



IMPRESSIONS OF

TACHING OILFIELD

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By Chiang Shan-hao

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING

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.

The story first appeared in several instalments in *Peking Review*, 1977. Some minor changes have been made for the present booklet.

First Edition 1978

Printed in the People's Republic of China

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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 oil-fields.

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.