



IMPRESSIONS OF

TACHING OILFIELD

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of
Taching Oilfield**

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Publisher's Note

The National Conference on Learning from Taching in Industry, which was held between April 20 and May 13, 1977 was of great significance to China's economic development. It will surely stand as an important milestone in the history of the nation's industrial growth.

The Taching Oilfield, situated on a spread of trackless grassland, is a red-banner unit among China's industrial enterprises. The oilfield, advanced even by international standards, was opened up in the space of about 10 years, and a modern petrochemical complex was completed. A new kind of socialist mining area, combining industry with agriculture and integrating town and country, was built up in China. By following Chairman Mao's line in building socialist industry, Taching has charted a road for China's industrial development that is fundamentally opposed to the capitalist or revisionist road.

What are the characteristics of the road of industrial development pioneered by Taching? How was the oilfield opened up and developed? How do the people there live and work? The writer tries to give some answers to these questions on the basis of a personal visit to the oilfield.

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Far More Than Oil

September 26, 1959. Crude oil gushed from an exploration well sunk in the bleak grasslands of China's northernmost province of Heilungkiang. The prospectors were jubilant over the discovery of an underground treasure house for their socialist motherland. It was just before the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1. Thus, they named the oilfield Taching, "great celebration."

There are some 27,000 oilfields in the world today and Taching is now one of the biggest.

Its achievements can be summed up as follows:

Ten Major Contributions

- The opening up of the oilfield dispelled the once widespread belief that "China is oil-poor" and led to the creation of China's own theory in petroleum geology, which paved the way for locating more oilfields in the country.
- Taching's crude oil output has increased at an average annual rate of 28 per cent. Current annual production is six times that of 1965, the year before the start of the Great Cultural Revolution.

- Thanks to the development of Taching and the opening up of other oilfields, China has begun exporting crude oil. In 1976 alone, it provided more than 40 countries and regions with crude oil and petroleum products.
- New technological processes and techniques have been introduced to keep Taching's oil output high and stable for 17 years running. (Generally speaking, the oil flow from a well tends to diminish and even becomes exhausted due to the gradually declining pressure in the oil layers.)
- In addition to a large petrochemical works that refines oil and turns out chemical fertilizer, chemical fibres and other products, Taching built a big chemical fertilizer plant last year.
- Of the many fruitful results in scientific experiments and technical innovations, more than 50 have reached or surpassed advanced world levels.
- The funds accumulated by Taching for the state over the past 17 years (profits that go into the state coffers) amount to 14.3 times the total state investment. Last year's returns were enough to build two oilfields and two petrochemical works the size of those in Taching.
- Initial successes have been achieved in building a unique socialist mining area on the trackless grasslands, which combines industry with agriculture and town with country.
- Geological prospecting and surveying on the fringes of Taching and deep down in the oilfield have obtained a wealth of data for the further tapping of oil reserves there.
- Taching has helped spur the growth of China's petroleum industry by sending 56,000-odd workers and cadres

and large quantities of equipment to other new oilfields.

However, Taching's significance goes far beyond the simple production of oil. Following Chairman Mao's line in running socialist industry and implementing the **Charter of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company**,* Taching has pioneered China's own road of industrial development, which is diametrically opposed to that of capitalism and revisionism.

As early as 1964, Chairman Mao issued the call "**In industry, learn from Taching.**" Premier Chou, who went to Taching three times on inspection tours, paid careful attention to its development. Shortly after the smashing of the Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao anti-Party "gang of four," the Party Central Committee headed by Chairman Hua Kuo-feng made the decision to convene the National Conference on Learning from Taching in Industry on April 20, 1977 which was attended by 7,000 representatives from all over the country. Chairman Hua wrote an inscription for Taching: "We must hold high the Taching Red Banner put up by Chairman Mao," which was a call and mobilization order to the entire Party and the whole

* Personally formulated by Chairman Mao on March 11, 1960 in a note on the report submitted by the Anshan City Committee of the Communist Party of China, the **Charter of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company** defines the basic principles of persisting in putting politics in command; strengthening Party leadership; launching vigorous mass movements; cadre participation in productive labour and worker participation in management, reform of irrational and outdated rules and regulations, and close co-operation among cadres, workers and technicians; and carrying out technical innovations and technical revolution. By drawing lessons from the Soviet Union's economic construction and summing up China's own experience, it sets forth the fundamental law for running socialist enterprises.

of China's working class to deepen the mass movement of learning from Taching in industry.

What, then, are the characteristics of Taching's way of developing industry? This booklet will try to offer some explanations.

The Taching Party committee and revolutionary committee — the headquarters of this huge enterprise — are located not far from a railway station between the cities of Harbin, capital of the province of Heilungkiang, and Tsitsihar. Rows of one-storey red-brick buildings resemble the surrounding groups of ordinary workers' houses. One cannot help comparing this with the luxurious headquarters of Exxon (or Esso, formerly Standard Oil of New Jersey) in Manhattan, New York City. That 53-floor skyscraper symbolizes the power of money and the rule of capital.

"Law of Capture"

For the sake of comparison, it would be useful to refer to the development of the petroleum industry in the United States. It came into being in 1859 following the drilling of the first oil well in Pennsylvania. Later, in 1901, a mighty gusher was discovered on a hillock called Spindletop in Texas. This spurred further advances in the industry.

The discovery of "black gold" drove many people, lusting after wealth, to hunt for oil. The question of ownership very quickly came to a head. It is the established practice in that capitalist society that land ownership extends to the minerals in the subsoil of the land property. But

oil is a wandering mineral. In their attempts to find a solution, bar and bench finally turned to the law governing the ownership of wild animals, that is, the "law of capture" or *res ferae naturae*. More graphically, oil underground was treated like a whale in the sea — whoever captured it owned it.

The "law of capture" is synonymous with the "law of the jungle" — the survival of the fittest. Dictated by this law, the history of the petroleum industry is one of cut-throat competition, sordid machinations and, at times, even violence. Many people were ruined while a few made fortunes. Hence the emergence of oil barons and the "oil empire." They not only seize the enormous wealth created by the oil workers, but interfere in and rule society by dint of money. The late U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said: "The trouble with this country is that you can't win an election without the oil bloc, and you can't govern with it."

Furthermore, the application of the "law of capture" resulted in serious waste of natural resources. In the early days of the petroleum industry, landowners vied with each other in drilling wells on their property to get as much of the oil pool as possible. The motto was: Get your neighbour's oil before he gets yours. Drilling large numbers of unneeded wells was itself a waste and, even more, drilling too many wells resulted in a rapid decline in underground pressure, a premature stoppage of the natural flow or even abandonment. Reviewing the history of his country's petroleum industry in the 20s and 30s one American scholar said that "this mad and greedy race for wealth" had caused "the most reckless and extravagant waste of natural resources."

A Massive Battle

Apologists for the capitalist system claim that rapid development is out of the question in the absence of the "law of capture" and "free enterprise." The "gang of four" claimed the same thing: "Socialist low speed [of development] is preferable to capitalist high speed." According to the gang, socialism was incompatible with high-speed development. But the building of the Taching Oilfield has proved that by following Chairman Mao's line in running socialist industry, we can achieve a high speed of development, even under extremely difficult conditions.

While in Taching, we visited two well-arranged exhibitions showing how the oilfield was built. The exhibits and the documentary *Battle Song of Taching* which was made on the late Premier Chou's instructions recapture many moving scenes of the pioneering days. The film was banned, however, from public showing by the "gang of four" for ten years, and has only recently been re-released.

In February 1960, Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee approved a report from the then Ministry of Petroleum Industry and decided to fight a "massive battle" to open up Taching. (Oilfields in socialist China naturally belong to the state which represents the workers and the other labouring people.) Like fighting a "people's war," the "massive battle" meant launching a mass movement to open up the oilfield under the centralized leadership of the Party.

Tens of thousands of workers, demobbed PLA men and engineers and technicians from all parts of the country flocked to the then virtually unpopulated Taching in response to this decision. The command post soon went to work in a disused cow-shed. Braving temperatures of

between -20 and -30 degrees C, groups of people with their bedrolls and tools marched to their assigned "combat posts" on the snowbound grasslands and buckled down to work immediately. At night, they bedded down in tents or dugouts placed near bonfires. A battlefield-like atmosphere prevailed.

In 1960, China was going through a period of temporary economic difficulties arising from serious natural disasters. The Khrushchov clique took advantage of this to put pressure on the Chinese Communist Party, hoping to force it to follow their revisionist line. They withdrew their experts, tore up agreements and contracts, pressed for repayment of debts, and tightened their oil supply to China. Due to the shortage of oil, buses in Peking had to carry huge bags of methane on top as a substitute for petrol. In these circumstances, we had to race against time and build the oilfield quickly — a task to be fulfilled in the revolutionary interests of China and the international proletariat.

The people of Taching put proletarian politics in command and took on the heavy job with determination. Their outstanding representative was Wang Chin-hsi, a Communist Party member and drilling worker who rushed to Taching with his famous No. 1205 Drilling Team from Yumen Oilfield in northwest China. Facing them were bleak grasslands and a host of problems — food, lodging, transport, equipment. . . .

Wang Chin-hsi and his team were undaunted. He asked a former PLA political instructor, "When you're in difficulty in combat, what do you do, push on or fall back?"

"How can we fall back? We push on, even at the risk of our lives."

"Fine! You and I see things in the same light. We mustn't fall back in the battle for oil either. We don't have all the things we need, but we'll create them and get on with the job just the same."

This was a simple remark from an ordinary worker, but it came from the bottom of his heart, crystallizing the magnificent spirit of China's working class and moving people to advance courageously against tremendous odds.

Wang Chin-hsi and his comrades-in-arms went into battle immediately. Since the lift trucks and tractors had not yet arrived, they moved their 60-ton drilling rig from the railway station to the site and put up the 40-metre-high derrick by sheer muscle. Before the water pipes were laid, they broke through the ice in nearby marshes and fetched some 100 tons of water in basins or buckets to solve the problem of water needed in drilling. Now that the necessary preparations had been completed, Wang Chin-hsi ordered drilling to start at daybreak on April 14, 1960. Five days later, crude oil gushed from Taching's first production well amidst resounding cheers of "Long live Chairman Mao!"

Despite fatigue, injury in an accident and all sorts of difficulties, Wang Chin-hsi remained undeterred and kept going throughout. For this people called him "Iron Man," and the name Iron Man Wang stuck and spread. Until he died of illness in 1970, he was always in the van leading the oilfield builders to fight the elements, class enemies, the revisionist line and erroneous ideas.

The oilfield's Party committee convened a meeting of 10,000 people on May 1, 1960, International Labour Day, and called on everyone to learn from the Iron Man. Wearing big red flowers on their chests, he and several other

outstanding workers came to the meeting place on horseback with the leading cadres holding the reins for them. A group of peasant-musicians from nearby villages were invited to play music on traditional instruments to celebrate the occasion. Everyone present, including workers, cadres and intellectuals, became more determined to contribute his or her share to this glorious undertaking. The mass movement to learn from the Iron Man that followed generated inestimable strength and wisdom in the tens of thousands of builders.

Throughout the battle, the oilfield's Party committee was a staunch command post. It made well-thought-out operational plans and, of even greater importance, carried out constant political agitation and education among the builders in line with the time-honoured tradition of the People's Liberation Army. This political work was done through the Party and Communist Youth League organizations, workers' meetings and in a variety of other ways. It kept the builders' morale high, which in turn led to one achievement after another.

Such a massive battle of course called for a highly centralized leadership which was based, nevertheless, on extensive democracy. Everywhere in those days, around bonfires or under candle light in tents, the builders, after coming off the job, had heated discussions about how to build up the oilfield and accomplish the task assigned each unit and made suggestions and criticisms about the leadership and its work.

Harsh as living conditions were, there was an all-pervading warmth of camaraderie. Among themselves, the builders made criticisms and self-criticisms, commended those who fought in the van and helped those lagging behind to catch up. When grain supplies ran low, some-

one would be surprised to find some food in his lunch box, saved and left there by an anonymous comrade. Unhesitatingly, the recipient put it into another comrade's lunch box. In the small hours, leading comrades braved bone-chilling winds to make the rounds of the tents, checking on whether the workers were well covered under cotton-padded quilts or who was not sleeping well for one reason or another. From time to time, troupes performed for the workers beside derricks, rain or shine, wind or snow. Female performers would do darning for any comrade in the audience. . . .

The massive battle rolled ahead with momentum and the first trainloads of crude oil were shipped from Taching on June 1, 1960. This big oilfield was completed in 1963 and the heartening news winged its way throughout the country: The days when China had to depend on imported oil were gone forever. Since then, Taching has continued its high-speed advance.

The Beacon

Over the years, Taching has gone through serious political struggles in addition to those against nature. And it has emerged victorious. Why? It is because the people of Taching have always taken Mao Tsetung Thought as the beacon illuminating their advance. The Iron Man put it well when he said: "In studying Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, one must put it into practice and exert oneself. You haven't got an iota of Marxism-Leninism to speak of if you don't put it into practice."

The Taching people say that they built the oilfield on the strength of studying Chairman Mao's two philosophical

works *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*. The first decision by the Taching Party committee in April 1960 was to call on everyone to study *On Practice* and *On Contradiction* and Chairman Mao's other works and use Mao Tsetung Thought to analyse and solve problems.

Philosophy, of course, cannot replace the social and natural sciences, but it is a generalization and summation of both. From these two basic philosophical works of Chairman Mao's one can learn the Marxist stand, viewpoint and method of analysing and tackling different problems.

Here are a few examples from Taching. Repeated study of *On Practice* has enabled the Taching people to keep firmly to this viewpoint: **"Man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world."** (*On Practice*.) Instead of taking for granted ready conclusions yet to be fully tested and proved in practice (the theory that "China is oil-poor" is one of them), they have paid great attention to obtaining and studying first-hand information. To get a clear picture of the oil layers, they have, from the outset, accumulated a mass of information and data. This way of doing things has become one of their fine traditions — combining soaring revolutionary drive with a strict scientific approach, which has played an important role in the development of Taching.

By studying *On Contradiction* over and over, they reached the clear understanding that of the many complicated and intertwined contradictions in society, the principal and decisive one is class contradiction. This is why they have all along grasped class struggle, the main theme and the key link.

From an international perspective, too, Iron Man's words were incisive: As long as oil production falls short of our

country's needs, "the imperialists and modern revisionists will use this as a breach and get a stranglehold on us." By firmly grasping this key link of international class struggle, the Taching people have pushed their work forward.

The class struggle and two-line struggle at home were no less acute. In the early days of the oilfield, Liu Shao-chi and company took advantage of the country's temporary economic difficulties to slash capital construction projects. After making a hasty round of Taching, they dismissed it as "a complete mess without any resemblance to a proper industrial undertaking." There also were a few people in Taching who were overawed by the difficulties and wanted to retreat. The contradiction between advance and retreat thus constituted the principal contradiction at the time. Once they had understood this key link, the Taching people waged a resolute struggle against the erroneous line, against the handful of class enemies engaging in disruptive activities and against mistaken ideas. Obviously, without the victory of that struggle, Taching as we know it today would not exist.

Later, Lin Piao and his followers and the "gang of four" also went all out to destroy Taching. They attacked Taching's high-speed development of production as following the "theory of productive forces," slandered outstanding workers like Wang Chin-hsi, the Iron Man, as "persons with vested interests" and vilified Taching's cadres as "hard-working capitalist-roaders." Moreover, they came up with the anarchist slogan "Burn up all rules and regulations and emancipate the workers completely" and tried to instigate work stoppages.

Disruptions by the "gang of four" had serious effects in some areas and units. But the people of Taching stood firm and upheld Chairman Mao's principle of **grasping**

revolution, promoting production. They established and have maintained the annual tradition of selecting and commending pace-setters who excel in both political consciousness and work. Meeting the serious interference by the gang head-on, Taching again in 1974 called a mammoth meeting of representatives of pace-setters, followed by a parade round the oilfield of some 100 trucks with large numbers of advanced workers aboard. Everywhere, people greeted them with flowers and colourful ribbons amid fluttering red flags and the beating of gongs and drums. It was a powerful demonstration against the "gang of four." It was at this time too that Taching raised the famous slogan: "Going all out to build socialism is justified! Going all out to build socialism is a merit! Going all out to build socialism is an honour! We will continue to make all-out efforts to build socialism!"

A slogan in direct opposition to the "gang of four," it has added lustre to the red banner of Taching put up by Chairman Mao.

Stand up Straight

The building of Taching began in 1960. The same year, major Third World oil producers adopted a measure of great importance—setting up the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). By coincidence in terms of time, these two events merged into the same historical current: The Third World countries are rising to control and exploit their natural resources independently.

Lessons From "Seven Sisters"

Earlier, we dealt briefly with the capitalist way of developing the petroleum industry as typified in the United States. The way international monopoly capital exploits oil in the Third World is only a variation of the same pattern. It follows the same "law of capture," but much more savagely.

In 1901, when oil gushed out at Spindletop in the United States and capital's scramble for oil intensified, greedy imperialists found high-yielding oilfields in Mexico at a place they called Golden Lane. Western literature on the petroleum industry has recorded what happened at the time. Extraction was truly predatory. One of the wells caught fire and palls of smoke darkened the sky. An estimated 50,000 to 100,000 barrels were lost every day. The uncontrolled flush at another well continued for eight months before it was capped. And to save themselves from

the trouble involved, the plunderers chose to skim off only the superficial layer from the fabulously rich wells. "Later, the salt water came in to end their [the wells'] famous careers—leaving the Golden Lane of Mexico a lugubrious monument to the sack of nature's riches."

While reaching into the oilfields of Latin America, the imperialists began trying their luck in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East. The petroleum industry grew in the latter regions mainly during and after World War II. By grabbing oil concessions and setting up transnationals, imperialist monopolies brought the exploration, production, refining, transport and marketing of petroleum under their control. They pillaged large quantities of oil and raked in staggering superprofits. They set up a "state within a state" in these countries to carry out intervention and subversion. This is how the "Seven Sisters"* (the seven biggest transnational oil companies in the capitalist world) amassed their fortunes.

At the same time, the economic development of the oil-producing countries themselves was held back. Rare riches were found underground, while dire poverty prevailed on the surface. Times were when kerosene was a luxury for the labouring people in areas known as a "sea of oil."

The social-imperialists' performance in the scramble for oil is no less disgraceful. They covet an ever greater share of Middle East oil, and make huge profits by selling the fuel so obtained to Western Europe. They repeatedly jack up oil prices to fleece the East European countries depending on them for oil supply.

* Exxon (or Esso, formerly Standard Oil of New Jersey), Shell, British Petroleum (B.P.), Gulf, Texaco, Mobil and Standard Oil of California.

Enhancing National Confidence

Although the old China was not an oil-producing country, it, too, had a long history of oppression and exploitation by the imperialists. One of the pernicious effects of this, as Chairman Mao said, was that **"there are people who, having been slaves too long, feel inferior in everything and don't stand up straight in the presence of foreigners."** (*On the Ten Major Relationships*.) He called on the Chinese people to **"enhance our national confidence"** (*ibid.*) and follow the principle of **"maintaining independence and keeping the initiative in our own hands and relying on our own efforts."**

A salient feature of Taching's role in pioneering China's own road of developing industry is independence and self-reliance.

When Taching was being opened in 1950, the imperialists were still keeping up the blockade and embargo they had imposed on the new China since its founding in 1949. The social-imperialists also put fierce pressure on us. Our industrial and scientific and technical levels were still low and the petroleum industry's foundation was even weaker. At the time of liberation in 1949, China had only eight drilling rigs and two small and poorly equipped oilfields (Shensi's Yenchang and Kansu's Yumen), and annual crude oil output was less than 100,000 tons. In spite of the progress made after liberation, there were still many difficulties involved in building a big modern oilfield solely by our own efforts.

Could we count on "aid" from the imperialists and social-imperialists? No. Such "aid" would entail foreign domination and exploitation. The other way was to stand up straight and do it ourselves. What Taching has done

over the past 17 years proves that this is the correct way. Suffice it to list the following facts.

Were there oil deposits in China or not? This was a big question in the 50s. Since petroleum is formed from ancient organic substances, foreign experts had long held that big oilfields could be found only where, geologically speaking, there were "marine formations," i.e., in ancient seas with the greatest amount of organic sediments. Most of China's territory consisted of "continental formations," i.e., ancient land masses, and so, they alleged the country was "oil-poor." In 1922 the American scholar Elliot Blackwelder wrote that "the scarcity of petroleum in China may be ascribed to three general geologic conditions: First China contains practically no marine sediments. . . ." After presenting a variety of arguments, he concluded: "The writer will venture only the opinion that China will *never* produce large quantities of oil." In 1950 the "authoritative" *Petroleum Facts and Figures* published in the United States listed China in the last category — "small" — in its "Areas of World Classified as to Future Prospects for Oil." Some foreign publications on oil in the mid-50s said: "Providence with a prodigious hand stored petroleum helter-skelter around the world. . . . Among the major powers, only the United States and Soviet Union are favoured with great deposits."

Iron Man Wang Chin-hsi never accepted this facile conclusion. In plain language, he said: "Our country has so vast a territory, I just don't believe that oil deposits are to be found only in foreign countries." He advocated reaching a conclusion through large-scale and painstaking prospecting in line with Chairman Mao's teaching in *On Practice*.

The late distinguished geologist Li Ssu-kuang (who joined the Communist Party of China after liberation and was Minister of Geology and Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences until his death in 1971) did not accept that hasty conclusion either. After an intensive study of the characteristics of China's geological structure, he maintained that some areas were endowed with excellent conditions for oil genesis and accumulation. Industrious labour by the working class and arduous efforts by scientists and technicians finally led to the creation of China's unique theory in petroleum geology. This theory has been borne out in Taching and is being corroborated and enriched by the discovery of other new oilfields.

Oil was struck in Taching, but it has a high solidifying point. What with the area's frigid weather, oil storage and transport posed a problem. By hard work and repeated experiments, however, the Taching people succeeded in introducing a new technological process to ensure the smooth flow of crude oil over 1,507 kilometres of pipeline from Taching to Peking, a project completed by our own efforts in 1975.

Oil erupts from the wells because of the pressure in the oil layers. When yields go down as a result of declining pressure, pumps have to be used to extract the oil. And quite a large portion of it will remain untapped when the wells finally stop producing. This is the general law.

In China, socialist enterprises attach great importance to conserving and fully exploiting resources. The people of Taching have created something new in this respect. At the very start of the natural flow, they inject water to keep the underground pressure stable. The result is that the average yield of old wells has risen instead of drop-

ping over the last 17 years. Taching's first well drilled by the Iron Man and his team in April 1960 is to this day a natural-flowing well with a stable output. With the opening up of new oil zones, Taching has increased crude oil output at an average annual rate of 28 per cent.

Thanks to various effective measures, Taching's recovery rate of crude oil from the total deposits is 15 per cent higher than originally designed. Specialists regard such a rate as fairly high, for gaining such an increase is tantamount to finding another big oilfield.

In well-drilling, the workers at Taching have set such records as drilling a 1,200-metre-deep well with one drill bit in a single day, and an annual drilling footage of 127,000 metres by one team. The present total footage of the No. 1205 team once led by the late Iron Man is equivalent to drilling through the world's highest peak Qomolangma Feng (8,848 metres above sea level) 96 times.

As for oil refining and processing, Taching built a general petrochemical works in the 60s, an all-Chinese enterprise from designing to equipment, which has been expanding ever since. At this giant complex with its forest of towers and crisscrossing pipelines, we saw bags of chemical fertilizer being shipped away and machines spouting tufts of wool-like polyester fibre processed from natural gas. The small number of workers in the workshops pointed to a fairly high level of mechanization.

The working class is the main force in self-reliantly building up Taching although, obviously, scientists and technicians have also contributed their share. They integrate with the workers and learn from the Iron Man. Much laboratory work had to be done when drilling got under way in 1960. The first lab was housed in a disused cow-shed. Instead of waiting for tap water, the lab workers

carried tens of thousands of bucketfuls of water indispensable for experiments. One of the shoulder-poles they used at the time is now on display at one of Taching's exhibitions. To solve the problem of transporting crude oil, a technician, braving severe cold of between -30° and -40° C, remained in the unheated carriage doorway of a speeding train day and night taking readings at frequent intervals. Another managed to use two abacuses, one with each hand, to speed up calculations.

In line with Chairman Mao's principle of forming three-in-one combinations of cadres, workers and technicians, Taching has achieved a great deal in technical innovations. While giving scope to the ability of the scientists and technicians, it has selected large numbers of workers to join them and organized a still greater number of workers for part-time research.

"Learn From Foreign Countries"

While placing primary emphasis on self-reliance, Chairman Mao also pointed out that it is necessary to **"learn from foreign countries."** He said: **"Neither the indiscriminate rejection of everything foreign, whether scientific, technological or cultural, nor the indiscriminate imitation of everything foreign as noted above, has anything in common with the Marxist attitude, and neither in any way benefits our cause."** (*On the Ten Major Relationships*.) The "gang of four" indiscriminately lashed out at learning from other countries as "worshipping things foreign and fawning upon foreigners" to confuse people and disrupt China's socialist modernization. But the Taching people were not taken in by such metaphysical and one-

sided nonsense. They acted in accordance with Mao Tsetung Thought which is replete with dialectical materialism.

Several comrades from the Taching Oilfield's scientific research and designing institute told us in an interview that, in theoretical study, the "gang of four" were ignoramuses. Chairman Mao pointed out in *On Practice*: **"All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience. But one cannot have direct experience of everything; as a matter of fact, most of our knowledge comes from indirect experience, for example, all knowledge from past times and foreign lands."** Therefore, while we rely mainly on direct experience, we should not reject indirect experience, including that of other countries. **"We should put these conclusions to the test of our own experience, assimilating what is useful, rejecting what is useless, and adding what is specifically our own."** (Mao Tsetung: *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*.) This is a Marxist approach.

Taching's workers have done things exactly this way. An example is the already mentioned method of injecting water to keep the pressure stable, one used in other countries. It was after analysing the conditions in a dozen big oilfields abroad that they arrived at the new method of injecting water at an early stage (not at a later stage) and in between wells (not on the fringes of the oilfields). The fracturing technique is also a new method employed abroad to effect fissures in rock formations so as to release the oil trapped in them. On the basis of foreign experience, the workers of Taching created their own fracturing technique. Extensive use of this method has helped increase output considerably.

Completed in 1976, the Taching Chemical Fertilizer Plant we visited has an annual capacity equivalent to one million tons of standard chemical fertilizer. As its major installations were imported, the "gang of four," and Chiang Ching in particular, kicked up a fuss, saying that importing equipment was a "disgrace," and wanted to have them dismantled and moved away. Speaking of this incident, the plant builders were filled with indignation. They said: "The plant was built on our own land, it uses our own raw materials and turns out products for our own use. The chemical fertilizer it produces is for boosting farm production, which in turn helps increase our ability to stand on our own feet. What's wrong with that!" In the course of construction, they kept in mind Chairman Mao's teachings of "relying mainly on our own efforts" and "making foreign things serve China," shrugged off the gang's curses and brought their creativeness into full play, thus completing the project ahead of schedule.

Imperialist Myth Being Exploded

The workers at Taching take a great interest in technical advances by the petroleum industry in other countries for comparative study. But they watch the political developments involved even more keenly, especially the oil struggle of the Third World. In 1973, when the Arab countries used the oil weapon to hit imperialism during the October Middle East war, Taching's people acclaimed this pioneering event. In their opinion, the developing countries can and should unite to break the imperialist monopoly over oil and other raw materials and safeguard their interests;

the Third World countries can and should control and exploit their own resources independently.

While we were in Taching, newspapers reported that, following Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, Venezuela and other countries, Qatar had nationalized all its oil resources. The myth spread by the imperialists that the poor countries could not manage their own petroleum industry, let alone develop it, is being exploded.

There is an exhibition hall in Taching on the history of China's petroleum industry. On exhibit is *Tien Kung Kai Wu (Ingenious Creations)*, a book written by Sung Ying-hsing in 1637, which recorded ancient China's scientific and technical achievements. With explanations and illustrations, it details how the labouring people in southwestern China's Szechuan Province used bamboo poles, with a drill bit fixed at one end, to drill deep wells for brine and natural gas. The famous British scholar Dr. Joseph Needham wrote in his *Science and Civilization in China*: "The art of drilling deep wells or bore-holes, such as are used today for exploiting fields of petroleum, is specifically Chinese, for we have much evidence for it in Szechuan going back to the period between 100 B.C. and 100 A.D. during the Han Dynasty."

Other Third World countries also have a long-standing history of striking and using oil. Why then did the Western countries have exclusive access to this technique in modern times? Simply because they had become colonialist and imperialist, while the Third World countries were reduced to colonies or semi-colonies.

The people of Taching are justifiably proud of themselves for building a large, modern oilfield independently and self-reliantly. But they remain modest. They always bear in mind Chairman Mao's teaching: "Even when one

day our country becomes strong and prosperous, we must still adhere to the revolutionary stand, remain modest and prudent, learn from other countries and not allow ourselves to become swollen with conceit. . . . We must be ready to learn even ten thousand years from now. Is there anything bad about that?" (*On the Ten Major Relationships.*)

"Black Gold" and the Red Flag

Capitalism was restored as the revisionists rose to power in the Soviet Union, the world's first socialist state. Those who head industrial and other enterprises there now ride roughshod over the labouring people, and punish and lay off employees as they please. They seize a huge share of social wealth and live in luxury, worlds apart from the life of the labouring people. Even though they continue to claim to be "communists," they have actually turned into bureaucrat-monopoly capitalists. As a class, these people are even more ferocious than the old-line capitalists for they not only wield financial power, but also have direct control of political power. On the other hand, the Soviet proletariat and other working people have been deprived of their position as masters of the state and enterprises.

Combating and preventing revisionism so as to forestall recurrence of the Soviet historical tragedy is the primary task facing socialist China and a cardinal issue in the contemporary international communist movement. The Great Cultural Revolution initiated and led by Chairman Mao is aimed precisely at solving this problem.

Flaunting the banner of preventing capitalist restoration, the "gang of four" created confusion and tried to undermine the economic base of China's dictatorship of the proletariat. They chanted, among other things, that "satellites go into the sky while the red flag falls to the

ground." With the development of the economy and science and technology, according to their logic, the red flag of Marxism-Leninism and of the dictatorship of the proletariat is bound to fall, as was the case in the Soviet Union.

But Taching's people were not misled by such sophistry. They grasp revolution to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the same time, they make revolution the prime mover and work hard to promote production. This in turn strengthens the economic base of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In short, what we saw in Taching was a scene of "black gold" gushing forth and the red flag flying high."

Some foreign commentators assert that the stress on learning from Taching shows a shift of emphasis from revolution to economic development in China. This is either a misunderstanding or a wilful distortion. Taching has always been a model in grasping revolution and promoting production. Even now a mass revolutionary struggle to expose and repudiate the "gang of four" is in full swing there.

Servants of Society

To prevent cadres who ought to be "servants of society" from turning into "masters of society" sitting high above the people is an important matter that Marx and Engels raised when they wrote about the experience of the 1871 Paris Commune, the world's first regime of the proletariat. Chairman Mao again and again stressed that cadres of the Party and state are ordinary workers and not overlords

and that the main target of the struggle in the historical period of socialism is the capitalist-roaders in the Party.

Through struggles against such capitalist-roaders as Liu Shao-chi, Lin Biao and the "gang of four," Taching's leading bodies have become more revolutionized and more closely linked with the workers.

We visited the well-drilling command, one of the oil-field's major departments. It is in charge of many drilling teams and other related units manned by 8,320 people. Under it, 3,620 housewives are organized in farm work, side-occupations or service trades.

The command's leading body (the Party committee and the revolutionary committee) is composed of 23 members, 19 of them workers who were first appointed leaders of grassroots units like drilling teams and then promoted to their present posts. Another leading member in charge of farm production is a drilling worker's wife. The remaining three are college graduates. The Party committee secretary is 39-year-old Tang Hsi-erh, formerly a driller, and the Communist Youth League committee secretary is Wu Shu-chen, 28, who was the leader of a woman's drilling team formed in 1974.

After taking up leading posts, these comrades are required to retain the fine qualities of the working people. As for the college graduates, it is all the more necessary for them to integrate with the workers.

Taching has always paid attention to this. A "three-point covenant" was laid down in its early days for the leading cadres: First, they must keep to the style of hard work and plain living, and not seek any privileges; second, they must take part in productive labour, and not sit around like overlords; and third, they must observe the

rules of the "three honest's and four strict's,"* which has become a popular motto in Taching.

In recent years, the leading cadres have been required to "be open and aboveboard in four aspects": First, state one's views publicly instead of concealing them; second, examine one's own mistakes and shortcomings publicly in criticisms and self-criticisms; third, report on one's work to the whole leading body and don't do anything behind others' backs; and fourth, be upright in daily behaviour and don't do anything detrimental to the public interest. These four requirements help put the leading members under the supervision of the collective and the masses. They are conducive to implementing the three basic principles put forward by Chairman Mao, namely, "Practise Marxism, and not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and aboveboard, and don't intrigue and conspire."

To ensure the fulfilment of these requirements, Taching has evolved many effective measures based on practical experience gained over the years. The comrades at the well-drilling command cited some examples for us.

The measures stress cadre participation in labour. All leading cadres and office workers have to take part in labour every Friday. One day a month is set aside for every leading cadre as "learn-from-workers day" during which he works alongside the workers on one shift at the grassroots level, joins their political study session, stays overnight and eats three meals with them. And all cadres must go to the grassroots units to be workers for one month every year. Apart from taking part in industrial production, they have to join in farm work, from sowing

*"Three honest's": be honest in thought, word and deed. "Four strict's": set strict standards for work, organization, attitude and observance of discipline.

to harvesting. Leading members of the command, for example, farm an "experimental plot" of one-fifth of a hectare near their offices, planting maize and experimenting with high yields on Fridays and in their off-hours. While labouring, they make it a point to learn from the workers one or several skills.

The measures also stress the need for leading cadres to go to the grassroots units and prevent themselves from issuing arbitrary orders. Cadres in higher leading posts take turns working as leaders of drilling teams or other grassroots units. There are "frontline command posts" formed by leading cadres who stay at key units to direct work on the spot. There also is the "roving office" — leading cadres make the rounds of various worksites to solve problems where they arise.

The measures stress supervision of the leadership by the masses. In addition to regular channels (such as Party, Youth League, shift or group meetings) through which the masses make suggestion and criticisms regarding the leading organs, "workers' check-up groups" are organized at least once a year. In 1976, for example, the well-drilling command invited 100 representatives from its grassroots units to check on its work. When they arrived, the staff of the command greeted them to the sound of drums and gongs. The leading comrades reported on their work, answered questions and listened to criticisms and suggestions. The representatives then inspected different sections of the command and made their comments as they went from office to office.

Generally speaking, leading cadres in Taching put strict demands on themselves and others as well. The home of the command's Party secretary Tang Hsi-erh is some 60 kilometres away. He finds time to go home by

bus only once every two or three months. The command allocated rooms for his family in the vicinity. He declined because some old workers' homes were also far away, and he saw to it that one of them moved into them. Influenced by the "gang of four" ideologically, a young Party committee member went in for factional activities. Taking this matter of principle seriously, the Party committee called several meetings to help him realize his mistakes. As a result, he made a self-criticism at one of the Party committee meetings and before the whole staff of the command.

That Taching's cadres adhere to plain living is obvious. Like the workers, they eat in the same kind of canteens, live in the same one-storey brick houses, enjoy the same free medical treatment, wear the same work clothes. . . . In appearance, it is hard to tell leading cadres who have tens of thousands of people under them from ordinary workers.

China today is still in the historical period of socialism. The principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work" must be applied, and there is an eight-grade wage system. Chairman Mao pointed out that such things can only be restricted under the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, the "gang of four" distorted revolutionary theory, lied and uttered high-sounding words, as if "bourgeois right" could be done away with immediately. Their aim was to create confusion and fish in troubled waters. Earnestly following Chairman Mao's teaching, Taching's cadres are consciously restricting bourgeois right and taking practical steps to identify themselves with the workers.

It is precisely because Taching's leading bodies maintain close ties with the masses and **"wholeheartedly rely**

on the working class," as Chairman Mao taught, that they have mass support. They are staunch and powerful, and their orders are fully carried out. Hence a dialectical combination of Party leadership with the mass line and democracy with centralism. Faking reliance on the working class, the "gang of four," however, advocated anarchism and negated Party leadership and thus at one time threw some enterprises out of gear. But their reactionary litany found few listeners in Taching.

"Our Taching"

From workers to hostel attendants, people in Taching often say, "Our Taching." This expresses a strong sense of being their own masters.

As masters of the oilfield and the state, the people of Taching have raised the resounding slogan "Going all out to build socialism is an honour!" They mean what they say and emulate each other. Every unit in Taching has made it a rule to select and commend pace-setters every year. While we were in Taching, mass discussions were going on to review and sum up the work in 1976. This culminated in the selection of the most outstanding pace-setters as well as large numbers of advanced workers and advanced collectives. Among them were workers, housewives doing farming, cadres, intellectuals and representatives from other walks of life. Like greeting combat heroes on their triumphant return, people showered congratulations on them.

As their own masters, Taching's people have a high sense of responsibility which is epitomized by their nationally renowned "system of responsibility at each post."

This set of rules and regulations clearly defines each person's post and responsibility, requirements for changing shifts, equipment maintenance, quality of work and products, safety in production, business accounting and so forth. Simple and concise, they are worked out through the "three-in-one" efforts of the workers, technicians and leading cadres. After putting them into practice for a period, they sum up experience and reform what is irrational and outdated.

This sense of responsibility can be seen everywhere. Each shift and group in Taching has a book recording its work progress. We thumbed through many during our visit and found that every entry was neatly and carefully written, without a single exception for months or even years. The equipment at every work-site was in good condition and clean. The machine room of each oil well and its surrounding area were neat and orderly.

As masters, the people of Taching strive to become both "Red and expert," that is, having a socialist consciousness and being highly competent vocationally. Going around a huge warehouse, we found spare parts and accessories for various types of motor vehicles, nails and wire of different specifications and a great array of other materials — arranged in good order in different depots manned by a small number of people. The warehouse personnel train hard to master their skills. In a big storehouse where 1,040 different kinds of diesel engine spare parts are kept on dozens of shelves, 23-year-old Chi Li-li of Mongolian nationality, one of the women workers there, could reel off the type, specification, price and stock on hand of any spare part by touching it with her hands without looking at it. Nearly all the other warehouse keepers have similar skills making for quick and accurate work. Asked why

she had trained so hard, she replied: "We must have the desire to serve the people and the skill to do it as well."

Taching has a method of training known as "the 100-query meetings." From time to time, comrades of a unit will gather and choose a few from among themselves (both leading members and workers) to take a "test." Questions, both political and technical, are put to the "examinees" who are required to answer right away. Many pass the 100-query test. A lively atmosphere prevails at such meetings, without a trace of the tension commonly found in examination sessions, because the aim is to exchange experience and learn from one another.

As masters, the Taching people attach importance to frugality. The sewing and mending factory is a good example. Manned by 415 people and equipped with 160 machines including washers and dryers, this factory occupying five buildings was originally a ramshackle house where several workers' wives washed and darned work clothes in the early days of Taching. Today, the main work continues to be making work clothes, fur caps, gloves and other wear from discarded material. The lining of a cotton-padded jacket, for instance, is made of tatters patched together after a thorough cleaning. Over the years, the factory has saved 920,000 metres of cotton cloth and large quantities of other material. This "spirit of the sewing and mending factory" has become one of Taching's fine traditions. Explaining the reasons for doing this, comrades there said: "Construction of our country needs funds. But where do they come from? We can neither plunder others like the imperialists do nor beg from them. The only way is to do our best to increase production and practise economy."

As their own masters, Taching's people are concerned about comrades who lag behind, and help them catch up, as if they were their own brothers and sisters. We heard many interesting examples of this. One young worker who was sloppy in his work was obsessed about raising pigs, rabbits, fish and pigeons. People nicknamed him "commander of the three services" because he "commanded" animals on land, in the water and in the sky. Another young worker had been dubbed "Dr. Sparrow" because he spent so much time studying ways of catching birds. And we saw for ourselves some of his superbly made traps. In dealing with such comrades, the leadership did not simply punish them and fellow-workers did not look down upon them. Instead, all worked together to remould them in the interests of the revolution. As a result of patient persuasion, comradely criticism, and warm encouragement whenever they made a little progress, the two young workers and many others like them gradually mended their ways and some even became advanced workers. This, of course, does not rule out punishment for those who violate discipline and refuse to mend their ways after repeated education. But such punishment, usually a public warning, is primarily aimed at helping them correct their mistakes. Lay-offs — the most commonly used big stick under capitalist or revisionist rule — are nowhere to be found.

This is how to deal with comrades who lag behind or have made mistakes. But the Taching people are always merciless towards class enemies and criminals who are indeed a tiny handful. In the criticism of the "gang of four," for example, besides small meetings in various units, meetings of some 200,000 people were held almost once every two weeks. The proceedings at the central meeting

place where speakers took the floor were relayed to other meeting places through a hook-up system and televised live by Taching's own TV transmitting station for grassroots units with TV sets. Both leading cadres and workers spoke at the meetings. They cited facts from Taching to denounce the "gang of four" and their henchmen. The atmosphere was militant.

This is Taching — an oilfield developing at high speed and a bulwark of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Leading members identify themselves with ordinary workers, and workers are masters of the oilfield. Class enemies are "drowning in a sea of people's war."

Taching reminds us of Engels' famous remark:

"Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." (Introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France*.)

So look at Taching. That is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Combining Urban and Rural Life

The conventional way of developing a big mine or oilfield under capitalism is to build a city right there or a distance away. Administrative setups, educational and cultural institutions, medical facilities, shops, service centres and residential quarters are concentrated in the city. This usually brings many of the drawbacks found in modern urban life—congestion, noise, pollution, commuting to and from work, food supplies having to come from faraway agricultural areas, imposing buildings alongside dilapidated slums and so forth. In countries where agriculture dominates the economy, large numbers of workers' family members would flock there from the countryside and turn from farm producers into consumers.

When Taching was being opened up in 1960, some people bound by capitalist and revisionist conventions wanted to build a "petroleum city" 30 kilometres away from the oilfield. But Taching broke away from this traditional concept. On his 1958 inspection tour of the Wuhan Iron and Steel Company, a big enterprise in central China, Chairman Mao pointed out: Such big enterprises **"should engage in agriculture, trade, education and military training as well as industry."** That is the orientation to be followed.

Taching organized its workers in 1961 to reclaim wasteland so as to ease the strain on the food supply at the time. The following year, workers' wives who had come

in large numbers were organized to do the same. Meanwhile, scattered settlements were set up under the overall plan for building up the oilfield. When the late Premier Chou inspected Taching for the second time in 1963, he summed up the experience already gained there and put forward the principle of "combining industry with agriculture and town with country to facilitate both production and the people's livelihood." In 1966, Chairman Mao issued the call: **"Where conditions permit, they [the workers] should also engage in agriculture and side-occupations, just as people do in the Taching Oilfield."**

The revolutionary teachers of the proletariat long ago pointed to the need to eliminate the differences between town and country and between worker and peasant in communist society. Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* called for the **"combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country."** In his *Principles of Communism*, Engels envisaged **"communities of citizens engaged in industry as well as agriculture, and combining the advantages of both urban and rural life without the one-sidedness and disadvantages of either."** Although the transition to communism is as yet a distant task, Taching has taken the first step towards this goal.

The oilfield has been built into a unique "country-like town and town-like country." Industrial installations, strewn across the grasslands, are surrounded by farming areas. Lush green fields are dotted with snow-white cabins housing oil-extraction machinery. Tractors chug past towering plants and workshops. And cattle graze in pastures which have a complicated network of pipelines underneath.

Instead of a single densely populated city, there are some 60 "worker-peasant villages" with 164 settlements around them. The villages are complete with commercial establishments, food-processing workshops, service centres, post offices, bank offices handling savings accounts, clinics, schools, nurseries and other facilities. Able-bodied housewives are organized to do farming or work in subsidiary small industries and service trades.

Administrative Structure

How is the oilfield administered? In the words of the people of Taching, it is a "new, socialist mining area combining industry with agriculture and town with country, where the petrochemical industry remains its major undertaking; industry, agriculture, military affairs, education and culture and commerce form an integral whole; and farming, forestry, animal husbandry, side-occupations and fisheries develop in an all-round way." What does this mean?

Taching today has a population of 500,000. It includes workers and staff members in the petrochemical industry and other trades, and housewives who do farm and other work. Students, pre-school children and old people make up the remainder.

The Taching Oilfield combines government administration with enterprise management. Its leading organ (the revolutionary committee) is concurrently the local government which takes all-round charge of industry, agriculture, military affairs (mainly militia), education and culture and commerce. China is a socialist country under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the Communist Party, the

political party of the proletariat, exercises leadership in everything. Therefore, the oilfield's revolutionary committee works under the centralized leadership of the oilfield's Party committee. Such a combination of government administration and enterprise management is conducive to concerting the efforts of all trades and professions and helps streamline the administrative structure.

The oilfield itself is an enterprise owned by the state which represents the working class and other labouring people. Profits must be turned over to the state and the wages of workers and staff members are paid by the state according to a nationally unified wage scale. With regard to housewives in farm and other work, collective ownership by the working people is applied. After a certain amount of reserve and welfare funds have been deducted, proceeds from production are distributed according to the "work-points" they earn. There is not much difference between the incomes of those in industry and those in agriculture. As is the case with other parts of the country, the principle of taking grain as the key link and ensuring an all-round development is followed in farm production. So, besides grain production, there are forestry, animal husbandry, side-occupations and fisheries.

A Worker-Peasant Village

Chuangyeh (Pioneer) Village which we visited was the first of its kind built in Taching. It now has 599 families, making up a population of 2,558. Rows of one-storey brick buildings stand widely separated across fields stretching as far as the eye can see. Urban congestion was totally absent here. In the past there was not a single

tree on the grasslands, but many now have been planted in Chuangyeh Village (the entire oilfield today has over 10 million trees, mostly lining the asphalt-surfaced roads or in and around the residential areas). We went to see a small mechanized bakery where biscuits are produced, a well-stocked department store and a spick-and-span kindergarten and nursery. This village also has workshops making noodles, bean curd, soya bean sauce and other foodstuffs, a new small distillery, a clinic with a staff of 40 and a ward of 30 beds, a public bath house, a barber-shop and service centres where watches, clocks, bicycles, and so on can be repaired. We called on a few families whose rooms, though simply furnished, were clean, comfortable and well heated (it was still cold at the time of our visit in early spring).

Taching's people, the women in particular, have made strenuous efforts to build these villages from scratch.

One of Chuangyeh's leading personnel, a middle-aged woman told us the moving story of "making revolution with five spades." It was in the spring of 1962 that five housewives first responded to the call of the oilfield's Party committee to reclaim wasteland. Carrying five spades with them, they trudged together with two youngsters through waist-high grass in the wilderness and located a site to pitch a tent. Conditions were harsh, and wolves prowled at night. Because their bottle of kerosene had spilled, they had to spend the night in complete darkness. Switching on their flashlights, they sat up and studied Chairman Mao's *Serve the People*, encouraging each other to keep going whatever the difficulty. More and more housewives joined them later. Without draught animals, they pulled the ploughs themselves. Why did they take all these hardships and hazards upon themselves? Not that their hus-

bands could not provide for them, but because they felt it necessary to make their contribution when they saw the oil workers throwing themselves heart and soul into opening up the oilfield for the motherland. Apart from battling the elements, they had to combat age-old ideas of looking down upon women and also break with such traditional concepts as "marrying a man to ensure food and clothing."

Conditions today are a far cry from what they were. Apart from tractors and harvesters, they have horse carts, trucks, and drainage and irrigation equipment including sprinklers. Nevertheless, people in the village still stress the spirit of the "five spades."

There are many other worker-peasant villages like Chuangyeh with such militant names as Huichan (Massive Battle), Hsienfeng (Vanguard), Chiehfang (Liberation) and Shengli (Victory).

Life in Taching

In Taching we witnessed a revolutionary surge to expose and criticize the "gang of four" and a rising drive to step up production. At the same time, we were impressed by other aspects of life there.

First, there is full employment and the people are well cared for. The fast-developing oilfield needs workers, as do the other oilfields which are being developed elsewhere. The manpower saved by mechanization and automation can be channelled into new undertakings. Many one-time housewives have freed themselves from household chores and taken up farm and other work. Workers also do a stint of farm work in off-hours and during the

busy farming seasons. Thanks to the unified leadership over all trades and professions, those no longer physically fit for their work are transferred to other posts. For instance, several people now working in Chuangyeh were once drillers.

All Taching's school-age children are in the classroom, and senior middle school education has become universal. While their main task is studying, the students also take part in industrial and agricultural production when they reach the fourth grade of primary school. After graduation from middle school, as a rule they go to settle in "youth centres" run by the worker-peasant villages and take part in collective farm production. Many become oil workers or join other trades afterwards. (The Chuangyeh comrades told us that good results have been achieved in family planning too and the birth rate has dropped to 11 per thousand.) The elderly receive pensions if they were workers. In our society, it is a custom to respect the old and help the disabled, and young people regard it a bounden duty to care for their old parents.

Second, there is plenty of evidence of the emancipation of women and equality between the sexes. Marxism holds: **"The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree."** (Engels: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.)

What has happened in Taching is living testimony of this. Women once confined to their families are now taking part in Taching's social productive labour, political study and other social activities. They have their own income. Thus they enjoy an equal position both in their families and in society. There are quite a number of women in

Taching's leading bodies at various levels and two have been promoted to posts at the ministerial level in the Ministry of Petroleum and Chemical Industries and the Ministry of Coal Industry under the State Council.

Former housewives mainly do farm work. But this does not mean there are no women in industrial units. On the contrary, there are many women workers. To further women's emancipation, Taching has made a point to form women's teams for jobs usually regarded as beyond their ability, such as oil-extraction, well-drilling and motor transport. We visited one oil-extracting team near Chuangyeh Village. A pace-setter for years running, it is made up of 108 young women with an average age of 22 who handle 31 oil wells and 12 water injection wells. They have close to four hectares of cropland and a vegetable garden near where they live, raise pigs and chickens and run their own canteen. They have their own sports teams and an art troupe. Regular militia training has taught them how to use both light and heavy machine-guns. Their offices, dormitories, canteen and sports ground are well kept. The capable and vivacious 24-year-old girl who took us around is a leading member of the team.

Third, the Taching people are advancing towards common prosperity. China is a developing country and the living standards of the people are still not high. However, on the basis of increased production, the people's livelihood is being improved step by step, as can be seen from Taching. In the past few years, the "gang of four" spread many wild fallacies. For instance, they labelled anyone concerned about the people's well-being an advocate of "material incentives." With withering disdain for this kind of nonsense, Taching's leadership took effective measures to expand collective welfare while applying the socialist

principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work."

Rent, electricity, water, heating and cooking fuel are free. Working couples who leave their babies or infants in the nurseries (mostly day-care) pay only for food. There are no tuition fees in school. Buses are also free on all lines linking various parts of the vast oilfield. Workers and staff members enjoy free medical treatment while family dependents pay only half of their medical fees — the same as in other enterprises throughout the country. Film shows and theatrical performances are provided free of charge at the grassroots units. All this, combined with full employment, has made for a general improvement in living standards. As comrades in Chuangyeh Village told us, nearly every family there has savings in the bank. The interest rate for bank savings is very low in China. People try to save because frugality is widely accepted as a virtue. Besides, with everyone depositing some idle money in the state bank, a large sum which can be used to finance socialist construction projects is accumulated.

One may safely say that in Taching there is neither a luxurious home nor a jobless family in dire straits.

Social custom has a part to play in the cost of living. Take clothing as one example. One can wear better clothes if one chooses to. As we saw in Taching, many young women workers do dress in well-cut colourful blouses or jackets in their off-hours. But in our society, it is quite unnecessary to dress up so as to show one's "income bracket" or position on the social ladder. This is all the more true in Taching with its tradition of hard work and plain living. Ostentation and extravagance at public functions or in private life are detested.

In a nutshell, life in Taching is militant and hard-working, and at the same time meaningful and happy.

Learn from Taching

With its many outstanding features, Taching is indeed worthy of being called a red banner put up by Chairman Mao and meticulously cared for by Premier Chou. The Party Central Committee headed by Chairman Hua is resolutely implementing Chairman Mao's call "**in industry, learn from Taching**" and this is making a tremendous impact on the whole country.

On our trip back to Peking we sensed the all-pervading atmosphere of learning from Taching. At the big boiler plant we visited during a stop-over in Harbin, capital of Heilungkiang Province, we saw workers earnestly discussing measures to emulate Taching. Learning from Taching, railway departments were clearing away the mess caused by the "gang of four" and rapidly improving their work. The crew members of the train we took swept the aisles again and again to keep the cars clean. This is one of their concrete, though minor, measures in the drive to learn from Taching.

Late at night, when the train stopped in Tangshan, the city struck by a powerful earthquake in July 1976, we saw thousands of lights shining near and far, a sure sign that the city was recovering fast. The big Kailuan Coal Mines there is a nationally famous unit which distinguished itself for its achievements in learning from Taching. The earthquake caused heavy losses, as though it had been ravaged by war. But it has continued to emulate Taching. All

of Kailuan's seven collieries have resumed production and one has reached the pre-quake production level.

All this called to mind two lines of a verse we read in Taching:

Rolling on and on, one wave rises higher than the last;

With one banner flying high, a forest of banners turns bright red.

With the red banner of Taching leading the way, China's industry will develop at an ever higher speed, and its dictatorship of the proletariat will become more consolidated than ever.

大庆印象记
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