



Political discussion in the midst of work: Tachai peasants study Mao Tsetung together in the late 1960s. Revolutionary theory and its combination with practice is exactly what today's Chinese rulers want to wipe out.

Tachai: Another Red Banner Pulled Down in the Dung

In recent weeks another of Mao Tsetung's red banners has been pulled down in China as that country's revisionist rulers—Teng, Hua, etc.—go full steam ahead in wrecking socialism. This time the victim is the Tachai production brigade, famous all over China from Mao's "In agriculture, learn from Tachai" campaign.

Once hailed as the "standard bearer" in China's socialist agriculture, Tachai is now coming under heavy fire. In 1964 Mao issued his famous "learn from Tachai" call. By grasping the key link of class struggle, the peasants of this 450-member production brigade were able to transform this rock-strewn mountain village into a thriving community. By 1974, Tachai's grain production was ten times the peak pre-Liberation figure. Carts and aerial cableways replaced backbreaking manual labor, and blocks of new housing were built. But as a revolutionary at the first National Learn from Tachai in Agriculture Conference in 1975 summation put it, "the land has been transformed... but the fundamental change has been in people's thinking. The intense struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the socialist and the capitalist roads and between the revolutionary and revisionist lines has tempered and educated broad masses and cadres. A contingent of socialist-minded peasants of a new type is stepping forward."

In 1977, less than a year after Mao's death and the revisionist coup, the second National Learn from Tachai Conference was held. Still facing the necessity of pretending to be Mao's successors, the revisionists held up Tachai as a model, but in fact painted the red banner white by making its lesson one of just hard work and increased production. Today this banner is being dropped altogether. Painting it white is not enough. Undoubtedly—even admittedly—some Tachai peasants were resisting this revisionism. And besides, not even a *memory* of socialism can be

allowed to stand in the way of capitalist restoration.

A Hsinhua News Service dispatch of Nov. 20, 1979 details a Shanxi (province where Tachai is located) Middle Region Party Committee meeting which held a "serious study" of Vice Premier Yeh Chien-ying's speech last October. This speech was a vicious, thinly veiled attack on Mao and his line that there are still classes and class struggle in China, and that class struggle is the key link. Mao's greatest contribution to revolutionary practice, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, was called an "appalling catastrophe" (see *RW* No. 22).

As a result of applying this speech to the concrete conditions of Tachai, the committee concluded that "in the past they had incorrectly put forward that Tachai's experience can be summed up as: always take class struggle as the key link, criticize revisionism and capitalism in a big way, consciously struggle against capitalist roaders within the Party..." We can thank the Shanxi Middle Region Party Committee for laying out—in order, of course, to attack—the *real* significance of Tachai.

The class struggle was waged around the question: will capitalism or socialism rule in the countryside? Revisionists like Teng and Liu Shao-chi put forward the "theory of productive forces" which says that, as the peasants are encouraged by material incentives to work hard like mules for hay in the fields, production will automatically rise and this will lay the basis for socialism. Mao was completely opposed to this kind of thinking. Having taken only its first infant steps toward communism, China under Mao was still shackled by many things left over from the old society. Feudal ideas such as the importance of having one's own land to cultivate were still widespread. Agricultural production was still small and scattered, and as Lenin pointed out, "small production engenders

capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale." Above all, bourgeois right (inequalities) had not been eliminated, even in the sphere of ownership.

This was especially true in the countryside, where ownership was still in the main collective (although this was a great advance from individual farming) rather than by the whole people through the state. What this meant was that those with better land and machinery could produce and accumulate more. Since there were still commodity relations—that is, production units had to sell part of their output to buy machinery and other means of production—there was a spontaneous tendency for those generally more well off (both individuals and collectives) to get richer, while the poor became poorer. This was fertile ground for capitalism.

The peasants in Tachai, led by Mao's line, took concrete steps to strike down the remnants of the old society and restrict inequalities. For instance, once a neighboring brigade in difficulty offered to buy Tachai's surplus hay at ten times the state price. At a mass meeting called by the Party branch, peasants denounced profiteering and decided to sell the hay at the normal price. Backward peasants were struggled against around holding private plots, and steps were taken to reduce wage differences.

"Self-Criticism"

These advances made by Tachai to restrict capitalism and build socialism came under a point by point attack in an Oct. 3 *People's Daily* article titled "Rectify the Ideological Line to Solve the Questions of Implementation of Economic Policy." The article reports that the Xiyang (county where Tachai is located) party committee is "reviewing and re-evaluating the ultra-left mistakes of the country's Learn from Tachai campaign in the last ten or more years," and that the "party committee

sincerely felt that in the past they had raised Tachai to an inappropriate position, made Tachai's experience a dogma, and did a lot of stupid things."

And just how does the Xiyang party committee propose to correct these "stupid things" they did (meaning, building socialism)? The party committee reached a decision to "release all the county's private plots and create conditions to encourage and support brigade members to work them well," and to "greatly develop sideline production" (like raising pigs, growing cash crops, making small handicrafts, etc.—*RW*). They also declared that "our past ways of restricting local trade fairs went against objective economic laws" and therefore the fairs must be promoted. These measures run completely contrary to the Tachai spirit of collectivity and will open up a floodgate of "me first, screw the next guy" kind of thinking.

Mao and other revolutionaries recognized that private plots, sideline production and trade fairs at this time still fulfilled a certain limited function of providing products not available through existing supply channels and of supplementing peasant incomes. But these things must not be promoted, and in fact must be restricted to the degree possible, because the peasants' spontaneous tendency is to be drawn to them, to the detriment of collective production. For example, one of the ways devised to restrict private fairs was to set up socialist big fairs, where peasants would buy and sell products through supply and marketing cooperatives, thus putting an end to speculation and swindling.

Treating Labor Like A Commodity

In another major point of reversal, the revisionists are throwing down the gutter Tachai's wage system based on socialist consciousness, in the spirit of "wholeheartedly labor for the collective interest, and determine work points through self-assessment and public discussion." This is totally unheard of to those of us who slave in a capitalist society—it's like writing your own time card and determining your wages through collective discussion with fellow workers. Of course, this requires the collective to develop a relatively high degree of political consciousness. The revisionists also axed Tachai's old policy of taking into account family size and natural physical abilities in determining wages, which meant that peasants who were weaker, or ones who had some children, didn't have to be so disadvantaged compared to stronger people or ones who were single. Now it's everyone out for himself—more work, more pay—that's it.

And finally, Tachai's emphasis on developing collective welfare (for example, free health care, child care, etc.) was blasted as nothing but ultra-left "egalitarianism." Tachai's policies around the questions of wages and welfare were steps, although still primitive, to narrow inequalities toward the communist principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

Of course, as steps were taken in the past in Tachai as elsewhere to restrict capitalism, the bourgeois elements jumped out to oppose the revolutionaries at every turn. This opposition was the fiercest and found concentrated expression within the top levels of the Party leadership.

In 1952, when Tachai first set up cooperatives, Liu Shao-chi branded their plans "utopian." Again in 1961, when Tachai was hit by a disastrous flood, a capitalist roader from the county came to Tachai and preached a return to individual farming and open markets, even instigating rich peasants to engage in profiteering. This went on at every stage, but under the leadership of Mao's line, the people fought it and pushed ahead.

This points out why Mao insisted that the *fundamental* lesson of Tachai was taking class struggle as the key link. Yes, the Tachai peasants did develop scientific planting to get the most out of the land, and yes, the peasants did develop mechanization to free them from the back-breaking manual labor that weighed down on them in the old

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days. But all this would never have been possible if the peasants had not been armed with Marxism-Leninism and mobilized to struggle against those who wanted to drag Tachai down the capitalist path. Mao saw the need to take this lesson and spread it all over China, for only by the masses of people taking class struggle as the key link could the dictatorship of the proletariat be protected and strengthened against the bourgeoisie. The revisionists in control of China want to smash and stomp out this lesson, because the class struggle waged by the Chinese people under Mao's leadership was directed precisely at their kind. Even some Tachai leaders who originally went along with the coup—though they met resistance—have now fallen from favor. Chen Yung-kuei, on the Politburo, has been relieved of all real functions. The top revisionists used him for a "seal of approval" but now they want "experts," not peasants, running agriculture.

Attacking the Communes

Although Tachai is a concrete and sharp example of what the revisionists' plans are for China's agriculture, indications are that much deeper and more thorough dismantling of Mao's legacy in agriculture is taking place. His policy of "taking grain as the key link" is now being junked for the law of highest profit. China is now considering trashing the whole concept of people's communes. A signed article in the Nov. 6 issue of *Guanming Daily* (indicating there is still debate among the ruling circles on this question) puts forward the view that people's communes outstrip objective conditions in China since they combine political and economic functions and therefore contain an element of ownership by the whole people. The people's commune,

the article charges, has "few advantages and many disadvantages," and "the confusion it created was very serious." The article proposes that the communes be stripped of their political character and become purely economic units.

Again, although this article doesn't name names, it's obvious that criticism of people's communes is a direct blast at Mao. People's communes were a product of the struggle in the agricultural sphere waged by Mao against the Right and their "theory of productive forces." Mao ridiculed these people, saying that "some of our comrades, tottering along like a woman with bound feet, are complaining all the time, 'you're going too fast, much too fast.'" ("On the Co-operative Transformation of Agriculture," *Selected Works*, Vol. 5) With full confidence in the peasants' boundless enthusiasm for socialism, Mao pushed for ever higher forms of collective ownership. People's communes were finally established in 1957. The greatest importance of the people's communes was not simply that they were a more efficient system of production than small-scale farming or that they rescued the poor peasants from being squeezed out by the rich or ruined by natural disasters, although the communes certainly did do these things. Above all, people's communes were a giant leap toward the communist goal of eliminating the differences between town and countryside and transforming peasants into proletarians.

The effect of revisionist policies in the countryside is clear—they will unleash all the capitalist forces. Peasants and production units will be egged on to produce all they can for profit instead of the collective. Inequalities between different regions, villages and individual households will intensify as bourgeois right is expanded. But the main thrust of the revisionist policies is not to encourage small-time private production, al-

though this will greatly expand, but to transform collective units into self-supporting, profit-oriented agricultural firms, linked to the state not by planning or required deliveries and sales, but by bank credit. It's either turn a profit or sink, the peasants be damned!

As an example of a capitalist force unleashed, a recent (No. 47) *Peking Review* cited favorably the example of a "commune member" who made 2,000 yuan a year in a sideline occupation. 2,000 yuan is many times the average yearly wage of a worker. But this little capitalist-to-be is called an example of the "meaning of socialism"—a few "socialist rich people," no doubt, while the masses can go to hell.

The revisionists' efforts to develop agriculture and the whole economy in accordance with what they euphemistically refer to as "natural laws" and "objective laws" (that is, the law of profit!) will inevitably result in a lopsided economy—cash crops will replace staples, rich units with better land will become richer, the poor poorer. The effects are already apparent—Vice Premier Li recently announced that 40,000 "unprofitable" enterprises would be closed (while there are 20 million unemployed), and for the first time since Liberation, inflation haunts China, as food prices were raised 33% on Nov. 1 (*San Francisco Chronicle* UPI report), while prices paid to peasants for agricultural produce had no proportional increase.

In any case, the difficulties the revisionists are having underscores a real necessity for them to come out more and more openly against Mao's line. Reportedly a cynical saying circulating in China a few months back went like this: "In agriculture, learn from Tachai. In industry, learn from Taching. The whole country must learn from Uncle Sam."

Now it can just be shortened to: Learn from Uncle Sam. ■