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SOYA BEANS/OIL WELLS INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE GO FORWARD HAND IN HAND

'More than a century ago Marx and Engels foresaw the elimination of the antithesis between town and countryside would not only become possible, but would directly correspond to the needs of industrial and agricultural production. To eliminate this antithesis will take a long time: it is one of the steps to communism. Daqing's experiment is only a first step, but it points the way.' - People's Daily; April 1966.

DAQING OIL FIELD is a spectacular example of China's progress through communal endeavour. Here, a vast community — or more accurately, a collection of communities — has sprung out of what was recently a wilderness pastureland, inhabited by a scattering of shepherds. The first pioneers arrived in the Daqing basin in 1959. In the intervening seven years they, and many thousands of new recruits, have created China's most modern oil producing municipality. At the same time the region has become a thriving farmland, run largely by women. This programme of dual activity represents a new form of social organisation which integrates city with countryside, combining the benefits of both.

Thorny Oil

Oil, a thorn in the side of the twentieth century, is unfortunately requisite to the progress of the modern industrialised nation. Until relatively recently geologists were altogether gloomy about China's supplies of the precious mineral, saying that as the deeper strata of her land had never been ocean bottoms they were therefore unlikely to contain any worthwhile deposits of oil. And indeed, between 1907, when oil was first commercially produced in China, and 1949, less than three million tons of crude oil had been tapped. This drop in the bucket of China's needs was increased to a fair trickle when experts from the USSR helped to develop the industry after Liberation. But still, after 1960 when the Soviet advisers left,

China was having to depend on imported oil. Then Russia cancelled her contracts and the US had placed an embargo, so it was imperative that China increase her own production. Chinese geologists had discovered a gigantic oil producing field at Daqing, an area shrugged off by foreign experts. On 30 September 1959, immediately prior to China's tenth National Day Celebration, the first well was successfully drilled at Daqing (Daqing: 'Great Celebration') and a new wave

of hope swept the country that China might now cease to be dependent on imported oil.

The first oil workers found a rather harsh welcome at the Daqing basin. The only existing shelters were the tamped earth dwellings of the local shepherds. Lacking other materials, the oil workers were obliged to adopt the building techniques developed by those natives, and not surprisingly, found that the houses they built for themselves were very comfortable and highly functional. The material cost nothing and was readily available, the structure was easily raised, and the result — if not a positive thing of beauty — was warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Thus, tamped earth became the universal solution to the housing problem.

(continued on page 2)

EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE ARTICLE headed 'From Inside China—Three Reports' in our last issue has elicited comments both approving and disapproving. Some of the latter seem to be based on misconceptions which we think it desirable to attempt to dispel.

As was made clear in the first sentence of the article, SACU NEWS — a monthly newsletter with very little space at its disposal — cannot attempt to report fully on the unprecedented mass movement that has been going on in China for more than half a year now, and will certainly continue for a long time to come. What we have done, in every issue since September, is to publish a series of reports (generally first-hand), which in our view both complement British press, radio and television reporting, and help readers to understand better what is going on in China.

The reports we have so far published are by ten different authors. We think that this is a strength, not a weakness, but they clearly cannot purport to give a rounded picture of the Chinese cultural revolution. In printing them we do not necessarily agree with every word, but we believe they all contain something of the totality of the truth about China which it is the aim of SACU, from a friendly standpoint, to convey.

In the belief that this is the right policy for a journal such as ours, we shall continue to print reports which come to us from time to time.

Soya Beans/Oil Wells

(continued from page 1)

Even today everything from schools to offices to department stores are built of earth. Only the very largest structures — those having the most exacting requirements, the oil refineries, the hospital, and the Research Institute — have had to be built of materials other than earth.

When, in the first years, it became clear the field was rich in oil, and as more and more workers with their families migrated to the region, it was necessary to make a broad plan for the development of the entire community. The idea of an 'oil city' was rejected by the workers. Instead, they decided on a decentralised municipality, under a single political jurisdiction, but splintered into scores of residential areas to be spread over the whole basin and connected by highways and buslines. Today only three of these areas have populations as large as twenty thousand. Most are tiny villages having as few as three hundred population, each part of a 'cluster' having perhaps five thousand people in all, served by centrally located shops, baths, canteens, etcetera.

Fourteen Methods

As for the oil fields themselves, some quite awe-inspiring statistics are offered by the officials of the Research Institute. A body of scientists had jointly surveyed the entire Daqing basin using fourteen different methods (including artificial earthquakes, chemical and bacteriological tests) before picking the most favourable spot to begin development. Uncounted kilometres of core taken from test drillings were analysed. Some twenty-seven million comparisons of data were made in order to form a complete picture of the oil reservoir. Only then was the site chosen for the 'battle for oil'.

Clearly, a sense of urgency, of national need, and of revolutionary favour prods the majority of workers at Daqing to give their utmost effort to this battle. The writings of Mao are studied and discussed for an average of two hours per day by some of the drill teams. 'On Practice' and 'On Contradiction' are cited as being especially valuable in prompting the workers 'to think and to dare'. Two drill teams, aided — as they say — by these studies, claim to have broken all world records by drilling an average of 7,850 metres each month since January 1966.

Their success was due not only to the stimulation provided by Mao's thought, but to the constant attention paid to improvements and modernisation. Joint conferences between oil workers, engineers and administrators

— customary in China — guided the processes into the paths of greatest efficiency. Two examples of innovations accredited to the Daqing oil workers are: 1. The super lightweight 'Christmas Tree' — the branching cap universally employed in cutting the flow of oil rising to the surface. Their device was repeatedly improved by reducing the size and weight from 1800 kilos (Russian version prior to 1960) down to Daqing's present version weighing less than 270 kilos. And 2. **Water injection process** — a complex system of simultaneous water injection into a well from the commencement of pumping oil, in order to keep the underground pressure at an unchanging level and enabling a greater percentage of oil to be taken than had been hitherto realised in any oil field. Daqing technicians conducted exhaustive tests of the varying rock formations and were able to devise elaborate equipment which has proved capable of maintaining a stable pressure and output for six years — a significant achievement in the science of oil extraction.

Meanwhile, Above Ground . . .

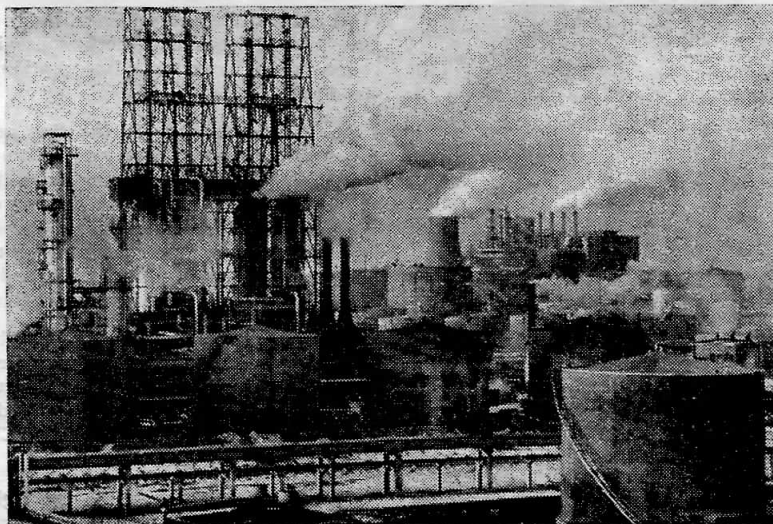
The women and families of the oil workers do most of the farming and community service work. The story goes that fifty year old Mother Hsueh pioneered the idea that women should take it upon themselves to exploit the pastureland stretching over the vast mineral deposits which their husbands were busily tapping. In 1962, when work was beginning in earnest below the earth, Mother Hsueh led a group of four women armed with spades to

a place some thirty kilometres distant from their settlement. There they set up a crude tent and began digging the virgin soil. After three days, and having dug nearly an acre, they were joined by eighteen more women, who brought along thirteen children. This group finally planted two and a half acres and harvested 3,850 pounds of soya beans. The crop was distributed among the twenty-four who had done the work, and those who wished set aside a portion to be given to families with weak children. That first planting site became the August First Village and has now a hundred households. The following year Mother Hsueh led seventy-one families to another site, this time equipped with a tractor. This settlement now numbers over six thousand households.

This and other tales of meeting the tough frontier existence at Daqing are inevitably spelled out with hosannas to the inspiration of Chairman Mao Tse Tung. Among women, especially, a difficult adjustment was required. Many were asked to volunteer for heavy work which, because their husbands were well paid, did not contribute to their own well being particularly. It was obvious, therefore, that their work had to be a dedicated act, or, as it is usually put, revolutionary action.

A more detailed account of the Daqing Oil Field may be found in Letter from China, 15 December 1966, by Anna Louise Strong, from which this article was drawn.

A general view of the installation at Daqing



NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

OXFORD: Two red-bound copies of Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung and some superb slides of China were colourful features of a symposium entitled 'China: Autumn 1966' held in Oxford on 27 January, when Dr J. C. Kendrew, FRS, deputy chairman of the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, Dr Kurt Mendelssohn, FRS, Reader in Physics, Oxford, and Mrs Mendelssohn gave impressions of their recent visits.

The Chinese and English versions of Mao Tse-tung's quotations belonged to Dr Kendrew, who spoke about the cultural revolution and Chinese attitudes to the USSR and the USA. Mrs Mendelssohn described her visits to factories and communes, to workers' homes and to student quarters which were very small and simply furnished. A striking comment was that children's bookshops were the only bookshops she had seen where anything other than Mao's works could be bought.

The emphasis in Dr Mendelssohn's talk was on technological advance which he illustrated with the magnificent slides he had taken. Recent startling developments included an electron microscope and micro-balances. He also showed a Chinese car, the control panel of a fully automated factory operated by a Red Guard, and other shots of Red Guards.

A lively and sometimes heated discussion followed.

A FILM AND COMMENTARY by John Bell, a petroleum geologist, was the main feature of a highly successful meeting of the Manchester branch held on 11 February at Friends' Meeting House.

Although the attendance was disappointing—those present were almost entirely non-members—the interest shown more than justified the meeting.

Mr Bell began by outlining his own career as an oil geologist, and went on to describe the private journey he made a few years ago across Siberia and through China from north to south. He then went on to show a colour film which he accompanied with a spoken commentary. As Mr Bell emphasised, this was a very personal view of China. Perhaps the most interesting parts were those showing informal shots of the people of Shanghai shopping and going about their ordinary business. There was a long sequence showing the Industrial Exhibition Centre in Shanghai which aroused much interest. We were given an impression of the Chinese people enjoying a relatively high standard of living. A

large part of the film was devoted to observing the simple activities of daily life—buying meat, riding mopeds and cycles, relaxing in parks, eating meals, or listening to the radio in their homes.

Of particular beauty was the section of the film shot in Kwangsi, in the south-west of China. There the river and mountain scenery, especially interesting to Mr Bell as a geologist, was strikingly reminiscent of themes in Chinese painting.

In the following discussion Mr Bell was asked to relate the apparently untroubled scenes in his film to the present upheavals in Chinese politics. He pointed out that as a traveller in both Russia and China he had no political axe to grind. His own view of the present happenings was that the degree of anti-revolutionary activity was exaggerated, but, he stressed, some Chinese people—like any other people—may well be inclined to pursue revisionist or profit-making courses if the opportunity arises.

A CHINESE DINNER and Social Evening arranged by the Merseyside and North Wales branch at the Kong San Restaurant, Liverpool, on 12 February, was attended by 60 SACU members and friends, including Chinese students from various overseas countries.

Highlight of the evening was a recital of Chinese classical music by Mr David Hung of Cambridge, who gave a masterly rendering of several descriptive pieces on the er-hu.

COPIES NEEDED

To complete our library files of **Peking Review** for binding, the following numbers are needed: 1960, No. 47; 1962, Nos. 47, 48; 1964, Nos. 2, 11; 1965, Nos. 20, 21, 22, 23; 1958, No. 34.

LIVE & LEARN

LEARN AND LIVE cheaply at SACU's ten-day summer school at Glynllifon Agricultural College, Caernarvonshire, on the beautiful coast of north Wales. From 25 August to 3 September, the inclusive charge will be £16 for SACU members; £14 for student members; £17 10s for non-members. On the edge of rugged Snowdonia this school provides opportunities for study and leisure. Reserve your place now by sending £1 deposit to central office. Lectures will be given on many aspects of China by well-known speakers.

A few places are still available for the SACU weekend school at Nottingham University, 31 March-2 April.

SACU DIARY

March

- 4 **Merseyside and North Wales Branch:** 'Workers in China', speaker Mr E. A. Roberts, Royal Institution, Liverpool. 3 pm.
- 7 **London Discussion Group:** 'A Teacher in China' by Irene Spink, 24 Warren Street, 8 pm.
- 9 **Barnet Branch;** film show 'The East is Red', Hendon Town Hall, NW4, 7.30 pm.
- 10 **Oxford Branch:** 'Romanization and Language Reform', speaker Mr S. Hervey, Brasenose College, 8.15 pm.
- 10 **Sheffield Branch:** 'The Present Situation in China'. William Jenner and Sybille van der Sprengel. YWCA, Sheffield, 7.30 pm.
- 12 **One-day school:** 'The Cultural Revolution in China', Holborn Assembly Room, John Street Mews (back of Theobald's Road), WC1. 2.30 to 5 pm and 6.00 to 9.00 pm.
- 13 **Cambridge Branch,** lecture by Prof Owen Lattimore on Modern Chinese History, Lecture Rooms, Mill Lane, 8.30 pm.
- 21 **Council of Management.**
- 30 **Camden Branch:** Public Meeting, Holborn Central Library, 7.30 pm.
- 31 **SACU Weekend School,** Nottingham University, Friday evening to Sunday afternoon.

April

- 4 **London Discussion Group;** 24 Warren Street, 8 pm.
- 5 **Film show:** 'Norman Bethune' (Canadian film), and 'In Praise of Revolution' (Chinese colour film), University College, Biological Sciences Dept, Gower Street, WC1, 7.30 pm.

TOURS TO CHINA

SACU is at present discussing with the China International Travel Service the possibility of organising tours at reduced rates for teachers and students (one tour travelling to and from China by rail and one by air) in the summer vacation 1967.

Members interested should write to 24 Warren Street, London, W.1.

It is the aim of SACU NEWS to encourage free discussion. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Council of Management.

SACU SPEAKERS SERVICE

SINCE ITS FORMATION SACU has records of about 100 requests for speakers on China. Naturally, in view of our aims, these have been given careful attention; for what better way of spreading knowledge about China than from the mouths of those who have it!

A long list of speakers was prepared, but this was not of much value. Mostly it comprised well known people whose limited time was clearly in demand; small meetings are out of the question for them; such meetings form most of our business. Yet we knew of many less prominent members with experience of China, whose talents were under-utilised and ideally suited to meet the demand.

So after a year of hand-to-mouth operation we tried to become more systematic. A questionnaire was prepared for likely members, designed to gauge willingness and availability to speak, as well as obtain essential basic information. Sixty of these went out in the summer; more than half came back from speakers keen to help. This was a very heartening response, and gave us much to work on. It founded our present Speakers Panel.

Currently, about half the Panel of 33 live in London, and five more in the South-East. Six are scattered in the Midlands, three in the West and two in Leeds. So coverage is uneven!

Twenty-five have visited China; the remainder have studied the country out of interest or business. They form a varied group — lecturers, housewives,

teachers, students, business and professional people of all sorts — most of whom would count themselves as amateur in relation to China.

The difficulty in expanding a speakers service is to keep demand and supply in balance. With present contacts, despite a substantial increase in requests from UNA, schools and colleges, political parties, and co-operative guilds, not enough work can be found to fill the capacity of the existing panel. This is the right way round, of course; but the main job now is to publicise the panel and expand its business. There is much scope here — through speakers themselves, SACU branches, and central office — which will occupy most of our present resources. But other plans exist too; establishing more speakers, especially outside London; preparing a stock of visual aids; and a series of information bulletins on current topics. Further off still, perhaps, a conference and speakers' correspondence course.

Help Needed

With present resources all this will take a long time. We have come to a stage where more voluntary help could well be used in London. We also need help and ideas from members and branches, especially outside London.

The demand exists and the resources are there; which should encourage us greatly in trying to bring them together.

Peter Mansfield

ABOUT SACU

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Believing that understanding between Britain and China is of the highest importance, SACU aims to make information about China widely available in order to help every interested person in Britain to make his or her own assessment.

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BACK NUMBERS

SACU Library needs back copies of SACU NEWS, especially the issues of January and June 1966. Spare copies will be gratefully received.

FOR HIRE: Pleasant meeting room (holding approximately 30-40) with kitchen facilities on SACU premises, is available to organisations by arrangement. Enquiries to SACU Central Office.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

The inclusion of a book under this heading does not preclude a review at a later date.

Chinese Journey. Photographs by Gun Kessle. Text by Jan Myrdal. Chatto & Windus. 1966. 45s.

A Quarter of Mankind: an anatomy of China today, by Dick Wilson. Society. Economy. Diplomacy. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966. 45s.

Orbit of China, by Harrison E. Salisbury. Maps. Secker & Warburg, 1967. 30s.

The Awakening Of China. 1793-1949. History in the Making. By Roger Pelissier. Edited and Translated by Martin Kieffer. Maps and Plates. Secker & Warburg, 1967. (Originally published in France 1963). 63s.

Membership of SACU is open to all who subscribe to the aims of the Society. Members are entitled to receive SACU NEWS monthly free of charge, use the library at central office, call upon the Society for information and participate in all activities of the Society.

Annual subscription: £1.0.0. Reduced rates for old age pensioners (5s), and full-time students (7s 6d).

SACU NEWS welcomes contributions, either in the form of articles, reports of events or letters. Material intended for publication should be sent to central office not later than the tenth day of the month prior to publication.