

# What Inspires Our Battle for Cotton?

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**O**UR Tzuhsi county is in Chekiang province. Seven years in a row we had bumper harvests of cotton, and again last year the county average was a record — 132 *jin* per *mu* on 487,500 *mu* of cotton fields. This was one of the highest yields in all China. Can we still increase the yield this year? We believe we can. And the main reason is that we have begun to apply the dialectical materialist truths found in the writings of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and to be convinced that principles which

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have helped to win the political and military struggles of the revolution can also be applied to the struggle against nature and make agricultural production obey man's will.

### Have We Reached the Peak?

But we had not always understood this. After the 1963 harvest which reached an unprecedented average of 108 *jin* per *mu*, variations of the idea that "the yield has reached its peak" crept into the minds of cadres and commune members. "When a man is as tall as the ceiling, he cannot grow any taller," was one remark. "A bam-

boo cannot reach the sky; we should be satisfied with it as it is." To clear away this stumbling block in people's minds, the county Party committee assigned me and some other comrades to go to the communes and help the people study Chairman Mao's works to see whether their thinking corresponded to the objective reality and its laws.

We went first to Chiatang commune, holder of the county's "high-yield championship" for three successive years. In 1963 Chiatang commune had brought in 155 *jin* per *mu*. But the people here were especially complacent,

Picking and drying the new cotton.

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and we tackled this problem at once. Side by side with its cadres and members, we worked in the fields during the day and studied Chairman Mao's *On Contradiction, On Practice and What Is the Source of Correct Ideas?* in the evening. All these three philosophical works deal with how to get a correct understanding of the objective world in order to change it.

### 'One Divides into Two'

Our studies were of course tied in with the discussion of cotton production. Soon the complacent ones began to see things differently. Since the development of contradiction brings ceaseless change in the objective world, man's understanding of that changing objective world must also develop ceaselessly.

Someone pointed out that Chiatang had increased its cotton production every year since 1949. "Before the liberation," he recalled, "our output was about 25 *jin* per *mu*. After the land reform in 1950, it went up to 30 or 40 *jin*. Didn't some people think even then that we had reached the top? During the years of the agricultural co-ops we increased it to 80 *jin* per *mu*. But those people still said, 'Well, 80 *jin* is not so hard; now 100 *jin* — that's a real hurdle!' After we set up the commune we not only broke 100 *jin* but even went beyond 150 *jin*. Today these same people are saying all over again that there's no more potential to be tapped. Why do some people never learn?"

The commune cadres then applied the materialist dialectical principle of "one divides into two" — i.e., the principle that all things divide into two opposite sides which are contradictory to each other — in order to analyse and sum up the results achieved in 1963. This made them more aware that there had been shortcomings as well as achievements. The shortcomings were: (1) the 1,500 *mu* of saline and alkaline land had produced only 110 *jin* of cotton per *mu*, 45 less than the year's average; (2) a serious dry spell had lowered the per-*mu* yield by 20 *jin* on 2,000 *mu* of land because the irrigation and drainage net-



Members of the Five Sisters' Cotton-growing Group of the Chiatang commune selecting seed.

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work had not been completed; (3) some cotton had been damaged because insect pests were not eradicated in time due to a shortage of sprayers; and (4) not enough green manure and base fertilizer had been used. This careful examination helped people to realize that if they made an effort to plug these loopholes, the 1964 harvest would far surpass the previous year's 155 *jin* per *mu*.

After wide-ranging discussions such as this, most cadres and commune members began to see that conservatism did not reflect the realities of our situation. Confidence grew and everybody threw themselves into the winter farm work. To improve the 1,500 *mu* of saline soil, they hauled 400 *jin* of straw and 20,000 *jin* of river mud to each *mu*. They dug more than 500 canals and ditches to complete the irrigation and drainage system. Seven hundred new insecticide sprayers brought the number to 1,250. At the same time, the acreage using green manure was expanded. All this laid a good foundation for their aim of a higher yield in 1964. As a result, the output rose to 180 *jin* per *mu* and the commune continued to be the high-yield champion.

Meanwhile, the rest of the county had been startled by the

realization that the record-breaking Chiatang commune was striving for still-higher yields. Commune after commune followed Chiatang and began to study Chairman Mao's writings, applying his teachings to summarizing and analysing their own experience, both good and bad, comparing themselves with more advanced communes and finding out why they were lagging behind. They recognized that to resolve any contradiction, people have to create the conditions for its solution. In other words, in order to change low yields into high ones, the decisive factor was *man* with a revolutionary spirit. Therefore that winter and spring all the other communes in the county threw more manpower into building irrigation projects, improving soil and collecting fertilizer. Many more sprayers and good strains of seed were added.

### Concentration of Forces

In the spring of 1964 it rained more than usual, threatening a delay in the sowing. If sowing is not finished on time it naturally lowers the output at the harvest. What should be done under such conditions? People decided to apply a principle developed by Chairman Mao — the concentration of forces to fight a decisive battle.

County leaders called upon everyone to get ready to make use of every available second for rush sowing the instant the weather cleared. Supply stores delivered materials needed for spring sowing right where they were needed.

In the middle of April when the sky at last cleared, 100,000 men and women poured into the fields for the rush job. In every village people just pulled their doors shut behind them and headed for the sowing. Even the oldsters and the children volunteered. Seven days later the cotton was in over the entire county — on time.

### 'Removing the Mountains'

One battle came after another. Shortly after the sowing was finished, the temperature suddenly dropped to 14° C. and rain fell for days, menacing the young cotton just breaking through the earth. After eight days of rain, sprouts began to wither and seeds to rot on 100,000 *mu* of land. All concentrated on conquering the impending disaster. Ditches were dug to drain the water away. The young plants were covered with ashes to keep them warm. The fields were sprayed to prevent insects from attacking the weakened plants. Where other crops had been intersown with the cotton, commune members worked in the rain to tie up beans and wheat so they would not lean against the cotton and cut off the sunlight.

Where seeds and sprouts had been ruined, instead of reseeding, they transplanted new seedlings, even though this required much more work. Most of the plants on 1,000 *mu* of one brigade could not be saved. Brother brigades came to their rescue, bringing extra seedlings by boat or shoulder-pole and even using doors taken off their houses to carry them. Every available person rushed to speed up the replanting. After a month of strenuous emergency work, full green cotton plants were growing well in every spot in the county.

In July and August, when cotton needs the most water, not a drop of rain fell for 50 days. The 400 diesel pumps in the county could be heard day and night and every waterwheel was put to work. In

some places commune members carried buckets of water to the fields. When the Ssumen district lacked water, pumps from its thirteen communes were set to work drawing water from the Tsao Ngo River, 10 kilometres away.

*How the Foolish Old Man Removed the Mountains*, an article written by Chairman Mao in 1945, is one we read a lot. From this article people drew strength to tackle the problems. While pumping water one day a commune member remarked, "Yu Kung, the foolish old man in the legend, decided that he and his sons and grandsons would level with pick-axes two big mountains blocking their doorway. Therefore he didn't listen to those who believed they could never do it because so little was dug away each day. Well, we're members of the people's commune with a tremendous collective power, and we can do much more than that. We have correct Party leadership and support from the state. Why should we worry about not being able to cope with the drought devil?"

### Carry Through to the End

The cotton grew luxuriant, like a rolling green sea. In mid-August most of the plants bore abundant bolls. The situation looked good and some farmers thought a bumper crop was in the bag. We soon realized, however, that this kind of complacency could lower the harvest.

So we asked all communes in the county to study Chairman Mao's article of 1948 called *Carry the Revolution Through to the End*, in which he wrote that the question facing the Chinese people at that time was ". . . whether to carry the revolution through to the end or to abandon it half way. If the revolution is to be carried through to the end, we must use the revolutionary method to wipe out all the forces of reaction resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely. . . ." The study made commune cadres realize that once we had begun a job, we had to keep at it until we overcame all the obstacles. This meant that if we wanted the good harvest we had worked so hard to get, we would have to give even more care

to the plants in the last stages of their growth.

The whole county was swept by a tide of "more care in the final stages". Commune members gave special attention to plants that were not too good, put additional fertilizer on great areas of land, and sprayed insecticides often. When insects appeared in some fields, all team members turned out to kill them either with sprayers or by hand. As a result, not only were the summer bolls sturdy but those in the autumn were more numerous. A count showed us that on the average each plant grew 2.2 more autumn bolls than in 1963.

In the autumn Tzuhsi county was a white world of cotton. A bumper harvest was in sight and the laughter of men, women and children could be heard everywhere. At this juncture we decided not to lose a single boll. On the land of No. 8 production brigade in the Chiatang commune, for example, every plant was tall and thick. But some bolls close to the ground lacked sunlight and began to rot before opening up. If these were not picked in time, there would be a loss. Eight women volunteered to do the work. Their slogan was "Don't lose even half a boll!"—and they picked 2,000 *jin*. In another brigade women carried little bamboo baskets, picking up any bolls which had dropped to the ground. They collected 132 *jin*.

In 1965 before the new farming year started, we analysed and summarized the previous year's experience: Although all the 65 cotton-growing communes in the county had exceeded 100 *jin* per *mu* in 1964, there were still wide differences in the yields of individual communes. When we compared ourselves with other advanced counties we realized that we had not yet tapped all the potential for raising our production. Last winter and spring people in every part of the county were busy using the approach based on Chairman Mao's thinking to lay the foundation for a still greater harvest this year.

1 *jin* = 0.5 kg. or 1.1 lb.

1 *mu* = 0.06 hectare or 0.16 acre