

PHILOSOPHY

IS



**PEASANTS
PUT
THEIR
STUDY
TO WORK**

NO

MYSTERY

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Is
No Mystery*

Peasants Put Their Study to Work

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Editor's Note

In recent years there occurred in China an upsurge in the mass movement to study Chairman Mao's brilliant philosophic thinking. The broad masses of workers, peasants and soldiers at the forefront of the upsurge study philosophy in the three great revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment. With philosophy as their sharp weapon, they untangle the knotty problems facing them, especially the problems arising in the course of the struggle between the two lines—the proletarian revolutionary line and the counter-revolutionary revisionist line, between socialism and capitalism.

Our great leader Chairman Mao's call: **“Liberate philosophy from the confines of the philosophers' lecture rooms and textbooks, and turn it into a sharp weapon in the hands of the masses”** is becoming revolutionary reality.

Why do workers, peasants and soldiers study philosophy? How do they study and what do they gain from their study? Answers to these questions will be found in these stories from Chinchien Production Brigade in one of the people's communes in China's Chekiang Province.

The experience of Chinchien in studying philosophy proves beyond doubt that workers, peasants and soldiers can master philosophy, because they study in the struggle and for the struggle. Their study of philosophy is necessary for the three revolutionary movements and for proletarian dictatorship.

Chinchien's experience shows also that only by relating philosophic study with the problems arising in the three great revolutionary movements, especially in the course of the struggle between socialism and capitalism, can the study yield rich results.

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HOW DID THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY START?

What Were the Contradictions?

This collection of accounts from Chinchien Production Brigade of Kiangshan County, Chekiang Province, tells something of the commune members' study and application of Chairman Mao's philosophic work "On Contradiction".

As for contradictions, they do exist objectively, always and everywhere, and everyone has to deal with them every day. But to correctly understand the nature of contradictions, and solve them, is quite another thing.

The Chinchien Brigade is situated on the border between Chekiang and Kiangsi provinces, its more than 800 *mu** of farmland embracing over thirteen plots of loess hilly slopes. The soil was poor, and even when it rained the water rushed down the slopes and could not be stored. Before the liberation, the poor and lower-middle peasants there lived worse than animals under the heel of Kuomintang reactionaries, landlords and rich

* One *mu* = 1/15 hectare or approximately 1/6 acre.

peasants. After the liberation they received their own land, but because of individual farming, some became poor for lack of labour power or for other reasons, and had to sell their land. Thus polarization arose. Then, agricultural co-operatives were set up in the Chinchien area. In 1955 the renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-chi and his agents in Chekiang Province drastically slashed the number of co-operatives in an effort to strangle the co-operative movement. But the poor and lower-middle peasants of the brigade frustrated Liu's scheme. Chairman Mao's timely report, "On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation", supported them. Production developed rapidly. During the three years from 1960 to 1962 when China's national economy met with temporary difficulties, Liu Shao-chi fanned up the evil wind of *san zi yi bao*,* which also blew into the brigade. The comrades once again succeeded in repelling it, but not without exerting strenuous efforts.

For many years, such cadres as the secretary and deputy secretary of the brigade Party branch Chiang Ju-wang and Tai Hsiang-mei, actually dealt with contradictions every day. So did the poor and lower-middle peasant rank-and-file of the brigade. Still they did not understand the nature of contradictions and attributed the difficulties and conflicts they encountered in their work to underdeveloped collective economy and the peasants' low living standard. They thought the difficulties and contradictions would disappear in the future when they were better off.

**San zi yi bao* means the extension of the free market, extension of private plots, increase of small enterprises with sole responsibility for their own profits or losses, and the fixing of output quotas on the individual households.

By 1963 the average grain yield of the brigade had increased from 300 *jin** per *mu* in the early years after liberation to 813 *jin*. The collective economy thrived, and a number of the commune members had built new houses, while there was great over-all improvement of the peasants' livelihood. According to the above logic, the contradictions would naturally disappear. But they had not.

Prosperity caused some in the brigade to slip backwards and stop revolutionizing their thinking. The idea that "it doesn't pay to be a cadre" arose in the minds of some cadres, who did not want to shoulder responsibilities. And some people thought that "the brigade's production has reached its maximum".

The comrades of the Party branch were also faced with a number of vexing problems, one of which concerned the use of fish ponds.

Every production team under the brigade has ponds, and the majority of the members held that the ponds should be used for collective fish breeding so as to strengthen the collective economy. But a few members with a spontaneous tendency towards capitalism disagreed, saying the ponds should be rented to individuals for private fish breeding. After repeated arguments the leader of a production team finally accepted the latter proposal, and it seemed that the contradiction had vanished.

During a dry spell in the summer of 1964, when the fresh green rice seedlings were beginning to turn yellow, the production team leader thought it best to irrigate the paddy fields with pond water. But a member engaged

* One *jin* = 0.5 kilogramme or approximately 1.1 pounds.

in private fish breeding said: "Does it mean my fish fry will all die, with the ponds drained?" Here was a contradiction. What was to be done?

The team leader said: "Let's discuss the matter. Shall we irrigate with pond water or not? We'll make a decision."

"Of course, we'll use the pond water. Can we let the fields dry up and bring a loss to the collective while the pond water stands idle? This is without rhyme or reason," the team members replied.

When the plan for irrigation was put into action, the fish breeder was very irritated and said: "You agreed to private fish raising at first. Now you drain the ponds for irrigation. The two decisions are contradictory."

The team leader lost his temper and retorted, "You yourselves are contradictory too!" They debated the problem for a long time but could not solve it. Then they approached Comrade Chiang Ju-wang for his view.

Several teams had the same contradiction, which became very sharp. Ju-wang and other comrades of the Party branch felt only that it was wrong to let members work at private fish raising in ponds that belonged to the collective, but they lacked other arguments to convince the members concerned, and the problem remained unsolved.

In the autumn of that year the "four clean-ups" movement* was launched in the Chinchien Brigade. Chiang Ju-wang and Tai Hsiang-mei greeted the movement as the solution to most of the contradictions in the brigade.

* Refers to the socialist education movement to clean things up in the fields of politics, ideology, organization and economy.

However, the movement itself was full of contradictions and struggles. At the initial stage a work team sent to the brigade followed Liu Shao-chi's bourgeois reactionary line, and checked the family-status records as soon as they entered the village, saying that a poor and lower-middle peasants' association was to be set up. This association would not admit any peasant from a poor or lower-middle peasant family who had been a cadre at any time after the liberation. Thus the cadres were indiscriminately all brushed aside. The work team trusted anyone who spoke against the cadres. The member who was engaged in private fish breeding raised his case before the work team. Taking this opportunity, some ex-landlords and rich peasants even tried to reverse the verdicts passed on them, and reactionary arrogance held sway. Instead of checking the ill wind the work team nagged at the cadres, placing itself at odds with the Party branch. Pointing to the cadres, one of the work team said: "The 'four cleans' and the 'four un-cleans' form the principal contradiction of the rural areas at present. The focus of the contradiction is on you."

These words jolted the comrades of the Party branch. What was the "principal contradiction", and the "focus of contradiction"? What were their contradictions after all? How were they to handle them? They resented that work team member's remarks. Heated discussion followed but gave no result.

What a heap of contradictions for Ju-wang and his comrades to sort out! He recalled the departing words in 1959 of the Liberation Army men who had helped them consolidate the people's commune and rectify the style of work. The Army men's words were: "Study Chairman Mao's works and find answers from them

whenever you come across problems.” His mind cleared. Looking at his comrades confidently he said: “Contradictions everywhere; what kind of contradictions are they after all? Isn’t there an article ‘On Contradiction’ by Chairman Mao? That will certainly solve our contradictions!”

That was when the comrades of the Party branch began to study “On Contradiction”.

A Tortuous Course

It was not plain sailing for the comrades of the Party branch to study and apply Chairman Mao’s philosophic works. Their course was full of twists and turns.

How should they study? This was their first question. They began by reading through the article paragraph by paragraph, much as students in school might, without stressing how the specific problems at hand were to be solved. Every evening, sitting around the Party branch secretary Chiang Ju-wang, the Party members listened while he read out “On Contradiction”. Though Chiang had only a few years of schooling, it was a little more than his comrades’ average education. This was the first time he had read a philosophic essay. Many of the words were unfamiliar, and he stumbled along, while the listeners felt dizzy. What was philosophy after all? What was contradiction? They read for several evenings, but still could not understand.

Though the philosophic study had yielded no results, word of it got about and the class enemy, feeling that

the Party members’ study of philosophy was not in their interest, began blasting the Party cadres. “Humph! Clodhoppers wanting to study philosophy! It’s as ridiculous as a cat teaching tigers to climb a tree. And these are blind tigers at that.”

Some in the village with a smattering of education were influenced by the fallacy that “philosophy is mysterious” spread by Liu Shao-chi and his agent in philosophical circles Yang Hsien-chen, and also considered philosophy quite beyond the poor and lower-middle peasants’ comprehension. At those who had the courage to study philosophy, they sneered, “Do you think you can understand what you’re studying? Even when you buy a hat you have to consider your head-size!”

While the Party branch comrades studied “On Contradiction”, the contradictions in the village kept mounting. A member of the 11th production team had sold his fish fry during the fight against the drought. Now, taking advantage of the attack on cadres by some of the work team, he demanded compensation by the production team for his loss due to selling the fry so young. The production team store-keeper could not decide the issue and asked Chiang Ju-wang’s opinion. Chiang said there should be no compensation. The work team said he was wrong, that he had taken a wrong stand, and that a mass meeting should be held to criticize him. The work team even tried to dismiss the 11th production team leader, and the store-keeper was actually replaced by a bad element.

The Party branch comrades were indignant at this and no longer read paragraph by paragraph but debated the incident, each voicing his views. All agreed that here was a real contradiction indeed. Why did the work team

describe a crystal-clear right thing as wrong and a wrong thing as right?

“Why does it trust only some persons with bad records and a serious spontaneous tendency towards capitalism?” questioned Tai Hsiang-mei.

Another joined in, “I belong to the poor and lower-middle peasant class too and might have been one of those the work team relied on if not for being a cadre for a time after the liberation.”

And another said: “What is that about the contradiction between the ‘four cleans’ and the ‘four uncleans’ being the principal contradiction in the countryside? Did we cadres all commit the ‘four uncleans’ errors? Is none of us any good?”

After that, they naturally turned from reading to discussing the practical problems, and laid the article “On Contradiction” aside and failed to apply what they read to help solve their problems. The more they discussed, the more they felt something was wrong and concluded that the contradictions were complex, and so they could not get a clear picture of them. Then, the work team hurriedly withdrew on New Year’s eve.

Like a clap of spring thunder, the “23-Point Document” (“Some Current Problems Raised in the Socialist Education Movement in the Rural Areas”) reached the village. It had been drafted under the direction of Chairman Mao himself and greatly excited the comrades of the Party branch. They studied this important document word by word and sentence by sentence. In it Chairman Mao refuted Liu Shao-chi’s fallacy of “contradiction between ‘four cleans’ and ‘four uncleans’”, and made it very clear that the present movement was to resolve the contradiction between socialism and capitalism. He also

emphasized that the majority of cadres are good or relatively good, and that the main target in the present movement was those Party persons in power taking the capitalist road.

Chairman Mac’s instructions enlightened the comrades of the Chinchien Brigade, and they combined their study of “On Contradiction” with that of the “23-Point Document”, and their study with their own experience. They began to realize that of the numerous contradictions the principal one is that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the socialist and the capitalist roads. What was the contradiction to be solved in the socialist education movement? It should be the contradiction between the two classes and the two roads, and not any so-called contradiction between the “four cleans” and “four uncleans” or between commune members and cadres. What about the nature of the private fish raising question? Was it a contradiction between fish raising and irrigating with pond water? In the final analysis, it was a contradiction between the two roads. Many questions, which they had been unable to explain before, became clear, once they grasped the principal contradiction.

But the Party branch comrades’ first attempts at integrating theory with practice were by trial and error, and the old force of habit was strong. The old methods of book-delving crept back, and they ran into snags again. For example, though they had grasped the principal contradiction, they still did not understand many concepts, like the principal aspect of a contradiction, and others.

“Is it because we have no education?” asked someone.
“Perhaps.”

“Then let’s ask someone with a higher education to give us a lecture, give us some enlightenment.”

Thus the Party branch invited three senior middle school students as their teachers. True, they knew more words and read more fluently than Chiang. But smooth reading was not what the Party members required. They wanted to learn to grasp Chairman Mao's revolutionary teachings. They raised the question: "What is meant by 'the principal aspect of a contradiction'?"

"The principal aspect of a contradiction, eh . . ." one of the students answered. He hadn't got it either, and became flustered. "The principal aspect of a contradiction is the principal aspect of a contradiction. What's there to explain about that?"

By this time some of those in the study class lost heart and said: "Let's give up! So many difficulties in our study of philosophy. It's enough for us farmers to know how to farm."

But the old poor peasant Chiang Cheng-liang had stronger determination, and said, "We studied Chairman Mao's articles 'Serve the People', 'In Memory of Norman Bethune' and 'The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains', and got a lot out of it. Why can't we study 'On Contradiction'? It depends on the way we study it."

Others in the study class discussed the question and said: "We studied those three articles well because we applied what we studied in solving the problems that faced us. This experience is also useful in studying philosophy. We study philosophy because we have problems, but when we turned to books we put the problems aside. Therefore we should study what relates to our specific problems and apply what we study to solve them."

Chiang Ju-wang summed up the discussion thus: "Right, in studying philosophy, we should integrate it

with our experience in the three great revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment and with our ideological problems, and apply our study to solve them too."

Getting Results

After going back and forth several times between study and application, the Party branch comrades got a better idea of what was meant by applying study to specific problems. Next was to determine what their specific problems were. They placed two questions on the table: one, the idea that "it doesn't pay to be a cadre", and the other, that "production has reached its maximum".

Animated discussion followed, Chiang Ju-wang leading off. "Taking ourselves as example, we used to say that our livelihood was not quite ideal and that made our work difficult. Now that we're better off, we still say the same. What's more, we said it doesn't pay to be a cadre. What contradiction does this notion reflect?"

The comrades discussed why they were always blaming their livelihood. Why did they always think they were "losing out" to be cadres? It was selfish ideas, they said, for during the early years of the liberation and agrarian reform they were all very enthusiastic despite the hard life. And during the early stage of agricultural co-operation it was the same. They firmly took the socialist road because they had suffered the bitter-



Secretary Chiang Ju-wang (*middle*) telling about his study of Chairman Mao's philosophic works.

ness of individual farming, and they held meetings, rain or shine. But now that their livelihood was better, the idea of "losing out" to be a cadre occurred to them. When meetings ran a little over the closing hour, some grumbled, felt tired, and that it was too much for them. What was the real reason for this? Why did they think more of personal interests and feel it "a loss" to them to be cadres when they were well off? What had they really lost?

A contradiction was there indeed, and it was selfish ideas that gave rise to the contradiction. They realized that it was a reflection of the struggle in their minds between the two roads, and happened when a person

did not view himself from the standpoint of one dividing into two. Such a person saw only that he wanted to make revolution, but neglected the danger of taking the wrong road, thought only of his good class origin, but ignored the bourgeois ideas that endangered his thinking. Through such analysis, the Party branch cadres could calmly think over the critical remarks the brigade members had made.

They cited another example, that of an old cadre of sixty who had been very active during the years of agrarian reform. After agricultural co-operation, when production mounted steadily and his livelihood improved, he began to have a different view of life. He thought of the humiliating life he had led in the old society. Chairman Mao had rescued him from his bitter suffering and he could now enjoy himself. He built a new house after the liberation, while formerly he had had no house of his own. But now he thought it inadequate. There was accommodation for his sons, but scarcely enough for his grandsons as they grew up. Every day he strolled around his house, looking for space where additional rooms could be built for his grandsons. And so his self concern grew. Many brigade members criticized his way of thinking, but he turned a deaf ear. His case served a warning to all.

Another question arose. Which aspect of the contradiction was the principal one, granted the struggle between the two roads was the main contradiction? At first some said the principal aspect of the contradiction was those persons taking the capitalist road. Then they studied and discussed fully the theory of the principal aspect of a contradiction in Chairman Mao's article. The working class and poor and lower-middle peasants were