not even only for Asia, but for the world.

The Liu family in Liu Ling

He: Liu Chen-yung, 37

She: Li Yang-ching, 36

Children:

Liu Lan-shuan, girl, 16, class VII.

Liu Lan-fang, girl, 11, class IV.

Liu Lu-wa, boy, 9, class II.

Liu Shao-lu, boy, 7—not yet in school.

Liu Lian-hong, boy, 2—also preschool.

Liu Chen-yung and Li Yang-ching had not changed very much during

continued

Jan Myrdal and his wife return from Communist China with a controversial report on how the Cultural Revolution overturned Chinese life

BY JAN MYRDAL

AUTHOR OF "REPORT FROM A CHINESE VILLAGE"

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GUN KESSLE



**Studying
Mao's words
"mobilizes"
everyone in
the village**



The Liu family: The eldest daughter (left) teaches her mother to read Mao. Top, the parents raise the window frame for their new stone house, while daughter cares for her infant brother.

these seven years. He is still a quiet, thoughtful man. She is talkative and joking. They have five children now. The four elder children take care of the youngest. The home is well kept. Both the parents are hard-working. They have no official posts. (He has been a party member since 1955 but has never had any governmental or party function.) They are respected people and considered a happy family.

They are very ordinary. Ordinary like Pettersson in Stockholm or Smith in Des Moines. I don't mean anything derogatory by "ordinary"; it is, after all, just these ordinary people like Pet-

tersson, Smith and Liu who have made all human history. When they move, the world changes.

He is a shepherd now. He takes care of the sheep and goats of the brigade. He was elected to this job in 1966. At a meeting, they had discussed the different functions. People said that he had a good hand with animals. He was a careful worker. He never did anything rash. Thus, he was elected.

He takes his flock to the mountains early in the morning. He comes back when the sun goes down. In the house, he is the one who fetches water from the new well, chops the firewood, sweeps the yard. In the evenings, he knits. The men knit in this region.

She takes care of the household and works in the brigade. She puts in 220 workdays a year. When she is at work and the elder children are in school, the seven-year-old boy takes care of his little brother. Now, because the seven-year-old is to begin school, the neighbors will take care of the little one. "There is no problem about that. People help each other."

They have discussed it and decided five children are enough. They limit their family with contraceptives.

Last year, the family started building two stone caves. They had been standing a year to dry. The dwelling will cost 600 yuan (a yuan is about 42 cents), which may be high, but then everything is counted—electric installations, carpentry—everything.

Sixteen of the 37 families in the village (59 of the 161 families of the brigade) have built new stone caves. Two caves to a family. "Cave" is an inaccurate name. The stone "caves" of North Shensi are really not caves. They are well-constructed stone houses.

The brigade building team builds. It goes from village to village and builds several stone caves at a time.

The old cave—not so old, built in 1961—will be kept as a storeroom. The family had been saving in order to build. They had also been selling pigs to the state. Each year, they bought two pigs from the brigade for four yuan. They slaughtered one at the

end of the year and ate it. They sold the other to the state for 50 to 60 yuan.

"Yes," says Liu Chen-yung, "this is an important development during the Cultural Revolution. We have been building so much. And it is not only people who have been getting new houses. The animals, too, have gotten real stone houses. There is so much more capital construction."

They had been taking part in the great discussions during the Cultural Revolution. Li Yang-ching had criticized Feng Chang-yeh, the former brigade chairman and party secretary: the political cadres had been sitting in offices, avoiding manual labor. They had begun to make decisions by themselves. Give orders. The cadres had not studied Chairman Mao.

But, after criticism, they had become better, and thus Feng Chang-yeh could later be elected chairman of the new Revolutionary Committee.

As a party member, Liu Chen-yung had taken part in organizing many meetings during these years. "In the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the party branch did not hold any closed meetings. The masses had to be mobilized. They must be helped to start a real critical discussion. In this, the masses educated themselves."

Neither he nor she could read seven years ago. Now, their daughter, Liu Lan-shuan, has taught them to read in the little red treasure, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*. In the spring of 1967, the daughter had come home from school and said that everybody ought to study and she would teach her parents to read. This had been done all over the village. In nearly every family, the schoolchildren had taken part in the movement to teach the elder generation to read.

Twice a week, the whole family now studies the words of Chairman Mao. The daughter teaches what she has learned at school. She explains the characters one by one and teaches her parents to read them. Then all together they discuss the quotation and how it can be applied.

"We must apply what we learn," says Liu Lan-shuan. "If we don't apply the teachings of Chairman Mao in a concrete way, we have learned nothing."

In 1962, Liu Chen-yung had helped his wife in the house. They were a young couple, and this had been considered good and progressive. Now, he sits at home and takes care of the children in the evening when she takes part in the brigade meeting.

During the Cultural Revolution, the women had demanded that they be given the opportunity of going to the meetings. In theory, they were equal, but in practice, the men left all the care of the children to them and went alone to the meetings. There had been some discussion about this demand. Many people said that men were not suited to take care of children: "They cannot breast feed them." But during the spring of 1967, the women had gotten a decision adopted by the brigade that

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the women were to have the same right as the men to go to meetings and that the men had the duty to stay at home and care for the children when the women went to the meetings.

"It is good for the men to learn how to take care of children," she said, "and it is good for the children too. Formerly, it was nearly only men who spoke at meetings. The women often had to stay at home and take care of the children. Now, the women too discuss and decide because the men have learned how to take care of children."

Living gets better

We arrived in Liu Ling early one morning when the night frost still held in the shadows. The village had

changed in these past seven years. It had a different look.

The Liu Ling village was being rebuilt in a planned way. The plan was discussed and decided upon by the whole brigade. During the next five to ten years, all the families in the brigade are to move to new stone caves, which are expected to stand for 500 years without major repairs.

The big loudspeaker outside the brigade headquarters has been moved to the school. Most families now have individual radios, including small transistor sets. The number of bicycles and two-wheeled carts in the households has increased. (So has the number of dogs. There are now ten big and friendly sheepdogs in the village. They

are not working dogs; they are pets. There are no strays, though.)

The standard of life has gone up. The Cultural Revolution has not meant a lowering of standards for most. In Liu Ling, the "struggle between the two lines" has not been a struggle between those supporting "a better life" (private consumption) and those supporting a "lowering of the living standards" (collective investments).

Take the case of the threshing machine. They had always threshed with flails or oxen. At the general meeting last winter, Mau Pei-hsin, the electrician, pointed out that as they had electricity, they could use a threshing machine. To buy it would cost each working member of the brigade three yuan,



Women on the "vegetable team" pick cabbages. Production increased, leaders claim, as a result of Mao's teaching on self-reliance and the use of more manure.



The children of the village (opposite) gathered in the courtyard under the light of a single 25-watt bulb to watch the Mao Tse-tung propaganda team (above), made up of teachers and students, sing and dance before a poster of an idealized young Mao.

The women played a big part in the "struggle" to make village life better

but it would increase productivity. After a long discussion, the meeting decided to buy the machine.

This cannot be construed as a struggle between "private consumption" and "collective investments." The meeting found that collective investments were necessary for higher productivity and thus a better life.

The same goes for the new mill. Formerly, Li Yang-ching had to grind the 3,000 jin (a jin is 1.3 pounds) of grain her family consumed each year. She had to do this at the donkey mill or by hand. Now, the brigade does it (for about ten yuan a year). This makes it possible for her to spend many more days in productive labor — thus contributing more to the family income.

In 1961, the Liu Ling brigade produced 326,000 jin of grain; in 1965, 480,000 jin; in 1969, 650,000 jin. Vegetable production is now 600,000 jin; apple sales, 100,000 jin. The collective funds total 160,000 yuan, and the brigade has a reserve stock of grain amounting to 150,000 jin. The reserve is kept in order to be prepared against war and natural disasters. This stock is going to be increased.

The five guarantees

The village's economic development is interesting. Even more interesting is the direction of this development.

Li Hai-yuan is now 55. He has not been well these last years. He says: "When you are beginning to get old,

and your wife is ill and you have no children to care for you, then it is good to know 'the five guarantees' exist."

The five guarantees were given when the commune was founded in 1958. Parents and children have economic responsibility for each other, but the five guarantees assure each member enough food, enough clothing, enough firewood, an honorable funeral and education for the children.

To make these guarantees possible, the beginnings of a social welfare bureaucracy had begun to form in 1962 inside a complicated administrative structure. Grain had been given to needy families by the work teams. The brigade committee had discussed the cases. Everybody had been careful not to give too much "in order not to undermine the value of work."

Now the whole administrative structure has been greatly simplified. All matters are handled by the Revolutionary Committee of the brigade and the large meetings. Social welfare as such is virtually abolished.

Out of the average grain consumption of 430 jin per person a year, 344 jin are now given directly from the brigade to each individual, regardless

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of work. This is a fundamental guarantee. There are only two households in the brigade that need extra help, and that is arranged through the Revolutionary Committee.

"There is something wrong with my throat," said Li Hai-yuan. "I am going to the doctor. Last year, I stayed at home for three months. My wife is ill. She can't work at all. So we did not earn very much last year. But despite my being at home so much, I got my grain. So did my wife, even though she had not worked at all. This is new. This is good. Formerly, you got less than the others if you had been ill. You had to ask for help. Now, you don't need to discuss it. You just get your grain. That is very good."

There had been a struggle about this reform in Liu Ling. The argument against it—the Liu Shao-chi line (named for the former president of China)—had been that people would be lazy if they got this guarantee. That peasants like Li Hai-yuan supported the Mao Tse-tung line on this question is not very strange.

The earlier work-points system had really meant that the brigade income was being divided according to piece-work. The idea was that this would raise productivity.

"But I became more and more worried those years," says Mau Ke-yeh. "Work came to be evaluated by a small group of leading cadres. They also decided who was going to do what work. That really meant that they could decide who was going to earn much and who was going to earn little. Many good and loyal people were hurt, and opportunists made money. Production began to be deformed. They produced for the market. Tried to make quick money. Especially on vegetables.

"The whole planning was wrong. When the plan was surpassed, you got extra income. Therefore, they began to set the plan at low levels: 100 jin per mu [about a tenth of an acre]. I was very worried. This system was wrecking our economy."

Mau Ke-yeh, who had been an old revolutionary, was one of the first to start criticism during the Cultural Revolution when the Red Guards came to the village. He was criticized himself because he had not raised these questions earlier. He was able to prove that he had raised them with the brigade cadres in 1964 and 1965, but his criticism had been suppressed.

After three years of Cultural Revolution and hundreds of meetings that had discussed every aspect of the work in Liu Ling, the cadres had changed. It had not been a question of — for instance—Mau Pei-hsin supplanting Feng Chang-yeh. But of Mau and Feng reaching agreement.

As a result of the new situation, after the Cultural Revolution the distribution system had been reformed. The 344 jin of grain per year were given to all. On top of that came income from work. This was divided according to workdays only. The book-



In hundreds of meetings, village life and work were radicalized



Wang Shih-chieh, 20, was active Red Guard; now teaches fourth grade in Liu Ling. Ancient gravestone (top) sitting above the apple orchard symbolizes the past. Tractor in the field before the hillside village mechanizes the future.

keepers had been transferred, and it was only noted who worked each day. The workday was valued the same whether one worked in the fields, took apples to the town or dug earth for the construction team.

But people worked differently. This had to be taken into account. It was done during the yearly meeting. At that meeting, everyone was discussed. Not only their physical strength but also their experience, their carefulness, their attitude toward collective property, their political level.

Each one stood up and stated what he—or she—considered his workday to be worth. Then all the other members discussed this until they reached a unanimous decision. Usually the discussion was short. On the average, men had between seven and nine work points per workday; women, six to seven. There were some men who had six work points and women who had nine. (The difference between men and women is said to reflect the shorter workday for women. They go home

earlier from the fields in order to do household work.)

In practice, this meant that an older man—like Ma Hai-hsiu, who now cared for the pigs—got a higher income than he would have received if only his physical strength had been measured.

After other long discussions, the “Liu Ling Brigade Cooperative Medicine” was founded on January 13 last year. All the 709 members of the brigade are members of the “cooperative medicine.” Each member pays 1.50 yuan a year, and the brigade gives 2,000 yuan.

The health workers are paid by the brigade, according to workdays and irrespective of whether they work with patients or in the fields. The members receive all medical treatment and all medicine free. In case of need, they are sent to the hospital in town, and the “cooperative medicine” pays the hospital bill up to 30 yuan (three weeks in the hospital). If the hospital bill is higher (no such case had as yet occurred), the brigade assists under the “five guarantees.”

There had been arguments against this medical program. Yang Kou-shen had said that, in general, he found the plan good but that “too many people will ask for medicine. We will lose all our funds and go broke. It is thus better if people have to pay something for

medicine.” (That argument had also been used in 1958 when social security was formally established at the founding of the people’s commune.) But after long discussions, unanimity was reached on the medical program.

Through these reforms, the Chinese villagers (the situation is different in different brigades, but the general trend is the same) have reached a high degree of social security based on collective economy and self-reliance with a minimum of administration.

Of course, life is hard and work is heavy in Liu Ling. But there have been real gains for the people. And this has a tremendous impact. Not only on Asia.

The reforms had been carried through during the Cultural Revolution in the form of a sharp conflict between “the two lines.” Against “the black line of Liu Shao-chi” struggled those who stood for “the proletarian revolutionary line of Mao Tse-tung.” These are not just words. There is—plainly to be seen at the grass-roots level—a very solid political base for Mao Tse-tung Thought.

The heart of the struggle

“In the autumn of 1966, I took part in the general criticism against party secretary Feng,” says Tung Yang-chen. “He had not studied Mao Tse-tung Thought and had forgotten the need for capital construction.

“In the spring of 1967, the work team for capital construction was founded. We were 24. We could do the hardest work. I was elected leader because they said I could work hard.”

Since then, this team has leveled the fields, built erosion dams in the gulleys, terraced the hillsides and dug wells to irrigate the fields. This has increased the yield. During the slack season, the team is increased, and major works are undertaken. And there is the key.

What had been the situation decades ago? Social injustice, corrupt officials, crushing taxation, famines—against all these, the peasants had fought. But they had fought against these many times in history. This time they won; they made a land reform. That, too, had happened before.

And how was the situation after land reform? Severe soil erosion and nearly total lack of capital. Underemployment and lack of labor power during harvest. Recurring natural disasters periodically assuming famine proportions and lack of reserve stocks. Small surplus and weak buying power.

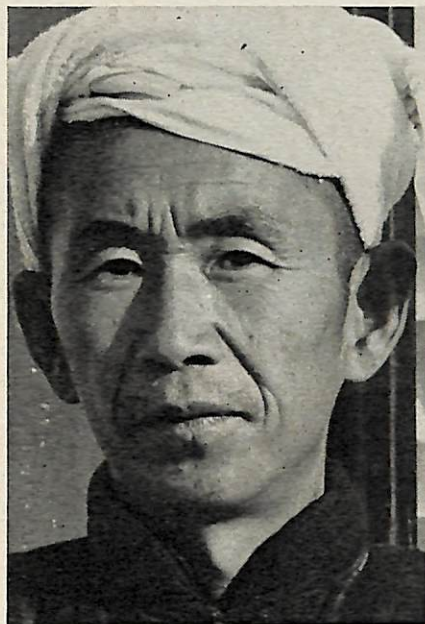
There were two distinct responses formulated to all this in China:

“Some comrades believe that agricultural collectivization can be introduced to rural areas by relying on mutual-aid teams, cooperatives and farming-service teams. This is impossible because this wishful thinking about agricultural socialism is wrong. In the socialization of agriculture, it is absolutely impossible for agriculture to attain collectivization without industrial expansion and without the real-

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"I study Mao even though I can't read."



ization of industrialization."—Liu Shao-chi.

"According to [former U.S. Secretary of State Dean] Acheson, China has no way out at all. A population of 475 million constitutes an unbearable pressure and, revolution or no revolution, the case is hopeless. . . . Of all things in the world, people are the most precious. Under the leadership of the Communist party, as long as there are people, every kind of miracle can be performed. We are refuters of Acheson's counterrevolutionary theory. We believe that revolution can change anything, and that before long there will arise a new China with a big population and a great wealth of products, where life will be abundant and culture will flourish. . . ."—Mao Tse-tung. And against Liu Shao-chi: "In agriculture, under the conditions prevailing in our country, cooperation must precede the use of big machinery. . . ."

This was not a conflict between a "dreamer" (Mao) and a "realist"

The village power structure: Feng Chang-yeh (above, left) is the top political leader. Electrician Mau Pei-hsin (above, right) and Wang You-nan, (top) the local doctor, organize political meetings among young people.

(Liu). Given the concrete situation in China, a victory for Liu Shao-chi would have had the most serious consequences for China. The waiting time until "the realization of industrialization" would have been very long. In the meantime, social pressures would be building up in the countryside; peasants would be driven to the cities; food production would remain low; capital would be lacking. China would have to rely on foreign aid for industrialization and sink deeper in debt.

The question could not be decided by a vote in the Central Committee. It was a long and drawn-out struggle at every level of Chinese society. From

the very beginning, there was strong support for Liu-Shao-chi.

Tung Yang-chen was the son of a revolutionary martyr and had received land in the land reform. But speaking in 1962 about the founding of the cooperative, he said: "Most agreed to turn the mutual-aid team into an agricultural cooperative; but I thought that as I had both animals and land, I ought to be able to manage on my own, and that if I was in want of labor, I could perfectly well hire people." In this kind of spontaneous development of a rich-peasant attitude after the land reform, Liu Shao-chi once had his base. The Mao Tse-tung line on the need for organization and collective effort was victorious only after a political struggle in the villages.

The rise of privileged strata in China—administrators, experts and party bureaucrats—gave Liu Shao-chi new support, even after his defeat on the question of collectivization. But the political struggle in the villages had led to a social change. And in the Cultural Revolution, Tung Yang-chen—and millions like him—now supported the line of Mao Tse-tung. They took part in the smashing of the Liu Shao-chi line by carrying through those reforms in the village that strengthened the collective and gave the members security as they increased productivity and accumulated capital for the further industrialization of China.

"Most necessary of all," says Tung Yang-chen, "is to study Mao Tse-tung Thought. I will act according to the instructions of Chairman Mao. I study Mao even though I can't read."

What keeps China together is no longer a traditional bureaucracy or a new administration, an "apparat," where orders and commands flow along organizationally structured chains of command. It is "the living study and application of Mao Tse-tung Thought." That holds China together and shapes its economic development.

The reader might say that I am partial. I most decidedly am. I have reasons for being partial. I have lived in India, and I have lived in China. In China, the "impossible situation" is changing, and China is developing. It is a difficult road. I believe it is a necessary road. This is not an afterthought. I wrote about the necessity of the Cultural Revolution before it started and had a name. In writing about China for readers in the United States, I want to restate what I said in Chicago in February, 1966: "Speaking about contemporary China in the United States today is not, and cannot be construed as, a piece of disengaged scholarly work. There is a very real danger of a war between the United States and China. Such a war would be utter madness. If it can be prevented—and I am not at all sure it can be—I believe that one of the factors preventing it would be a better understanding in the United States of the social reality of China today."

END