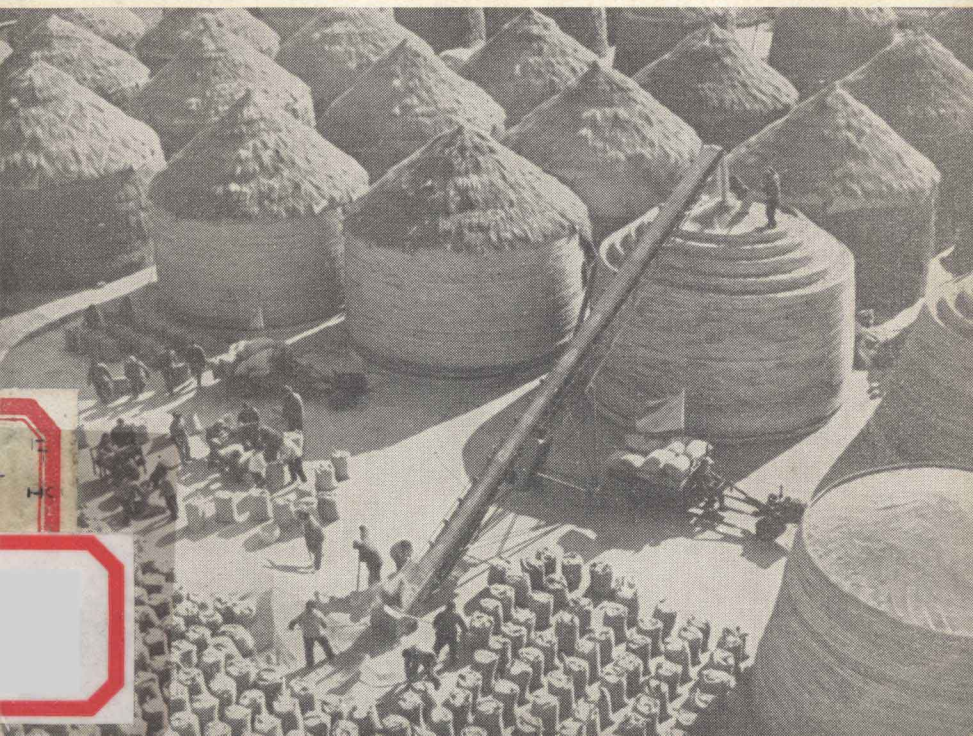


How China Became Self-Sufficient in Grain



How China became self-sufficient in grain

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Editor's note

In a world faced with grain shortage, the new China's achievement of self-sufficiency in grain for her 800 million people has aroused interest and attention everywhere.

The country suffered from a chronic lack of grain in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial days, when ruthless exploitation and oppression by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism impoverished the people and seriously impaired farm production. In the quarter-century since the birth of the new China, the nation has won self-sufficiency in grain in a big battle led by Chairman Mao and the Communist Party to expand output and solve the long-standing shortage left over by history.

This achievement confirms Chairman Mao's thesis that **"revolution plus production can solve the problem of feeding the population."** It strikes hard at the Malthusian ideas on population peddled by imperialism and social-imperialism. It has helped the people of the world to see clearly that the root cause of the grain shortages affecting many countries lies in aggression and plunder by imperialism, especially the superpowers.

How did China solve this problem? What was her basic experience in doing so, and what actual ways were used

to increase the production of grain? How has the mass movement to learn from Tachai in agriculture pushed China's farming forward? Answers to these questions can be found in this booklet.

How China became self-sufficient in grain

Chiang Hua-nong

In the past quarter-century the Chinese people, led by Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, have self-reliantly solved the country's long-standing historical problem of grain shortages. This is a feat of great political and economic meaning — China's agricultural advance makes her independent socialist economy ever more stable. Her experience confirms that only by making agricultural development a primary concern of the national economy and by great efforts to push farm production forward to ensure food and clothing for the people, can a country win real political and economic independence, free itself from the control and bullying by the imperialists, and particularly by the superpowers, and speed its own economic growth.

On the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, imperialists ranted that China's ever-increasing population had created "an unbearable pressure upon the land," prophesying that the new China would never be able to feed her hundreds of millions of people. By their imperialist logic, the only way for China was to depend on "rice and flour from abroad" and remain an imperialist colony forever.

In the 26 years since that prediction was made, China's population has increased by 60 per cent. But her grain

production in the same period has more than doubled, far outstripping the rate of population growth. The average amount of grain available for each person has increased by more than 100 kilogrammes, and everyone's needs are guaranteed by a system of planned supply. Prices, too, have long been stable. The state, the people's communes collectively, and their member-households individually, all have grain in reserve. Thus the grain requirements of all the Chinese people, in good years or bad, are guaranteed. China's winning of self-sufficiency in grain has shattered the shameless assertions of the imperialist soothsayers.

Grain is a basic necessity of life. The imperialists and colonialists, old and new, habitually used control of grain markets as a means of meddling in other countries' affairs. In semi-feudal and semi-colonial China, imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism worked hand in glove to exploit and oppress the Chinese people, impoverishing the masses, especially the peasants. Farm production was severely impaired or ruined. Just before liberation, the average grain yield per hectare in China was only a ton or so. On the one hand the imperialists savagely plundered China of her farm and subsidiary products; on the other, they dumped "foreign rice" and "foreign flour" on her markets to make her ever more dependent on them. As a result of their aggressions and robberies, old China had to import grain almost annually to supply her big coastal cities. In the vast countryside, a bad year always brought famine, beggary and wide-spread death by starvation. After the big 1920 drought, 20 million people in five northern provinces became refugees, among them 500,000 perished from hunger.

In the world of today, with its food shortages, China has reaped bumper harvests for 14 years running. During

1975 many natural disasters — such as droughts, cold rains, plant diseases, floods and waterlogging — occurred in various parts of China. But the people conquered these calamities by enthusiastic action at the Party's call, and finally won a good harvest. In this struggle they overcame nature by human determination, displayed a spirit of unyielding struggle, and gave full effect to the strength of the collective economy of the people's communes. China's total grain output in 1975 outstripped by a wide margin that of the bumper year 1974. Bountiful harvests were also reaped in industrial crops such as cotton, oil-bearing plants, bast fibres and tobacco. China's agriculture goes from strength to strength. Gone forever are the times when tens of millions of her people were starved or malnourished.

How did China solve the food problem left by the old society? Fundamentally, by acting upon Chairman Mao's teaching, **"revolution plus production can solve the problem of feeding the population."** In the past 20 years and more, a series of revolutionary movements have been carried out in China's countryside, changing the relations of production and thus greatly unfettering the productive forces.

"Get organized"

In old China 70 to 80 per cent of the farmland was owned by landlords and rich peasants. The masses of poor peasants were tenants, forced to pay 60 to 70 per cent of their harvests in rent. Farming individually with crude tools on small plots, and subjected to relentless exploitation, they could hardly manage to live, let alone develop production. Grain output remained miserably low.

After the birth of the new China, under the leadership of the Communist Party a great land reform movement was launched. Its purpose was to destroy the system of feudal land ownership and break the heavy shackles that had fettered the rural productive forces for many centuries. This aroused the peasant masses to enthusiasm for production. Immediately thereafter, the Party led the liberated peasants along the road of organization and common prosperity — first to mutual-aid teams which introduced the rudiments of socialism, then to semi-socialist elementary agricultural producers' co-operatives in which the land was pooled for cultivation but still privately owned, then to fully socialist advanced agricultural producers' co-operatives in which the land became collective property and draught animals and farm tools were bought by the co-operative. Thus the labour power and the land, draught animals, farm tools and other means of production in the rural areas all came under unified management, helping agricultural production to expand.

In 1958, on the basis of the advanced agricultural producers' co-ops, the peasant masses set up the people's communes. As large collectives with greater economic strength, these were able to organize both the work force and means of production more extensively and apply them more effectively, further expanding productive forces in the countryside. The communes are both economic units and the basic units of political power in the rural areas. Thus they are better able to gear agricultural production into the national economic plan.

In leading the peasants along the collective road, the Chinese Communist Party educates them constantly in socialism. It helps them to free themselves gradually from the idea of private ownership, rooted in thousands of years

of individual farming, and build up the idea of farming for the revolution. The Party organizations at various levels organize and lead the peasants in the study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, of the Party's basic line for the historical period of socialism and of its guiding principles and policies. This has greatly heightened the peasants' awareness of class struggle and the struggle between the two lines (socialist and capitalist), enabling them to tell right from wrong and criticize capitalist tendencies, to resist interference and sabotage by the revisionist line and to adhere conscientiously to the socialist road in the rural class struggle. Especially in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius, the peasants, together with the rest of the Chinese people, have deeply exposed and criticized the revisionist line pushed by Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao and their followers, and repudiated the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius which Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao advocated and used as their reactionary ideological weapon for capitalist restoration. Through the criticism they have freed themselves to a greater extent from such fetishes as "The highest are the wise and lowest are the stupid," and "The Mandate of Heaven" — spiritual shackles in which the reactionary ruling classes had held them fast for many centuries. Thus the masses of peasants attained a better understanding of Chairman Mao's historical-materialist concept, **"The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history,"** and ample recognition of their own vital role in building socialism.

Revolution has brought great changes to China's countryside. Now it seethes with activity everywhere, and farm production is growing vigorously.

In agriculture, learn from Tachai

Hundreds of millions of peasants are engaged in the mass movement to learn from Tachai, which is of great importance for the development of China's farm production and her achievement of self-sufficiency in grain.

Tachai is an ordinary little village in the Taihang Mountains, situated in Hsiyang County of Shansi Province. Before liberation, it was a place of steep slopes, loess soil, a few caves and houses of earth. Its some 700 mu of land were scattered in 4,700 fragments over seven gullies and eight ridges of its hillside location. The soil was poor and badly eroded. Nine years out of ten brought droughts. The grain yield per hectare was only about half a ton. Of the 60 or so peasant households, some 30 worked for landlords as long-term or seasonal hired labourers. Dire poverty forced more than 20 of Tachai's peasant families to beg for food or even to sell their children.

After liberation, guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line Tachai's peasants organized themselves and took the collective road. In the past two decades and more, they have grasped class struggle as the key link, vigorously criticized revisionism and capitalism, worked hard for socialism, and thus brought about fundamental changes in the conditions of farming. Today the land of the village has been transformed into level terraced "spongy fields," with thick topsoil. Dams and embankments of stone and earth have been built to protect the fields and preserve water, soil and fertilizer. To adapt their land to farm mechanization and irrigation Tachai's people have levelled hills to fill in gullies, converting small plots into big ones. Since 1971, they have filled in four of the seven gullies to form larger fields, which they fondly call "man-made

plains." They have dug a canal that winds over the mountains for seven kilometres to convey water from the county reservoir to Tachai's three water storage ponds as well as a pumping station to irrigate the hillside plots, formerly drought-stricken nine years out of ten. Moreover, they have succeeded in the trial-growing of paddy rice and gradually working up from one annual rice crop to two. And they have afforested Tiger Head Hill with 26.6 hectares of pines and over 40,000 fruit trees, all now mature. At present the average yield of grain per hectare and the total grain output in Tachai are both 10 times what they were before liberation. In 1975, the per-hectare yield reached 8.4 tons. Not only has Tachai achieved self-sufficiency in grain, it also supplies market grain to the state. From 1955 to 1958, its annual deliveries and sales averaged 52.5 tons, rising in 1959-70 to 122.5 tons and in 1971-74 to 165 tons, an annual average of two tons for every household in Tachai. Tachai's progress and transformation demonstrates the splendid prospects of China's socialist countryside.

In 1964, Chairman Mao issued his great call to the hundreds of millions of Chinese peasants **"In agriculture, learn from Tachai."** The 1975 national conference on learning from Tachai in agriculture gave a high evaluation of the achievements of the Tachai Brigade and scientifically summed up its basic experience. It pointed out: "Tachai is a red banner designated by Chairman Mao himself; it is a typical example in adhering to the Party's basic line, continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialist agriculture. Tachai's fundamental experience lies in its adherence to the principle of putting proletarian politics in command and placing Mao Tsetung Thought in the lead, to the spirit of self-

reliance and hard struggle and to the communist style of loving the country and the collective."

The movement to learn from Tachai in agriculture, initiated and led by Chairman Mao and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, has been in full swing throughout the country ever since 1964, and "red flowers of Tachai" now bloom everywhere. Over 300 counties have distinguished themselves as advanced ones in learning from Tachai and a large number of people's communes and production brigades have qualified as Tachai-type units. All of them study Tachai's basic experience seriously and follow Tachai's example in radically changing conditions for farm production by working hard in agricultural basic construction — reshaping hills, harnessing rivers, deep ploughing and soil improvement. Spurred by this mass movement, in China as a whole in each of the recent few years an average of 1.6 million hectares of land has been added to the irrigated area, over 1,333,000 hectares of fields liable to waterlogging have been transformed to eliminate this menace, over 6,666,000 hectares have been levelled and deep-ploughed, and over 666,000 hectares of level terraced fields built. China's total irrigated area now exceeds 43 million hectares, while over 33 million hectares of farmland have been improved to guarantee good yields irrespective of drought or flood. Profound changes have thus taken place in the face of China's countryside.

A striking example is Hsiyang County, where the Tachai Brigade is situated. With about 210,000 people, it began learning from Tachai in 1967. In eight years, it has filled in over 2,800 of its 3,000 rugged gullies, building 530,000 metres of stone embankments to prevent mountain torrents from washing away their soil in the gullies, and created there 667 hectares of farmland with guaranteed high and

stable yield. In the same period, it has harnessed and brought under control three larger rivers with their tributaries and reclaimed 3,000 hectares of fertile farmland on their banks. Of the farmland on the hill slopes, 80 per cent has now been built up into fields which conserve water, fertilizer and soil, and produce high, stable yields. By thus improving the conditions of farming, the county's grain output doubled in 1967-69, and by 1975 had increased three-fold; in that year it delivered and sold 50,000 tons of grain to the state. The average 1975 yield was six tons of grain per hectare and over 700 kg. per person. Hsiyang County's example proves that the mass movement to learn from Tachai is a powerful stimulus to constant growth in China's agriculture.

In September 1975, the National Conference on Learning from Tachai in Agriculture, convened by the State Council, issued the call: "Let the whole Party mobilize for a vast effort to develop agriculture and build Tachai-type counties throughout the country." It set the goal of basically mechanizing all China's farming by 1980. This conference, which marked a new and important stage in the movement to learn from Tachai, is bound to exert a profound and far-reaching influence on the acceleration of China's agricultural development.

All-out support for agriculture

"Take agriculture as the foundation and industry as the leading factor" — this general policy for national economy set by Chairman Mao has become the common guideline for action by all its departments and trades. Particularly since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, various

government departments have taken effective measures, doing their utmost to support agriculture. The nation's heavy industries supply it with more and better farm machinery, chemical fertilizer, pesticides, fuel and trucks every year. Leading Party cadres at the Central Committee, provincial, prefectural, county and commune levels go to work at selected spots in the countryside to strengthen leadership at the grassroots. Tens of millions of school graduates go to settle in rural and mountain regions. Masses of scientific workers go out to basic rural units to do their work of research and investigation on the spot — which is of profound significance in strengthening scientific and technical forces in the countryside and promoting agricultural development.

The farm machinery industry was non-existent in pre-liberation China. Since the founding of the new China, the mechanization of farming has been promoted in a planned way in the course of collectivization. The fundamental line for the development of China's agriculture is mechanization on the basis of collectivization. Agriculture is the foundation of the national economy. The modernization of agriculture exerts great influence on the modernization of industry, national defence, science and technology. To mechanize farming is to create conditions for the gradual transition from the small-scale collective ownership by the peasants to large-scale collective ownership and then to ownership by the whole people. So the Party organizations at all levels regard farm mechanization as a great revolution that they must carry through. In the past few years, it has made great strides in China. Constant efforts have been made to expand industry's capacity to equip agriculture. Between 1971 and 1974, more irrigation and drainage machinery, chemical fertilizer and tractors were supplied to agriculture