

The Rebirth of a Chinese University

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In August and September, 1967, Shanghai's Tungchi University sent more than 100 people in groups to factories and building sites to go into the question of reforming education through a combination of classroom work and labour on the building site itself. This was then a break-through to what is now fully accepted and (all-over) practised method of study, i.e. part-study, part-physical-labour or practical experience.

Tungchi University finally formed what they called the May 7th Commune, in which education and production could be successfully combined. This achievement had tremendous repercussions in colleges and universities all over China. Tungchi University's May 7th Commune consisted of a unit for the study of theory, a unit for the study of design, and a practical class on a construction site. This was an early milestone on the road to integration between education and production. Even the teaching staff were required to participate regularly in work on the construction site, and workers from the site made their debut as lecturers in the halls of the university.

The rebels began by exposing the old educational system and criticising the lecturers who were attempting to poison the minds of the students by teaching them to design far-fetched and exotic buildings quite unsuited to China's present needs or plans for a Communist future; and also teaching the students to

admire only foreign architecture and ideas, thus filling their heads with bourgeois ideology. The determined few, who wanted to form the May 7th Commune, had an uphill task from the beginning. They were often discouraged, but Chairman Mao's words of May 7th, 1966, which had inspired them a year earlier, reminded them over and over again that what they stood for was correct. And they discovered for themselves that you cannot create anything good and new until you have completely torn down, exposed and done away with the bad and the backward.

Their preliminary educational programme was at first strongly resisted by the bourgeois lecturers and authorities of the university, who attempted to strangle it at birth. But the May 7th Commune members finally won their battle; were recognised by the Revolutionary Committee of Shanghai, and praised by Mao Tsetung himself.

In November 1968 I visited Tungchi University and had a talk with three students and a construction site worker—all original members of the May 7th Commune, who rescued the university from its revisionist mud-hole, and who gave a high-spirited account of the zig-zag course they had to travel in their battle to abolish the barrier between university students and the men who labour with their hands; and whose joint achievements have helped to create a completely

new system of education in China. The first account is a synthesis of what was given to me by the students; the second was by a carpenter.

The First Account—by students

This is the Architectural and Engineering college of Tungchi University. It was set up in 1907 by the Germans. It was a part of the cultural invasion of China by many foreign powers at that time. They gave it a very nice name—'Mutual Aid'—but actually it was like the butcher who hung a sheep's head over his stall and sold dog meat to the public.

Our university had been in existence for 42 years at the time of Liberation in 1949. It began with a medical college. Later an architectural and engineering college was added.

Our path has not been different from any other university in China: we had a revisionist educational line here, too, organised by Liu Shao-chi and our college was under the control of bourgeois intellectuals and people planted by the KMT. Most of them came from one-time rich families; some of them used to be landlords or capitalists themselves. Some were still getting shares from the businesses they once owned—right up to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Many of the lecturers were once high-ranking officers under Chiang Kai-shek, and many are Chinese who returned to our country after long years of study in foreign countries, filled with Western ideology after eating bread and butter!

There is a professor here who actually used to cover his nose with his handkerchief whenever he came near to students from worker or peasant families and had to bend down over them to explain something. He wasn't hostile towards those students, but his ideas were in a complete rut. Only a few professors here were out and out reactionary; most of them had just got some bourgeois ideas. The com-

monest fault of the bourgeois intellectuals is that their theories have nothing to do with practical knowledge. For instance, in the Public Works' Department, a professor there had written a book on the water supply of the city. It is a very thick book, all about pumping water into the cities from the surrounding countryside. Since it is such a big book, it ought to contain a great deal of knowledge. Early on in the Cultural Revolution, we brought a pump into the lecture room and asked him to operate it, but he didn't have any idea how to work it. Then we took him to a pumping station, where the pump had gone wrong; and he held the design in his hands and was looking from the design to the machine, but he couldn't even diagnose where the fault lay. Then he suddenly remembered a very urgent appointment and hurried away from the pumping station! Now he agrees with us that he can talk a lot, but can do very little. We examined his book and found it was reams of words just copied from foreign books and had nothing to do with the problems connected with China's water-supply system; to which we badly need immediate answers.

There are a great many professors like this one in our colleges and universities. We used to think they were very learned and important. The most serious thing is that many of them crept into the Party, because Liu Shao-chi thought it was better to take high-ranking intellectuals into the Party rather than people from the working class. Ours is a socialist country, but these intellectual Party members had no socialist ideas in their heads. In 1956, ten professors here were taken into the Party. Ten was the total number of new Party members from our university for that year, and not one of them was from a working class family. (Four were capitalists at the time of Liberation; two were landlords; three of them had been KMT members, and the other one had been a Japanese stooge during the Anti-Japanese War.)

After becoming Party members, they put on a cloak of sympathy with the socialist and communist cause while they gradually organised the educational programme along the lines of their true convictions. Of course our university could not be a socialist one under such conditions, and it wasn't. I want to give a few examples to show the kind of thing that was happening and which made the Cultural Revolution necessary and a change in the educational system essential to suit the needs of a socialist country. Our students were given many wrong ideas. Up to the time of the Cultural Revolution, very few working class students managed to get into this university: the entrance examination was stiff, and one needed very high marks in order to graduate. In addition to the written exam., we had to submit a drawing. Most of the students from worker or peasant families had to rush home every evening to help their families, and they didn't have much time or equipment or space in their homes to practise draughtsmanship. In 1962, still only ten per cent of the students here were from working class homes. The professors called them 'dull' and did everything they could to drive them away from the university. There was one class which consisted of workers who were recruited from construction sites. From that class of thirty experienced builders and mechanics, only two got through the examination, and both of them scraped through with only two marks above the 'pass' level. The drawings and designs of these students from the construction sites used to be hung up on the walls of the lecture rooms as examples of how buildings should *not* be designed; and those students were told: 'You are developed physically, but mentally you will always lag behind', just as though this was a law of nature! They were neglected consistently and many became disheartened and dropped out of the university.

The students from the bourgeois fami-

lies were treated in quite a different way. The son of a professor here got quite good marks in an exam., but his father moved heaven and earth to get his son higher marks still. He said: 'The type and style of arch designed by my son was taught to him by me, so why are you judging me so harshly?' And the lecturer had to give that student full marks.

Architectural designs have a lot to do with ideology. The ideas of the working class students were not liked by the professors, because all our professors wanted to imitate foreign designs and add some 'typically Chinese' flourishes here and there. They said we must 'keep up' with the modern world; whereas the working class students only wanted to design what they and their families really need in this country; and at this time, and above all, as cheaply as possible. So the worker and peasant students would include in their designs only what was practically useful. One student, who was of peasant origin, designed a house. He provided a place for the storing of grain; another for the storage of vegetables through the winter months; a sty for a pig—back-to-back with the kitchen; a place for farm tools and a flat courtyard for the drying of grain—all very well incorporated together and a dream-house for any Chinese peasant today. But in spite of the fact that eighty people out of every hundred in China are peasants, the professor just drew his pen across the page in a big cross. This was not the kind of house he meant, though the exam. paper only said 'a house'. This professor helped the students to think and design in terms of a garage, a spare room, a dining room, music room, study etc, which our workers and peasants don't need, so of course they didn't put them into their designs; and that was why they couldn't pass their examinations. Many working class students gave up their studies, but some from bourgeois families stayed for many extra years at this university. One student has

been here almost eleven years! After he graduated from here, he didn't like the place of work he was assigned to and re-entered the university for another four years. Then came the Cultural Revolution (almost three years now), and still he is here. How was it possible for him to do this? Because he is related to a professor in the university.

What *sort* of knowledge we should acquire here is most important. Chairman Mao says that students should develop morally, culturally and physically. Liu Shao-chi wanted to turn students into spiritual lords, to meet the requirements of a capitalist restoration; his standards were quite different. For instance, when we entered this university as new students, we listened to a talk given by the head of this college in which he told us, on our first day here: 'Now you have entered a university; that means you have been given the chance to be somebody special. We are going to make engineers and architects of you within five years. What is an engineer, or a designer of buildings? He is like the conductor of an orchestra. He is not like an ordinary builder but cast from quite a different mould: sensitive, talented, with a deep understanding of the finer things in life . . . ' So you can see that he was teaching us that an engineer was superior to a builder and that a builder was decidedly inferior to an engineer or architect. He went on in this vein: 'You should have the brain of a philosopher, the eyes of a painter, the ears of a musician and the feelings of a great poet.' He said nothing about the feelings of workers and peasants. He openly spread bourgeois ideology by telling us: 'You must know the ways of life; life is enjoyment; if you don't know enjoyment and relaxation, you cannot create a good design.' So at the beginning of his course he spent quite a long time teaching us about the luxuries of life as it is lived in other countries, so that we could provide for them in the buildings we designed. During the first

year, he took the students to see churches and temples, big hotels and the foreign houses in the old concession areas. He also showed us foreign magazines and gave lantern-slide lectures to let us see the architecture of Western countries. He told us that an architect's design is a monument to himself and urged us to develop a style of our own and do 'original' work. Then he would add a few words of Marxism-Leninism right at the end of his lecture. What those professors were teaching had, and has, nothing to do with our needs in China today. We learned about the Royal Opera House in London; the sky-scrapers of New York; Notre Dame in Paris; the Vatican; Greek and Roman temples; the Pyramids of Egypt; Milan Cathedral; castles; etc. Our country consists mainly of peasants, factory workers and soldiers. We just don't need this kind of training. But we learned to think of them as 'immortal examples' in architecture, though these examples would be quite meaningless here. We think our Great Hall of the People is quite good: it is a product of The Great Leap Forward. It can seat more than 10,000 people and can be emptied in only a few minutes. Apart from serving its purpose extremely well, we think it looks very dignified and grand. But our lecturer said: 'Your Great Hall of the People is *big*, not *great*.'

In our studies here, we were taught only to look back at buildings of the past and not to create buildings of the future. Our old architects think in terms of pavilions, pagodas and small bridges over little streams: 'That', they said, 'is China.' The lecture halls were filled only with theories; there was nothing practical in their teaching.

The bourgeois intellectuals are very learned: they make a commonplace thing into a tangled mystery. For instance, one of our courses was entitled 'The Principle of Space'—it goes something like this: 'A doorway is a part of space and a door is a structure dividing space and joining

space at the same time. When the door is closed, space is separated; when the door is open, space is connected.' All this about a door! When you listen to it you feel it is nonsense, but the 'Principle of Space' took one year of our time in this university. Even about stones and bricks, they went on endlessly about weight, quality, porousness, and angles and perspective from the artistic viewpoint. When they wanted to teach us about the composition of a building, they started from a very small stone and it seemed to us that after two years they still hadn't got to the point. You can imagine what kind of students graduated from this university; and when those graduates got to their assigned posts, they found they had not studied what was actually needed in those areas. Chairman Mao says that what we learn should serve the ordinary people, but our students only thought of fame and building a monument for themselves. One student designed his own cottage in the countryside; another named a theatre he designed after himself!

The students from working class families didn't think like this when they first came here; but after several years in the university their ideas changed a lot. Some of them had parents who are builders, and after graduating from here they looked down on their fathers and mothers. One boy, whose parents came to visit him, was asked by his class-mates, 'Who are they?' and he replied: 'They are my neighbours.' These students were good when they came, but by the time they graduated they had become bourgeois. So we know that the educational field was not run by, or for the benefit of, the workers and peasants—quite the reverse in fact. The worst of it was that this process of bourgeois education was carried out secretly. It was not easy to discover the planners behind it. They pretended to love socialism. The students didn't think about these things, and they didn't imagine that in a socialist country

such things were happening. The students studied hard here; they didn't look at the educational system in a very critical way.

When the Cultural Revolution began, the bourgeois leaders said we must correct a few things which had 'gone too far'; 'where the political line wobbled a bit'! In this way they blinded us again to what was the *real* purpose of the Cultural Revolution—to dig out the people who were deliberately leading us towards the capitalist way of life and ideas.

In 1960, at the beginning of the Socialist Educational Movement, some lecturers and students of this university criticised the teaching methods and drove a few of the professors from the lecture halls. A professor trained in the USA was one of them. Whenever he gave a lecture, he always tried to speak in English and talk about life in the US. The students didn't like him and they felt he didn't behave like a Chinese and didn't love his country. He and one or two others were stopped from lecturing; but two years later, in 1962, Liu Shao-chi said that was a mistake and that professors all over the country had been harshly treated. Then the capitalist-roaders went to those professors and apologised to them saying the students lacked understanding. Their salaries were increased and their prospects improved. This professor who was trained in the USA was one of those re-instated. But some time later it was he who—after a visit to Peking—spoke to us about the Great Hall of the People being 'big', not 'great'. From these few examples you can gather the general trends. Revisionism was being taught even more openly in many other colleges and universities; ours was not such a serious case.

During the past year we have learned architecture and engineering on more than 40 construction sites and we have seen for ourselves that what Chairman Mao said was quite correct about education serving the working class. Our May

7th Commune is now a fact. We proposed to bring it into being last year and we gave it its name because it was set up in accordance with the spirit of Chairman Mao's instructions of May 7th, 1966 (but not published at that time). He said: 'It is still necessary to have colleges—here I refer, in the main, to colleges of science and engineering. However, the period of schooling should be shortened, education should be revolutionised, proletarian politics should be put in command and the road for training technicians from among the workers, which the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant followed, should be taken. Students should be selected from the workers and peasants who have practical experience. They should return to production after a few years of schooling.'

Two important points had first to be taken into consideration if we were to be able to carry out the above instructions: First the question of who had the power in the university. Early in 1958, Chairman Mao said that education must serve proletarian politics and must be combined with productive labour, but while the power was in the hands of the bourgeois intellectuals, this could not be done. So the first thing was for the working class to take control of the universities so as to put an end to their government by the bourgeois intellectuals. The members of our 'commune' planned to cancel the old committee of management and form a different one, based on the three-in-one-alliance (which means here that all decisions must be taken by agreement between lecturers, students and construction-site workers), and the leading body should be the commune committee, which should consist of workers, lecturers, students and designers. Once we got the power, this was what we planned to do.

The second point was to change the condition of theoretical lectures which were divorced from actual experience in building. We decided we would remove the lecture hall to the construction site.

Our final educational plan divided the students' studies into three parts: lectures in the lecture hall; experience in the making of architectural drawings; and manual work at the construction site—which also helps production.

Now this plan is in operation and it is working well. In addition to the above, the students do some agricultural work, and also get a good military training. The lecturers join in the work at the construction site too; and the construction site workers now come here to help with the teaching of the students. This two-way traffic to and from the construction site has definitely put an end to the old bourgeois dictatorship in our university. Up to the time of this change, our students were enclosed within the walls of the university and could learn only from lectures in the classrooms. The teaching methods, too, are quite different from before—we used to be taken from theory to theory. But Chairman Mao asked: from where does knowledge come? It comes first from doing something; second from theory, and then from practice again. He also tells us to learn to swim by swimming; not by merely reading books on how to swim. You cannot learn a thing except by doing it. So the first thing to do here was to get the students to take part in the actual building of houses, and from that for them to produce some theories and questions in the classroom. And having found some answers in the classrooms, and having learned some theory, to go back again to the construction site to put those ideas to the test. So our new students now begin their course on architecture and engineering by working on building sites with the workers and they get an excellent basic knowledge of building. After that they ask many questions and produce many good ideas. Then they start a course in theory. From there they begin to draw designs and test their theories. In this way they can make great progress. When they study, they always have in mind the needs of our people

today and they will not be carried away by fanciful flights into an imaginary future, or by a desire for personal fame or gain. And it is important for the students to know that while they are learning, they are actually doing something useful. Chairman Mao teaches us that correct ideas come only from actual experience.

Our main aim in the university used to be good examination results; now the students think instead of what is needed to build up our country to take her place in the modern world. Our students are taking part in the Cultural Revolution *with* the workers. This helps them to keep their feet firmly on the ground while they are studying here—and the theory of space in a doorway has been buried forever! We have cut the course from between four and five years to between two and three years; and still the results will be better than they used to be under the old system of teaching.

The building of the May 7th Commune: We announced the plan for our May 7th Commune in July 1967 and let it be discussed by all. After that, we sent teams to communes and factories to find out the needs and opinions of peasants and workers regarding: housing and on the training needed by a student here who will return to his commune or industrial area to work after the course in the university is completed and he or she has qualified as an architect/engineer. We sent teams to various military units too, to ask their opinions. They all supported us and gave us many valuable suggestions. We also visited some so-called 'experts'; but our ideas were not welcomed by them. They said: 'Your proposals are bold; your spirit is good, but . . . ; but . . . ; but . . . the purpose of this university is to produce high-class technicians and experts, so higher maths and physics are an absolutely essential part of the training. All this will take time; Rome wasn't built in a day you know.'

One engineering expert said: 'Once I

had ideas like yours, but now I know they were the thoughtless ideas of youth.' This kind of thing caused some confusion in the ranks of our May 7th Commune, and some of them sided with the experts and authorities and thought those opinions were correct. Members of our commune began to drop out at an alarming rate due to the insidious propaganda made by the other side and we even began to wonder whether we should continue with our plans or not. But when we analysed the position in the light of class struggle, it seemed quite clear to us that our commune was actually a continuation of the class struggle, striking a blow for the working people, and it was quite natural for the bourgeois intellectuals to reject it. And since they unanimously opposed us, we knew that our main direction was right. We thought too of the opinions given by the workers, peasants and soldiers, who put the needs of the country first and whose advice was diametrically opposed to that given by the many experts we had consulted. The workers and peasants were firm in their opinion that we should be able to build as well as design, whereas the experts wanted us to go in for higher theoretical knowledge. August to December last year was a bad period, when the young people were encouraged to travel all over the country to 'gain experience', thus making it impossible for them to attend to the Cultural Revolution in their own units. This had already been done once earlier. Some of our group were very anxious to go travelling and had no further interest in our plan. What was more harmful was that travelling about China like this was in direct contradiction to Chairman Mao's instructions that we should resume classes and continue with educational reform. Finally, after much argument, most of them realised that moving about and exchanging experiences was not correct at that time, and they settled down to carrying through the Cultural Revolution instead. But after resuming classes, some students

argued that we should get on with studying architecture and engineering and not 'waste time' on debates, criticism of Liu Shao-chi, etc., and many of the lecturers supported this line of thought, saying we were throwing away our time in the university. They said: 'It is over a year since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, and it is time for you to catch up what you have lost in a whole year; and probably next year you can graduate. This will be your great contribution to the Cultural Revolution!' So many of our commune students neglected revolution and took up their textbooks again. And we couldn't do anything with our plan to form the May 7th Commune and change the educational system; and the membership of our May 7th Commune dropped from 93 to only five. So the five of us formed our own study class and we looked at this problem very honestly, and we came to the conclusion that this was a test of the strength of our convictions and we decided not to give up, but to go on trying to get recognition for our May 7th Commune. Later, the Revolutionary Committee of Shanghai recognised us; but the greatest encouragement we got was when Chairman Mao wrote his favourable comments on our proposals. We have more than 200 student and lecturer members now. It is a new idea, so we will make some mistakes. But we are led directly by the workers, so our own bourgeois training will not lead us into bourgeois errors. The barriers between the classes in China were absolutely unbreakable in the past, and it is the first task of our generation to solve this problem.

The Second Account—by a worker

The students were followed by a worker in his middle 40's, who spoke from the point of view of the construction-site manual workers. He was a tall man, dressed in blue, with a rather heavily lined alert face, and one finger missing. Following is what he said:

I am a carpenter from a building site near this university. I am a member of Team No. 2 of the May 7th Commune, and I am now a part-time lecturer in the university and a part-time student in the university's drawing office.

The May 7th Commune was set up on August 8, last year, and students from the university began to come and work regularly on our work-site. We hadn't studied Chairman Mao's works very carefully at that time and we had some wrong ideas in our minds when the students came and offered to work with us. We had met many students before, who came—sometimes from far-away schools and colleges—to do some physical labour, for a week or two. They used to come to our site and put on all kinds of airs; and after leaving us at the end of their stint of duty, even if they met us in the street, they wouldn't even nod to us. We thought this was the same old story when the students from Tungchi University offered to work with us—(always saying loudly: 'Now I have laboured—Now I have been tempered!' and then running back as fast as possible to the classroom). So we were not very friendly or encouraging: we just gave them some work to do and left them to do it. These students went back to the university that night feeling very disappointed; and decided they must try harder. The next day we noticed that their attitude towards manual labour was very good: they did the work carefully, and their behaviour towards us was good too. They told us on that second day: 'We have not come just for a short time, but will come quite regularly to learn to be builders. We want to live with you and integrate with you as Chairman Mao said on May 7th.' We had read the May 7th instruction, but we hadn't mastered it very well, so we studied it again with the students and in that way we came much closer to them. They suggested we should form a three-in-one combination: i.e. construction site, lecture hall, designing unit. We agreed, but the staff mem-

bers of the designing unit let us down and refused to come and work on the construction site because living conditions there were not so comfortable as in the university. So we all collected gongs and drums and with many flags and 'Welcome to our Work-site' placards and banners we all went to their office, smiling and making lots of noise, and announced we had come to welcome them to our construction site in procession. So of course they couldn't very well refuse to come with us, and we were able to form our three-in-one unit as planned.

As we had only had experience of working on the site, we knew nothing of what had been happening behind the walls of the university earlier. The students had dragged the would-be capitalist-roaders out into the light of day, and everybody knew who they were. We had done the same thing on our site, so the three legs of our unit had all completed this work. Through our joint criticism of the capitalist-roaders, we learned something of what the situation was in the university and what had been happening to our working class sons and daughters who had gone to study to be architects and engineers—how they were despised, neglected and so often driven out. We already knew about the special class for working class students in the university, and we had known too that more than half of them had had to give up studying. We knew too that in this class the professors were not very well qualified to teach, and politically (ideologically) they were not very good either. Some were Rightists, and one or two had even run away to Hongkong when criticism began; so we knew what kind of attitude they had towards worker architects and engineers and that they would never be on the side of the workers. Some staff members of the design section then exposed the crimes of the capitalist-roaders among the lecturers of the workers' class. The worker students used to be told—soon after entering the university—'You must work

hard; this is a great chance for you to better yourselves and attain a higher rank in life and a big salary at the end of the course.' At first the labouring-class students thought this a bit insulting, but after about a year they would be competing with each other for good marks and a chance for a better future, and the unity they started out with would have disappeared. The professors repeatedly warned these students to be obedient and not to cause any trouble, or they would be sent away—either to work on a construction site, or to a commune to do physical labour. Labour was used as a punishment! Even now, some of these lecturers and bourgeois cadres still think that if you do something wrong, you will be sent to a construction site to work, and when your 'punishment' is over you will be allowed to return to 'normal life' in the university. They used to come to work on the site in the past with the students, but with the idea always in their minds that they were fulfilling an extremely unpleasant and degrading task quite unworthy of their high intellectual level and superior status. We were very angry: we had always been angry with the attitudes and airs put on by the intellectuals who came to work alongside us. We used to tell each other: 'We didn't know that in our socialist country students can be brought up in this way.' It was obvious that there was something very wrong with the teaching methods in the university. We started a study class with the students, and the teachers from the design section, and tried to find a way to agree on how we should follow Chairman Mao's instructions to shorten the period of education and prevent bourgeois intellectuals from continuing to dominate the educational scene; and how we should apply working class leadership. In the course of these discussions, we all came to know each other much better than before and we began to understand what had divided us in the past. We found that the students were not so brave as the workers at that time:

they still preferred on the whole to obey rather than 'stick their necks out'; they often used the words 'punishment' and 'regulations' and they still had some fear of 'the authorities'. Later we talked of the situation in Peking; and we discussed ideas for new designs with them. Then they asked us to come and lecture to them in the university. This time we were unsure of ourselves; we wondered how carpenters, brick-layers and masons could possibly mount the lecture platforms and say anything useful. Then we saw that 'useful' was the key word, and mounting a platform only enables people to see better what you are demonstrating. After all, we were not expected to teach them physics, but something we really knew. So we thought we would begin by teaching the students to love their country and understand the point of view of the working class. We also invited them to visit our work-site regularly and work with us. And we all took the problems that cropped up on the work-site back to the lecture rooms for analysis and discussion. Two-thirds of the lecturers used to accompany us to the work-sites; and one-third carried on teaching—in turn. We found this method worked well: some people on the site and some in the classroom, changing around at intervals of one month. By employing this method, we found we could achieve two other results: (1) We could take more students into the university, and (2) the help we got on the construction sites from all those extra hands was both regular and valuable.

In order to help the students in an understanding of the working class point of view, we got three veteran workers to join the teaching staff of the university. They spoke with great feeling of their childhood; the wretchedness of their poverty; their lack of education; and the ruthless system of exploitation of those pre-Liberation days. They said: 'We stood up and rebelled against the injustice in our lives; we won and proudly we sent our children to school, college—even uni-

versity. So why do those children turn their backs on the labouring people? Why are many of them even ashamed of their own families?' Besides political instruction, we also gave the students practical lessons on how to follow and carry out a design from a blue-print; how to lay a foundation; how to do work at the site in the most economical way. Many of these lessons we conducted at the site itself, and soon we could give the students pillars to do, or an arch to complete on their own. The students were very interested, and they said: 'Though we are to be architects and engineers, we can do all manner of things, and we can understand much better by finding out by experience how things are done.' They said they used to get confused before, with only drawings on the blackboard, and everything proved by a sum in the margin; and they really agreed with us that theory alone is no good. They taught us a lot too, and the barriers came down very rapidly. At our site now, we have a classroom. It is not very grand; it is only a shed; but it is a sign of the progress we have made. After two months' work at the construction site, the students were asked to submit a design for a new Hsin-hua printing works. This was the first designing task given to our May 7th Commune; it was also the first time we workers had anything to do with the drawing up of a design. We started on the 27th January, and went to see the old printing works, and we talked to the workers, who told us what they needed and what was inconvenient or unnecessary. After the Spring Festival holiday we began work, on the 6th February. By May 29th we had designed and built this four-storied building, which covers an area of 3,600 sq. metres. It took us only 112 days. The students did most of the designing and building; and we workers coached, advised and helped them. Everything that was done was checked by veteran workers; and if they said something was not quite right, it would have

to be done again. At first the students were unsure of themselves (because it was a very responsible task for a first assignment), and they kept going back to the design department in the university to consult the lecturers and experts. Finally we told them: 'If you are going to go on like this, why not move back into your dormitories in the college altogether? Do you really only trust books after all? Why not try and trust the experienced workers on the site as well?' They took our advice, and through putting up that building we learned to rely on each other and trust each other. There was no time wasted on that job because we drew the design and put it into construction simultaneously. And as we built, we would add something to the design, or perhaps subtract or change something. In all our previous experience, the design alone would have taken about six months to emerge from the drawing office. Now, on our site you can't tell who is who! Everybody is doing everything just as the need turns up. In the past, it was always easy to spot the creased trousers of the designing staff and the umbrellas they held over their heads against the sun. We feel that in a very natural way we have all been able to deal with the problems that used to exist between our 'brain-workers' and our 'manual workers'. The work goes smoothly. In the past, when queries arose at the construction site, we had to telephone the design section, and after one or two days someone would wander in and say: 'I'm afraid that is not my drawing; I will send somebody else'; and after a few days somebody else would come. Then we could go on working until the next difficulty arose and we had to go through the whole process again. Sometimes the site was very far away from the

city's design section offices. We used to simply carry out their orders. Any suggestions from us would have been considered impertinent. Now we can all solve problems as they crop up; the results are very good; we can work much faster and the quality of our work is much better. So far, our combined staff of five hundred people have completed five new projects. And remember, all this whilst learning! At first the students tired easily at the site, but now they can do anything we can do. They are making good progress and are really useful people. These students will help the next batch of students not to be afraid of getting dirty or weary—now they sweat like we do, and have dropped all those old affected airs.

Now the door has been opened to us workers to learn some theory as well. Up to the time of the Cultural Revolution, whenever we put forward a request to learn designing, we were always told: 'You hardly know your ABC, so how can you attempt to learn architecture?' And the most we could then hope for was for one of our sons or daughters to manage to pass the examination and get into the university. Now Chairman Mao has supported our May 7th Commune and has given us this chance, and we must not let him down. We recently completed a 4,200 sq.-metre building in 125 days. This building was designed entirely by worker-designers, and every time we look at it we feel very proud, though we still 'don't know our ABC!' We do have some difficulties with mathematics (stress calculations, etc.) and at first we left these calculations to the teachers and students. Now they are patiently teaching us how to do these calculations.

So together we are changing the old habits and making history.