

POLITICAL WORK:
THE LIFELINE
OF ALL WORK



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING

**POLITICAL WORK:
THE LIFELINE
OF ALL WORK**

by *Hongqi (Red Flag) Commentator*

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING 1966

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This pamphlet consists of four articles which appeared in 1964 in *Hongqi (Red Flag)*, the theoretical journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. The articles, based on the experiences of China's revolution and socialist construction, deal with the importance of political work and the main lessons to be drawn from it. An exhaustive analysis is made of the "Four Firsts" principle in the political work of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, which gives first place: (1) to man in handling the relationship between man and weapons; (2) to political work in handling the relationship between political and other work; (3) to ideological work in relation to routine tasks in political work; and (4) in ideological work to living ideas in handling the relationship between ideas in books and living ideas. With cogent arguments the articles refute the theory of "weapons decide everything", the principle of "material incentive for the individual", the idea of "the whole people" — non-class or above-class ideology — and other revisionist views.

Printed in the People's Republic of China

C O N T E N T S

THE HUMAN FACTOR COMES FIRST	1
POLITICAL WORK: THE LIFELINE OF ALL WORK	16
GIVING FIRST PLACE TO IDEOLOGICAL WORK	31
IDEOLOGICAL WORK MUST BE BASED ON REALITY	47

THE HUMAN FACTOR COMES FIRST

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: "The people, and the people alone, are the motive force of world history."¹

The creative power of the masses of the people is inexhaustible.

The entire history of social development is above all one in which people enter into certain relations of production for engaging in material production. It is also a history in which people invent and use tools to carry out production. The main difference between man and other animals is that the former can consciously create and use different tools to transform objects of nature, and make them suit his own needs. In the course of production as well as in the struggle against nature, in different historical stages, people constantly improve tools used under different conditions, resulting in the development of techniques of production. Tools serve as an extension of the functions of man's hands and an expansion of his capabilities. By transforming tools and raising their own capabilities because of historical necessity, people also promote change and development in social relations.

¹ Mao Tse-tung, "On Coalition Government", *Selected Works*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965, Vol. III, p. 257.

The first point of the "Four Firsts" principle¹ in the political work of the People's Liberation Army is giving first place to man in handling the relationship between man and weapons. That is to say, as far as relations between man and matter are concerned, the decisive factor is man and not matter. This is a fundamental viewpoint of Marxism-Leninism. Actually, this must be upheld not only in handling relations between man and weapons in the army, but also in carrying out socialist construction and all other work.

In 1920 when Lenin dwelt on the tasks of socialist economic construction, he said:

It is the class consciousness and firmness of the working class that count here. If the working class is prepared to make sacrifices, if it has shown that it is able to strain every nerve, the problem will be solved. Everything must be directed to the solution of this problem. The determination of the working class, its inflexible adherence to the watchword "Death rather than surrender!" — this is not only a historical factor, it is the decisive, the winning factor.²

On the question of war, Lenin pointed out in the same vein: "He wins in war who has bigger reserves, bigger

¹ The principle of the "Four Firsts" is giving first place: (1) to man in handling the relationship between man and weapons; (2) to political work in handling the relationship between political and other work; (3) to ideological work in relation to routine tasks in political work; and (4) in ideological work to living ideas in handling the relationship between ideas in books and living ideas. — *Tr.*

² V. I. Lenin, "Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)", *Selected Works*, FLPH, Moscow, 1952, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 329.

sources of strength, and greater stamina in the masses of the people.”¹ He also said:

In any war, victory in the end is determined by the morale of those masses who shed their blood on the field of battle. . . . This realization of the aims and causes of the war by the masses is of enormous significance and assures victory.²

Speaking of the experience of civil wars at the 1919 Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East, Lenin declared:

. . . weak as they [the peoples of the East] may be, and invincible as may seem the power of the European oppressors, who employ in the struggle all the marvels of technology and the art of war — nevertheless, a revolutionary war waged by oppressed peoples, if it really succeeds in arousing the millions of toilers and exploited, harbours within it such potentialities, such miracles, . . .³

It can thus be seen that the viewpoint of giving first place to the human factor is precisely a Leninist one.

To realize this is of paramount importance. This is particularly so for the rising newborn forces and those revolutionary people who are at the moment fighting to seize the victory of revolution and who are building their own countries. Whether they recognize this truth

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russian edition, Moscow, Vol. XXX, p. 55.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXI, p. 115.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East*, FLPH, Moscow, 1954, p. 10.

or not, how deep their understanding is and whether they can adhere to it under whatever complex conditions — all this has a bearing on the future of their struggle and on the success or failure of the cause of their revolution and construction.

Imperialists and all reactionary ruling classes invariably possess the brutal machines of suppression and superb weapons and equipment. In the face of such enemies, should the revolutionary people be frightened and retreat, or dare they rise in struggle and seize victory? When the imperialists and reactionary rulers resort to violent repression and armed aggression, should they submit to humiliation, compromise and surrender, or dare they take up arms to wage a resolute struggle against their enemies and foil the enemies' aggression?

Most countries which have won victory in socialist and national revolutions were comparatively backward economically and technically. Under these circumstances, should the revolutionary people lose their confidence and sell themselves to the enemy, or should they work energetically to bring about their countries' prosperity through self-reliance?

Concerning these questions, it is only by upholding the principle of giving first place to the human factor and conscientiously organizing and planning their actions in the light of their knowledge of this principle that the revolutionary people can open bright vistas for themselves.

In the course of a war, weapons do exert great influence on its progress and changes in tactics, but in the last analysis the final outcome depends on man. In history as well as in practical life, the carrying on of war has continuously refuted all arguments which one-

sidedly exaggerate the role of weapons and belittle that of man and the thesis that the outcome of war can be decided by certain new weapons.

Wars fought during the bourgeois revolutions — we will omit those of the earlier times here — such as the American War of Independence (1775-83) and the French Revolutionary War (1791-94), all showed that the role of man was of prime importance. In the former, the insurgent forces used inferior weapons to resist British colonialist troops armed with impressive weapons. Though poorly trained and equipped in the early stage of the war, the insurgent forces were well aware that they were fighting for independence, justice and their vital interests. Therefore, they brought into play their courage and wisdom and finally defeated the British. The French revolution also saw poorly equipped forces of a militia type pitted against well-trained and well-equipped mercenaries of the allied countries. In 1792, with the blessings of Great Britain and tsarist Russia, Prussia and Austria carried out armed intervention against the French revolution. The then French revolutionary forces were formed mostly of volunteers. However, inspired by the idea of defending their country and supported by the great patriotic and revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses, they finally drove the interventionist troops from their territory.

In the 19th century, the steady improvement of technique in rifle-manufacturing resulted in the appearance of a highly effective, new-type rifle. At that time, some people believed that this weapon decided everything and that in the face of it individual courage and the strength of the masses of the people were of no avail. The wars

which broke out later, however, proved this argument wrong. As Engels said, in the light of the experience of some of the wars fought at that time, "The tide of military opinion has turned. People again begin to see that men, and not muskets, must win battles."¹

In the 1890s an American, named A. T. Mahan, advanced the so-called theory that "marine force decides victory", saying that this was the main factor in determining a nation's history. After World War I, G. Douhet, an Italian, chanted that "air force decides victory", while J. F. C. Fuller, an English armyman, maintained that tanks and mechanized weapons alone accounted for 99 per cent of the chances for victory in war, whereas other factors at most constituted only 1 per cent. One by one, all these arguments have gone bankrupt in wars which have been fought.

Nuclear weapons were developed after World War II. The imperialists, the reactionaries of different countries and the modern revisionists have exerted themselves in proclaiming far and wide the power of such weapons, regarding them as playing the decisive role in all wars. They wishfully believe that this weapon of mass destruction can intimidate the revolutionary people and restrain them from resisting. But the history of the past 20 years since the emergence of atomic weapons has again mercilessly proved the bankruptcy of this intimidating argument. It is specifically in this period that more and more oppressed nations and peoples subject to aggression have risen heroically to fight liberation wars. They have used inferior and short-range weapons to defeat

¹ *Engels As Military Critic*, "The History of the Rifle", Manchester University Press, 1959, p. 64.

the imperialists and reactionaries who possessed modern weapons. When the Cuban people staged their uprising with seven rifles and the Algerians did the same with 500 old shot-guns, they were confronted by tens of thousands of reactionary or colonial troops equipped with modern weapons. But the insurgent forces eventually put the latter to rout. The U.S. imperialists cannot but admit that "overwhelming nuclear strength cannot curb guerrilla warfare". In their war in south Viet Nam, the U.S. imperialists counted on weapons such as helicopters and amphibious armoured cars to wipe out the south Vietnamese people's armed forces, but they have suffered defeat after defeat.

It is a matter of course that in order to defeat their enemies, people in revolt must constantly improve their arms and equipment. But it is by relying on bringing into full play the role of man and on correct strategy and tactics that the people's army solves the question of weapons. And in many cases, they simply seize weapons from enemy hands. In fact, even when it comes to the final decisive battle, the weapons of the people's forces are more often than not inferior in quality to those of the reactionary troops. That is to say, as far as weapons are concerned, many people's wars never got the upperhand from start to finish. The secret of victory lies in man and in winning popular support and manpower.

The main reason for the temporary failure of a number of people's armed struggles is to be found not in weapons but in strategic and tactical errors which do not give full play to the role of man. But so long as they can learn their lessons in this respect, they will sooner

or later change their position from weakness to strength and from failure to victory.

All countries that have won victory in revolution must work hard to modernize their armed forces and master all the modern techniques and know-how of war. The more modern the army and the more advanced the military techniques, the more important, instead of more insignificant, becomes the role of man. The modernization of a people's army must be carried out side by side with its revolutionization, with the latter as the foundation. This is because however advanced military techniques are, it is the power of man, his courage, political consciousness and spirit of making sacrifices that decide the final outcome of war. Modern wars particularly underline the fact that advanced military techniques cannot possibly produce their maximum effect without the revolutionization of the army and the advanced political ideas distilled into it.

That the imperialists and reactionaries have done their utmost to brag about the role of certain new weapons while playing down the role of man has its class origin. The reactionary, exploiting classes are divorced from the people and hostile to them. Since they cannot win the people's support, it is only natural that they cannot make full use of the people's strength. Therefore, the only way for them is to put blind faith in weapons. In this way, superior weapons lose their real superiority in their hands and become nothing more than paper tigers for frightening people. Even if under certain circumstances they may temporarily score some victories, they will ultimately be defeated.

Throughout history, the victory of a new mode of production over the old came about because it liberated, in

varying degrees, the productive forces at the time. This was chiefly because the labourers who are the basic force in production were liberated. This makes it possible for them to create or become interested in employing more advanced means of labour, or to make the old means of labour more effective and thereby create higher labour productivity than before.

In societies under the system of exploitation, productive techniques and other means of labour created by the labourers are owned by the exploiters who, in turn, use them as instruments to enslave and exploit the labourers. When it comes to socialist society, the phenomenon of man being enslaved by productive techniques and the means of labour has come to an end. “. . . Man who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of nature, because he has now become master of his own social organization.”¹ In this situation, man's initiative and his ability to apprehend, control and change nature, are greatly enhanced as never before. Under the leadership of the proletarian party and the state of the proletarian dictatorship, and following the ever deepening understanding of the laws of the objective world, people are able to work out all sorts of miracles as well as create the most up-to-date productive techniques to produce wealth for society.

One of the fundamental differences between socialist and capitalist production is that under the new, socialist relations of production, man's state of mind has undergone a great change. There exists among the masses great, potential strength and enthusiasm for socialism. They no longer look like slaves, they are not inclined to

¹ Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, FLPH, Moscow, 1954, p. 392.

rely on others, but are confident of changing the poor and backward face of their country with their own hands. Comrade Mao Tse-tung correctly stated:

China's six hundred million people are, first of all, poor, and secondly, "blank". That may seem like a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution.¹

Russia, too, was once an economically and technically backward country. After the victory of the October Revolution, the revisionists of the Second International all said: Russia's productive forces have not developed to the level of realizing socialism, the people are really poor, they are not even civilized, to build socialism in Russia is a mere daydream, sheer nonsense. To this, Lenin answered:

You say that civilization is necessary for the building of Socialism. Very good. But why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilization in our country as the expulsion of the landlords and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards Socialism?²

To overthrow landlords and capitalists is first of all to relieve the labourers of oppression and make them masters of society, to release the inexhaustible latent energy in them so that they can fight for their own destiny. That is to say, the first thing is to release the energy of the labourers, to get the support and manpower

¹ "Introducing a Co-operative", *Peking Review*, No. 15, 1958, p. 6.

² V. I. Lenin, "Our Revolution", *Selected Works*, FLPH, Moscow, 1952, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 727.

needed in the fight for socialism; the next step is to create the necessary advanced material and technical base for the elimination of poverty and backwardness in their country.

As is widely known, this is exactly what the glorious Soviet people did under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union headed by Lenin and later by Stalin.

The historical experience of socialist countries likewise proves that the decisive factor in construction also is man, not matter. Only people with the revolutionary spirit, consciousness and firmness of the proletariat, determined to make self-sacrifices, can build socialism, and on that basis build communism. There are those who cannot really build socialism, let alone communism. These people have lost the proletarian revolutionary spirit and seek only individual material incentive and high wages. Their minds are filled with such bourgeois ideas as "liberty, equality, fraternity", and "humanism", ideas which they use to corrupt the proletariat and paralyse the masses.

In leading the people in construction the primary task of the proletarian party is to attach great importance to the role of man in a socialist society, to bring out fully the potentiality of the masses for socialism, to give full rein to their enthusiasm and readiness "for action and for the revolution" and to organize their strength. The general line of going all out, aiming high, and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism put forward by the Chinese Communist Party proceeds from just such an aim. All the Party's concrete policies and measures on construction work are

also worked out in accordance with this spirit of the general line.

Of course, it is not to be interpreted that man can act freely with no regard for the objective material conditions. Man and matter at any time are the two opposites in a unity. Man is the master of matter, while matter provides certain conditions for man's activity. Man cannot achieve success beyond the limits set by these conditions; but within these limits there is ample room for his initiative to manoeuvre. Within these limits, politics, ideology and man's revolutionary drive can give rise to technique and other material conditions. Numerous facts show that due to differences in people's political consciousness and in the play of their subjective initiative, organizations with approximately the same material and technical conditions may achieve quite different results, some good and some bad. If more attention is given to the role of man, greater, faster, better and more economical results may be achieved in production even with comparatively backward technical equipment, while with more advanced technical equipment, you can get still greater results. On the contrary, if man's initiative is not brought into full play, even with advanced technical equipment production may be reduced to a state of stagnation or even chaos.

Socialist and capitalist enterprises are entirely different in nature. Besides the gradual realization of technical modernization, socialist enterprises require their workers and staff members to revolutionize their thought so that, filled with the revolutionary spirit and enthusiasm of the proletariat, they are wholly dedicated to the cause of socialism and communism. This is the only way to vitalize enterprises, steadily improve their technical moderniza-

tion, and make all modern techniques fully effective for high labour productivity. Capitalist enterprises take the enslaving of the workers as their prerequisite. The modern revisionists use the capitalist principle of profits to adulterate socialist enterprises, and the so-called "individual material incentive" to corrupt the minds of the workers. Thus, in reality, the role of man cannot be really brought into play. The modern revisionists pay lip service to "concern about man"; in fact, they attempt to kill the revolutionary spirit of the people, cause the degeneration of both socialist enterprises and the economic base of socialism.

The spirit of the Taching Oilfield has become a byword among the Chinese people. What is the Taching spirit? In essence it is the proletarian revolutionary spirit in building enterprises, the spirit of giving priority to the human factor.

The Taching Oilfield, a modern oil enterprise newly opened in China, was built on a former wasteland at a difficult time and under trying conditions. There was an acute shortage of machinery and equipment; communications and transport facilities were poor, causing frequent delay in the delivery of supplies; and machine repair workshops were non-existent. Under such circumstances the Taching builders, carrying forward the revolutionary tradition of hard work and self-reliance, subordinated their personal interests to those of the people, the state and society and battled amid hardships without a moment's hesitation. They overcame one unimaginable difficulty after another and achieved greater, faster, better and more economical results in building up a giant modern enterprise in a short space