

FERISE OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S COMMUNES ANNA LOUISE STRONG

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THE RISE OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S COMMUNES

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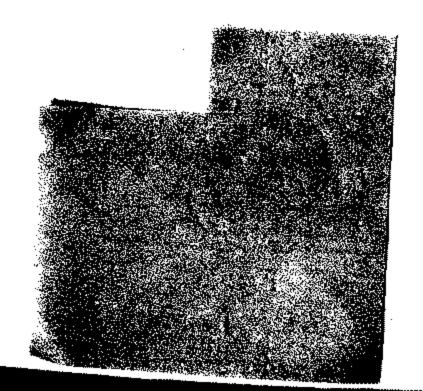
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There's no Jade Emperor in heaven,
No Dragon King on earth.
I am the Jade Emperor,
I am the Dragon King.
I order the three mountains and five peaks:
"Make way! Here I come!"

(Popular song in 1958)





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Introduction—Some Misconceptions

People's communes swept all China at the end of last summer. By December they contained over 120,000,000 households, ninety-nine per cent of the peasant population. They became the base on which rests China's immediate future, and the units from which the more distant future is expected to grow. They are discussed abroad by everyone from Secretary Dulles to Marshall Tito, neither of whom has any idea how the people's communes work.

I have therefore made preliminary collection of facts from four personal visits to widely scattered communes—in Honan, Kiangsu, Kwangtung and near Peking—and from interviews separately held with some fifty men and women members of communes from all parts of the country, and from nine months' perusal of commune news. The facts suggest that we have here a new form of social organization which is widely misrepresented but which has great significance for China and the world.

I leave to theoreticians the relation of communes to Marx. The term "commune" has historically been used with various meanings, the early French use to designate merely a community, the revolutionary use in the "Paris Commune," the many idealistic com-

munal settlements in early America, of which Llano Colony and others were as late as the period after the First World War, and the communes in the U.S.S.R.'s first period of collectivization, which were dropped in the thirties as premature.

The people's communes in China differ from all of these; we must define them not by preconceptions but by the Chinese facts. They are large mergers of agricultural co-operatives, which at once assume new, wider functions. They handle not only farming but industry, commerce, education and military affairs on their territory, which is commonly that of a township or larger. They run the local schools, and some of the local branches of the state bank and state trade. livelihood from cradle to grave. This is not alien to They thus differ from past communes in other parts the old Chinese concept of county and village but is of the world by the wideness of their powers, which a far greater decentralization of economic and political include state power and military affairs.

Chinese Communist Party promptly corrected these units. enthusiasts, and made it clear that communism demands a much higher stage of production than can lically and politically, from past organizations called exist in China for many years. The people's com- communes. As I write, in March 1959, they have munes, it stated, should at present pay according to been in existence for half a year, the first constitution work rather than according to needs. It may thus be of a commune having been adopted on August 7, 1958. seen as the introduction of the "wage system" to a Each of the 26,000 communes differs from every other, peasantry that has hitherto lived by subsistence farm- each being tailored to its community. All of them ing. However, even at the beginning, this wage system is modified by a certain amount of "free sup-

ply," depending on local decision. Most spectacular of these was the rapid and wide introduction of "free food," which came as the result of the bumper crop. Other free items, maternity care, free schools and kindergartens and old people's homes, are less revolutionary, since they exist also in capitalist lands, either as free education or as community relief.

In China, however, these free items are based on a new concept. The local people of the township or of the county - directly own and develop to the limit of their abilities all the resources of the area, whether land, water-power, timber or mineral ores, and from this development look after their community power than is common today. It is expected to pro-It is not strange that many peasants, in their first mote the rapid growth of production and prosperity enthusiasm over these wide powers, declared that they in socialist forms under local initiative, and eventually were "entering communism," with "each according to facilitate the transition to a communist society, in to his needs" and even "absorbing the state." The which the people's communes will remain as basic

> The Chinese people's communes thus differ, economchange and develop week by week. It is far too soon to pass final judgment on their future.

Why then should one write at all about this phenomenon? The answer is that serious misconceptions have appeared abroad about the communes, and are being spread for the purpose of attacking China, and even for the purpose of portraying the Chinese people as lawless and sub-human, creatures who might with clear conscience be atom-bombed from the world in the next Taiwan Straits war. Since there are plenty of facts to prove such attacks baseless, they should be answered at once. The best reply is a description of the communes as they are of present date.

Even in an introduction one may note the chief charges. These are that communes enslave the individual, break down the family, and militarize the people under the militia, spoken of as "Peking's cops." Even on present facts, one can show that these charges are ridiculous. The process of industrialization does indeed change the individual's relation to society and to the family; this has happened in every land thus far industrialized. But the changes made thus far by the Chinese communes seem less of a strain on either the individual or the family than by any industrialization in history.

The much-advertised "destruction of the patriarchal family" which the people's communes proclaim, has not yet, in the communes I have seen, removed the grandparents or the children from the homes of the married couples. Long ago this "destruction" happened in America, where the young couple usually abandons both parental homes on the day of their marriage. In China the "big family" still lives together, not only

in the ancient village houses, but in the new blue-prints for housing thus far approved by people's communes, all of which include rooms for grandparents as well as minor children. The "Homes of Respect for the Aged" are for those who have neither sons nor daughters to care for them; they do not thus far cater to the aged who have sons.

Two changes have been made by the communes which destroy the patriarchal rule. The first is that wages for work are paid to the actual man or woman worker, and not, as heretofore, to the head of the household. The Old Man, who ruled the home by collecting his son's and daughter-in-law's wages, loses this power. The second change is the establishment of a wide net of public dining-rooms, nurseries and kindergartens, which "liberate" the able-bodied young housewife from domestic labor and enable her to earn wages on an equality with her man. For women who formerly did both field work and household chores, including the grinding of the grain daily, this is a very welcome liberation. In any case the parents themselves decide whether they wish to use the local nursery or kindergarten. Thus far I have not yet found in China even that form of coercion which every small town in America uses ruthlessly, the truant officer compelling attendance at the primary school. What the West calls compulsory school attendance, enforced regardless of the will of parents, may later develop also in China: but as of early 1959, even in matters of primary schools, the parents still decide.

As for the "slavery of the individual" through indus. trial routine, let us recall how the westward drive the United States was bought by two generations migratory workers, "bindle-stiffs" deprived of all normal home life. Let us recall the rug factories of Pe king a generation ago, or the textile factories in Japan responsible home guards. - not to mention early Britain - where men or women workers slept in long rows on floors, deprived by years is the extent of the Chinese people's own initiative in of contract labor of any home. That, if you like, was the organizing of the people's communes. As Dr. slavery, degrading the individual. In China the peo Joseph Needham, the eminent authority on China and ple's communes avoid all this. People stay in their Chinese science, recently stated in the New Statesman village homes, or build better homes in more convel and Nation, "the West cherishes the idea that the nient places in the same township. Meantime they population is dragooned to perform its tasks. On the make arrangements whereby able-bodied men and women cultivate the fields, develop local industry and running government planning . . . a new type of social trade, while the strongest go on temporary assignment engineering, the product of leadership from within, to build roads or irrigation projects for their own com- not from above." Those words should be read often; munity use. What slavery is here?

As for "militarization" through the "militia," here note only that most peasants I have met welcome the take the entire booklet. bugle or bell that enables field gangs to assemble or time, in communities which still have few clocks, and like to plant flags in the fields to mark gains in production. Most peasants also are proud that their democratguards," directly responsible to the commune and no thus far under any Ministry of Defence in Peking. Th need of such home guards was recently emphasized by the flare-up of war in the Taiwan Straits, and is kep in mind by the occasional capture of agents of Chiang Kai-shek, sometimes in the act of planting bombs

schools or theaters. The political significance is hardly that of "militarization by Peking," but rather that of the rather amazing trust placed by the central government - in a China so short a time removed from the warlord period - in locally-chosen and locally-

The basic fact that needs from the start to be stressed contrary, everywhere one sees spontaneity, often outthey are a clear, incisive description of the forces operating in today's China. To illustrate them will

Let us here note, however, that the people's communes arose in China as a mass movement in the rural areas, in which local conditions and organization by local Communists played a part, that they existed in ically-elected people's commune has its own "home slightly differing forms in wide areas before Peking officially took notice, that they acquired their name and clearer formulation during the discussions of Mao Tse-tung and other leaders with local peasants in the fields, and that the first official resolution by the Central Committee of the Communist Party about the communes was published on August 29, 1958, at a time

ready joined, while the more complete formulation by couraged by a bumper crop and the belief that hunger intelligence and work.

ship and county to get irrigation, roads, water-power inspire the rest." steel and modern industry by local initiative, as fast. This sense that the future is fluid, and will be detera vast central bureaucracy and without strain on the and creative energy so marked in China today. nation's taxing power. In these respects it seems t combine the local initiative that built the American westward drive with the social planning that built the U.S.S.R.

No final word can yet be said on the people's communes. So far the most authoritative word is the resolution of the Chinese Communist Party, passed of December 10, 1958 by its Central Committee. No government decree yet exists: one may be passed by the

when thirty per cent of all China's peasants had al. National Assembly when it meets in April 1959. The final decision will not be made by the Chinese Comthe Communist Party came only on December 10, when munist Party or even by the Chinese People's Governninety-nine per cent of the peasants were already ment. It will be made by the Chinese peasants, in members of communes. The peasants, moreover, en- all the length and breadth of China, through their

was conquered forever, had already widely voted "free Locally, the people's communes have already absorbfood for all members and their families," a step which ed the political form of the township: in some places no Party resolution had foreseen. Nothing in this they have absorbed the county. The statement of history indicates "dictation from Peking." The facts this in constitutional law is yet to come. A leading do, however, indicate a remarkable technique of Chinese Communist told me: "We think the people's leadership, which should be studied and understood. commune good, but it will take ten years of testing to To me, as a western American, what is most im-know its potential. Some communes will fail this winpressive is that the people's communes have given ter: then they will reorganize better and we shall all China an economic mechanism that incites every town-learn from them. Others will succeed brilliantly and

as the local people can do the work. At the same time mined not by decrees or flats, but by trial and error, by it enables China as a whole to get highways, irriga-wide experimentation of all the people, by the sowing tion systems and a vast network of industry, in an of a hundred flowers of which some will show strength incredibly short time by local energy without building to reproduce themselves, is the source of the initiative

ROOTS TO ROOTS

Ming Dao

Pine trees beside each other Have roots that intertwine. Our village by the others Merges its bits of land

Into great fields.

Each commune member lets

His heart combine

With others.

1. How the People's Communes Arose

The common idea of the West that people's communes came in China by orders from Peking is of course sheer myth. No government ever existed that could force such an organization on six hundred and fifty million people. The description given by the December resolution of the Chinese Communist Party—"a new social organization appeared"—is accurate but inadequate. What natural and human forces produced it? In studying this, one also studies the role of communist leadership in China and the nature of the "mass line," which may be briefly defined as "from the people through the leadership to the people."

When 1958 began, most of the five hundred million peasants of China were organized in 740,000 agricultural co-operatives, with an average membership of 160 families. When the year ended, these had merged into 26,000 people's communes, with average size of a township or more, and with functions that included not only farming but industry, commerce, education and home defense. We must trace the causes of such change.

The farming co-operatives were themselves the result of eight or nine years' growth, which began with the land revolution and the policy of "land to the

tiller": this was part of the "liberation" itself, o followed it almost at once. Mutual-aid teams cam is control of the water supply. For centuries they quickly, for without aid the poorer peasants, lacking have lived at the mercy of rains and rivers, with floods draft-animals and implements, could not have worker and droughts decreed by the climate and the longtheir new land. These "teams" were small groups peroded soils. In the eight years after liberation, the neighbors who helped each other in farmwork, whill national government accomplished many remarkable

Communists and aid of state loans, into farming co operatives, buying animals and better implements for joint use. For a time, in what was known as the "lowe stage," the private ownership of land and many draft animals was recognized by extra payments at harvest In a few years, however, the co-ops grew into th "higher" or "socialist" form, holding land, animals an larger implements as joint property, and dividing the harvest in proportion to labor performed. This change steadily from eroded hills. The problem began not was made not by confiscation but by the increasing par played by labor in the joint crop, and by buying th members' livestock for the co-op at market prices of the instalment plan, a process made possible by stat the locally-retained soil and water, and at the same loans.

surge" swept most remaining mutual-aid teams intstood, not only by experts but by the peasants. For co-operatives, and raised most of the lower type of co China's peasants today are literate and avidly study ops to the socialist type. By winter of 1957-58, a largany information that they find of use. proportion of these co-operatives had paid much of the Great drives began in many parts of China in winter debts incurred in the purchase of their joint property 1957-58 which dwarfed all irrigation work previously and had even begun to save "accumulation funds. Jone in world history. Of these drives I mention only They were ready to think of wider advance.

The first joint aim deeply felt by China's peasants keeping private property in land, animals and took feats of water conservation, increasing the irrigated The mutual-aid teams grew, with encouragement b area by some forty million acres, doubling the total irrigated land which the past centuries had achieved. This achievement was still far below the peasants' needs.

"To conquer floods and drought forever," as a popular peasant slogan has it, would clearly take generations f done by the national government, and would cost an unbearable amount in taxes. Moreover the great state projects had limits: many reservoirs and canals of past dynasties had been silted up by soil draining with great floods but with millions of small streams washing down ravines. If the local peasants could retain these, their own farms would profit at once by time this would materially help control the greater In winter of 1955-56, a nation-wide "socialist up floods. By winter of 1957-58 this was widely under-

Wo.

Honan Province was notoriously poor and subject to famine. It suffered for centuries the floods of the Yellow River and these were often followed by drough when the waters fell. "Ten seasons, nine calamities, said the local proverb. When I visited Honan October 1958, they gave me figures. The province ha inherited from past centuries some 1,266,670 irrigate acres. In seven years the national government, aide by local people, built projects that irrigated 4,500,00 acres more. Then, in winter of 1957-58, the local farmers organized "to banish flood and drought forever. Millions turned out and built reservoirs, dams, wells cisterns, ponds of every kind, and stored enough water for 13,750,000 acres, three times what the national government achieved in seven years!

The projects were not all well done by the local farmers. Some dams and reservoirs were washed away did in the same area in the preceding eight years," Only a small part of the stored water was in completed which included the Hwai River project. The statistiirrigation systems: it was in ponds and wells from tians then added an even more astounding detail of which human labor must still carry it by pails to the fields. This did not worry Honan farmers; they had he national government removed the earth, it cost 364 the water where they could get it and within another year or two they could add the electric pumps to lif it into channels for the fields. With water already /158th as much. The cost per thousand cubic meters stored on their land, they felt secure.

rivers and the Grand Canal. In the years after libera tion, the national government built here the grea

Hwai River project, a gigantic flood-control job which became famous around the world. This relieved ther 0.06 hectare.

great floods, but left the local problems of lesser floods, drought and water-logging, which Anhwei shares with much of the North China Plain. The daring peasants proposed to handle this problem by criss-crossing the province with wide canals, which should then be connected with the Yangtze, the Hwai and Yellow rivers and the Grand Canal, and furnish irrigation, drainage, vater-power and water transport to every township. t was an idea which, starting in Anhwei, was within year to be discussed as a serious plan for the whole North China Plain.

In spring of 1958 the Anhwei peasants announced hat in the irrigation and water-control jobs north of he Hwai, they had done a total of 3,900,000,000 cubic meters of earth removal during the previous winter, and that this was "seven times what the government type dear to the hearts of the thrifty Chinese. When ruan1 per thousand cubic meters, but when the local people did it, it cost the state just 2.30 yuan, only of water stored was 290 yuan when the state did it, Even more spectacular was the achievement in Angut only 1.80 yuan when the peasants did it, just hwei Province, at the joining of the Yangtze and Hwa /160th as much. The state had paid for some bridges,

¹¹ yuan=42 cents or 2.8 shillings. Other Chinese units used this book: 1 catty=1.1 pounds or 0.5 kilo. 1 mou=0.16 acre

tunnels, arches, tools and wages of technicians. Th local farmers did the rest.

Who paid for this incredible achievement? This course is where Mr. Dulles says "forced labor," an where the Chinese Communists say "the peasants political consciousness." The peasants tell you it was "improving our own land." In point of fact, the individuals doing the work were paid, but not by the state gation as work done for the farm, and hence payable Westerner can at least note, what may be more imomist would therefore find that the work was actually poster whose design has been copied by hundreds of paid by a local taxation, assumed by the co-operative thousands of local amateur artists on frescoed local they could easily spare the labor in winter, and because depicts a giant peasant splitting a great cliff and usherthe coming harvest.

In many other parts of China great water-control moved." This is the theme of China today. projects were begun or completed that winter of 1957- From such actions grew "the military form," not by 58. In Kansu they were bringing the waters of the orders from Peking but by the fact that when men Tao River over the mountains to irrigate two and a went out "to conquer a mountain" it was cheerful and half million acres of hitherto arid soil. In Kwangsi effective to go with drums and banners, and to plant they were controlling the Lunkiang, in Hopei the flags on hills showing the extent of their work. Later Haiho. In Sinkiang deserts they were renovating Mr. Dulles spoke of it as "the enslavement of the ancient irrigation systems after centuries of disuse Chinese peasant," an epithet at which all Chinese In Inner Mongolia and other parts of the arid north-angrily laughed. west, they declared war against the moving sand None of these great actions were begun by the peodunes of the Gobi which in slow centuries have been ple's communes. But out of them the people's comswallowing the settlements of men. In Shansi munes were born. one of the worst eroded areas, where soft loess

soil ran down treeless slopes with a total loss of three hundred million tons of soil a year, work began which within a year announced the terracing of four million acres of sloping land, and the consequent cutting of erosion by one third, saving to the province a hundred million tons of soil per year.

No Westerner will find it easy to accept such figures, but it is not wise to discount them, for every Chinese and not, in most cases, in cash. They were paid by local child eagerly counts the achievements of his village co-operative farms, which credited their work on irriand every province checks on other provinces. The by an increased share in the joint harvest. A tax econ-portant, that everywhere in China appears a great farms because they saw its immediate benefits, because walls — as common as Coca-Cola in the U.S.A. It everybody hailed it as the surest way to guaranteeing a swift river through, and it bears the words: "Let the mountain lower its head; let the river course be

twenty small co-operatives in the office of a Party able to plan thirteen larger reservoirs, which eliminated secretary, for the one modern irrigation pump the the menace of flood and drought. county had so far obtained. The chairman of Co-op All these new mergers, whether they grew from the No. Three, a doughty one-legged veteran of the libera- irrigation drive or from other causes, came because tion war, wins the pump on merit but loses it through the farming co-ops felt a shortage of labor. This is the weakness of the county office to the greedy Co-op another fact which will seem incredible to the West. No. Eighteen. Unwilling to start a feud, he suggests Has not China had peasant labor in great excess? But that if the other co-ops will help him with labor to it was a fact that the small co-ops could not deploy dig a ditch from Blue Dragon Fall for irrigation, this labor on the scale needed for all the new activities they will be "better than the pump." The county secretary wanted. This lack expressed itself in many ways. The inspecting the fall with a technician, finds that the Kuochuang Co-op had iron-ore on its land but lacked best proposal is a big reservoir, useful on county scale coal; the nearby Tienchuang Co-op had coal but no iron. but inundating half the land of Co-op No. Three. . . . Neither co-operative had funds or labor enough to buy Out of this and other dramatic conflicts between local from the other and start the making of iron. When interests and county-wide development, the result is the two merged, it was simple to begin the making clear. All the co-ops form a federation, which builds of iron and steel by native methods for farm implethe dam and uses it for everyone's interest. This is a ments. . . . simple, dramatic statement of the actual type of situa- The Sputnik Co-op in Suiping County of Honan, tion from which communes arose.

units began in many parts of China in spring of 1958, co-operative," later claimed to have been the first peo-They took various names, such as "federation of co-ple's commune. There are reasons for this claim, for operatives," or "enlarged co-operative." Most of them, the Sputnik's new constitution was published and but not all, came as a result of needs discovered in the Widely copied, and Honan was indeed a main basis for irrigation drive of the previous winter. Thus forty-the first great expansion of communes. But enlarged eight small co-ops on the Tanshui River in Honan built co-ops appeared also in many other provinces at about eighty small water-control projects during the winter, the same time as Sputnik. Liaoning, Szechwan,

A fascinating motion picture by one of China's many but because of small scale, poor quality and inability film-producing companies tells a typical story of the to select the best site, which might be on another farm's birth of a commune. It is called "County Secretary" land, many of these projects were damaged in the sumand portrays with drama and humor the struggle of mer flood. When the small co-ops merged, they were

formed in April 1958 by merger of twenty-seven small-Spontaneous merger of farming co-ops into larger er co-ops, and which called itself at first an "enlarged

Kwangtung provinces all have claims. It may be interest to note here two other widely differing communes, which began in different manners, and which show how varied the new tendency was.

A small island off the Chekiang coast, known a May the First Island, had actually a people's commune though without the name, as early as 1954. Its total population is 2,700 souls, all fisherfolk. In 1953 they which grew the locally-consumed vegetables.

They had also a dozen small factories for motor repair, months. Members in one co-operative drowned sixty iron smelting, making fish-nets. They had a broad-pigs in order to eat them. One township official went casting station, a library, a "palace of culture," a school in for peddling watches without a license, thus evading for fishery, a maternity home, electric lights and tele-the tax laws. In short, the drift towards capitalism, phones. The 1958 gross income was five times that of which always exists in a peasant economy, was break-1957, a total of three million yuan, 1,100 yuan per ing up the Changshih co-operatives.

capita, which is \$450 U.S.A. Much of this would at once be reinvested, but all the fisher families now had bank accounts, while fifty of the poorest had moved into new homes during the year. This amazing advance showed what an already-organized community could do on the basis of the new form.

The Changshih Commune in Kwangtung, which also can claim to be one of the earliest, as it started in organized four fishing co-operatives. In 1954 these April 1958, is interesting for another reason. It grew merged into one, thus ending quarrels over the rich out of the failure of the co-ops in 1957, and it illustrates but limited fishing grounds. The merger gave funds the part played by Communist leadership in arresting and manpower enough to launch into deep-sea fishing, and reversing a failure. This township had some 20,000 The co-op took over the functions of the township people, and there were eight farming co-operatives, government, which later was the typical mark of a none of which was doing very well. The area people's commune. It absorbed small handicraft co-ops, was mountainous with thick forests and rich ore dea credit and marketing co-op and a small farming co-op posits which the peasants exploited spasmodically. The small co-operatives proved unable to handle two kinds When the movement for communes began, this little of work at once. In 1956 they got a good rice crop island not only took the new name at once but was but neglected the side-occupations; in 1957 they deready for a big drive. It set up a fish-processing veloped the side-occupations and the grain fell to 219 industry, established trade with the mainland, and sent catties per mou for the late rice crop. This was partly a number of young men to Shanghai to learn to operate because the better-off middle peasants, dissatisfied with motor junks. By December they had built eighteen the income from the co-operative, had taken to private motor junks and ordered two trawlers: some of the jobs such as peddling ore in Canton, so that entire field young men already commanded motor vessels at sea gangs were absent from the fields as long as two

they were able to show the peasants that the road individual enterprise, however attractive at first, le to the splitting of the community, the exploitation of some by others, the return of the "old society." bine them, thus gaining enough labor power to organ ize division of labor. Permanent groups shoul specialize for each occupation. One eighth of the total labor force should be permanently assigned to timber and mines, and keep this work going with skeleton force even during the height of field work then, when field work lessened, large numbers workers could be thrown into the side-occupation under leadership of the permanent staff. Thus Chang shih moved towards modern division of labor.

The eight co-operatives merged in April 1958, too over also the local handicraft co-operative, tailors' co operative and some transport workers, and were soo given the state-owned marketing establishment. Wit

The contrast of nearby successes with their ow these changes, and working with the new, united confailure aroused the local Communists in late 195 viction that socialism was the best road for everyone They reacted by holding a "rectification campaign and that they must make it work, the new combination, followed by a "great debate," a process then commo later renamed a people's commune, secured a total in China. A mass meeting of the eight hundred local income of 13,000,000 yuan in 1958, five times the in-Communists was first held to criticize and analyze the come of 1957. Of this somewhat more than half came own errors: this lasted several days. Then a "great de from timber, ore, and newly-organized small industries, bate" began for all the peasants on the subject: "Which but the most spectacular progress was in the late rice road is best for China, for Changshih, for YOU per crop, which had a yield of 1,717 catties per mou, eight sonally, capitalism or socialism?" Since the Commu times the yield of 1957. The income per capita is still nists in their own discussion had already confesse extremely low by western standards: it was reckoned their shortcomings and developed some useful idea at 650 yuan gross income, or 400 yuan net income per capita, counting children and dependants: but the commune put so much back into new investment that its workers will draw only 10 yuan per month, about Th \$4.00 U.S.A. . . . However, in the past most of the way to cure the lacks of the co-operatives was to con peasants never drew any wages, and Changshih today offers its members not only wages, but three good meals daily for everyone, children and aged included, for which they have not only more rice than they can eat, but also pork, fish, chicken, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, peanut oil, tea and honey, all produced by themselves. "Salt is the only thing we have to buy," they boast.

> One learns from the Changshih Commune that, because the leadership of the Communist Party penetrates and connects all areas, no local failure is final, but s discovered, analyzed, and made a starting-point for wider success. This was even more strikingly illustrated by Honan Province, which, partly because of mistakes made in 1957, became in 1958 the leader in

the organization of communes. In 1957 there we out "to attack a mountain" with drums and banners, and amalgamation with confidence born of harsh exprew. perience. The winter irrigation drive strengthene All these changes began in the small co-operatives operatives that became people's communes.

communes with the Sputnik Commune in Honan, ever peratives. The Central Committee was of course others. For the Sputnik was the first in Honan and well as the other Party leaders, spent much time in Honan established the trend. It was a trend not onlummer of 1958 travelling to the farms and talking towards larger size but wider function. The agricu with the peasants and the local leaders. In early tural co-operatives, in merging, took over also local ugust, about the time when Sputnik adopted its handicraft, marketing and credit co-operatives, praconstitution as a people's commune, some Shantung tically all of which served the farms. With the greatleasants, seeking wider organization, proposed that increased labor force, a greater discipline was needed bey become a state farm. Mao told them that a state Permanent labor groups were formed, assigned tarm was confined to agriculture and this was not what special tasks or special fields. Having few clocks, the ney wanted. They wanted to absorb not only farming,

controversy in Honan as to whether small co-operative proudly called this "the military form," not knowing or larger ones were best. Conservatives in the propably not caring — how Mr. Dulles would later vincial Party committee supported the richer peasant buse this term. The tendency to set up nurseries demand for small co-operatives, and induced a fairle or the convenience of mothers engaged in field work, large proportion of Honan's co-operatives to split int which had begun in the smaller co-operatives, now smaller groups. All those which did so found them videned; these services, which the smaller coselves at harvest of 1957 far behind the record of thoperatives usually charged for, began to be offered co-operatives which had persisted in keeping a largerree. Public canteens, to save the women from the size. The lesson was learned. Honan peasants at oncheavy drudgery of peasant households, and to carry reversed the trend and promoted wider and wide ood to the field gangs during harvest, appeared and

this tendency. By April 1958, Honan, somewhat ahea and increased in the larger ones. They marked the of other provinces, brought forth the enlarged coneginning of a new form. But the peasants were not ret aware of this, nor had the new form yet a name.

The new name and the precise definition of function, ame from Mao Tse-tung's research and especially It is therefore convenient to start the history of therem his trips that summer to these new enlarged cothough it began at about the same time as sever arefully watching these developments: Mao himself, were often called to work by bells or bugles. They se ut local industry and trade. This, he said, was a

"people's commune" and they should add education of the should be sh and home defense as well.

This remark was published in the press: it crystal lized action across the country. Dozens of peasan have told me this. All rural China at the time wa discussing the enlarged co-operatives and asking what manner they themselves might gain new strength Evergreen Commune near Peking told me they sent delegation to study the new form in Honan. Kans farm women said they did not travel so far and wh should they?

we wanted, we said at once: 'Then why wait?'"

A leading Communist thus put it to me later: "Th peasants already knew that they wanted to handle a unit everything in their locality. They did not havorivately retained. Property turned over to the comhad already discussed the future form of expansion ormer co-operative, but any excess over a modest the science and analysis. From his discussions wit All past investments by members of co-operatives, Shantung and Honan peasants that summer, the peouch as livestock and tools turned over at various ple's communes in their present form were born."

the Sputnik Commune of Honan, which adopted it unds and debts of the operating year, which the conew constitution on August 7, 1958. It comprised a perative must complete. the time four townships with 9,300 households and The commune's tasks were to develop "an expanding fame of the Sputnik so spread that it recorded 85,000 ossible," to build roads, dredge waterways, build

titution is therefore historic.

The people's commune, in this constitution, was eclared to be "a basic unit of society" whose task "to manage all industrial and agricultural production, rade, cultural and educational work and political afairs within its own sphere." "Military affairs" were ot listed among essential functions but Article 10 provided for "a system of citizen soldiery."

The commune took over all members of the merging o-operatives who had reached the age of sixteen. Mem-"When Chairman Mao said: 'People's commune bers had the right to elect the management, to be are good,' and that they should include all those thing lected, to vote on all the commune's affairs. Individual easants might also join by turning over to common wnership their means of production, except for small lomestic animals and small farm tools which were the science to formulate this. The Central Committenune was partly taken as "share capital" as in the but had reached no decision. Chairman Mao supplie share capital" was listed as "investment" to be repaid. eriods, were also assumed by the commune as debts. he commune took over all collectively-owned proprty and reserve funds of the constituent co-The first publicly-announced people's commune wa peratives and also all debts, except for the current

43,000 people. The constitution was published and the gricultural output," to build "industry as rapidly as

modern communications. One item provided "one two postmen" for each "production contingent," quick way of getting rural free delivery without co to the state. The commune took over the local branof the state bank and state trading organs, ran the under regulations fixed by the higher organs, as divided the profits. It absorbed local government taking over one or more townships: this meant practise especially the running of local primary ar middle schools. The commune thus also became t registrar of marriages.

fied, and under democratic control. For the higher that might discourage the actual laboring force. organization was the "congress of the commune," mad up of elected representatives from all production bri township level.

Members were to be paid "according to work." Inot want to." "wage system" would be set up when the commun Other articles provided for "universal, compulsory

nade local industry possible, and began the transition rom peasant life to the life of industrial workers. Far lown in Article 15, the constitution mentioned the possibility of free grain to members "when the grain upply reaches a higher level and all members of the commune agree. . . ." This free supply to everyone, ncluding children and aged unable to work, was to be ntroduced only when the harvest was enough to do it, while increasing and not decreasing the income of members supplying the labor power. . . . " The commune did not intend that any ultra-left voting by large, All local resources of nature and man were thus uninungry families should introduce any free distribution

The commune was to organize the labor force in 'production brigades," or working units usually ranging gades and all sections of the people, such as women from one hundred to a hundred and fifty able-bodied organizations, youth, old people, educational worker adults, and these were to be combined in what we may personnel of industrial enterprises. This congress translate as "production contingents," usually over five elected on a functional basis, then elected a "managenundred workers. Community canteens were to be ment committee" and a "supervisory committee" foorganized and also nurseries, kindergartens and sewchecking and inspection. The management committeing teams "to free the women from household labor." set up departments for different tasks: agriculture These services were to be run at cost, "without losses forestry, water control, livestock, fishery, industrior profits." In practise, with the bumper harvest that finance, trade, culture and education, armed defens soon came, they were usually run without any charge and the like. All these had force of government at all. An important provision noted: "Members need not use the canteen or nursery service if they do

"acquires stability of income." This would replace the ducation," for "health and medical service on a cosystem common under the co-operatives of paying boperative basis," not necessarily free, for "Happy workdays, reckoned at harvest. The wage syster Courts" for the aged and disabled "who have nobody to depend on" — which implied a system of old-age reliand certainly not "splitting of the home." Other puvisions were for financing and planning, reserves a expansion.

The full daring and originality of this new organization becomes clear from careful study of the constitution. The citizens of the local area, usually of tow ship size, assumed ownership and management of local natural resources, land, minerals, livestock, dustries, subject only to normal taxes to the state. The were to manage these properties democratically, a expand them, and take responsibility for caring all children and disabled, for paying steadily-increasing wages to all workers, for developing education and health services, roads, communications, irrigation workers from their own resources and suitable to their need

Any student of government or of economic form can at once think of many problems which this typo of organization will face. But the comment quickle made abroad — that the communes were "militarization by Peking" seems singularly untrue. For no such decentralization of government, of economic assets an management had ever been seen before. It was not being proposed in the most populous nation on earth with 650,000,000 people, who had been mostly illiterate ten years earlier, and who were now being offered, local organizations, the ownership and management of the local resources, with the responsibility of using these to develop not only food production, but industry trade, education, government, and all they desired a good life.



Bringing fertilizer to the cotton field. "Garden-farming" in Hopei Province

Cultivating close-planted rice with special tools, Kwangtung Province





Chairman Mao visits cotton field in Honan Province



Close-planted wh

The peasants of China saw this new form as unprecedented opportunity for rapid progress. The Communists of China saw it as the basic cell in what would become the future communist society. But in the rest of the world, which, far more than China, is today disturbed by the threat of annihilating, thermonuclear war, there must have been those who saw at once that the communes made China invulnerable far beyond other nations. Short of a war destroying the human race on the planet — a possibility in which the Chinese do not believe - what major harm can be done to a nation whose great central irrigation dams are supplemented by millions of small reservoirs in every township, whose central steel plants are reinforced by local iron and steel works in every county, whose citizens are organized to the ends of the land as mobile warriors, with every small unit able to raise food, make clothing and steel, and govern itself on a township basis? The strategic invulnerability which the people's commune gives to China, as well as the great economic potential, possibly accounts for the virulence of the foreign attack.

The constitution of Sputnik Commune, adopted on August 7, was widely published "as reference material." Szechwan Provid This gave prestige but no authority over any people except its own members. The Communist Party of China had not yet spoken any authoritative word as to the commune's detailed form. During August, the provincial Party committees everywhere promoted experimental communes, encouraging sample "enlarged

co-operatives" to develop their own ideas. By the e of August it was reported that all the peasants Honan and Liaoning provinces had joined the cor munes, and that on a national scale thirty per cent all China's peasants had joined.

Then, and then only, did the Central Committee resolution on the communes, on August 29, 1958.

their appearance," that "it is highly probable that the of centuries was conquered at last. will soon be an upsurge," and that, because of the "un normal size, but larger or smaller communes may a pear through local conditions. Mergers of local operatives should depend on local decision and "should not be hastened." No changes of ownersh should be pushed "beyond the desires of the owners

All large, merged co-operatives should now be call "people's communes." They should embrace not on farming but also industry, trade, education and milital affairs at the lowest level. They should seek to troduce a wage system instead of the earlier indefin payment by shares of harvest. Payments were st "on the basis of work done" and not "according

needs." But in future the communes are the best form "for transition to communism" and will develop into 'basic units' of the future communist society.

No mention was made in this short restrained resolution of anything like "free food." The Sputnik constitution had mentioned "grain supply" as a future the Chinese Communist Party issue its first offici possibility: the Communist Party's resolution did not go so far. But within a month the communes, organiz-This resolution, the first official statement of nationing across all China, were to raise the banner of "free wide policy, was a modest document of six page food" in a happy assertion that, to China's peasants, somewhat more conservative than the Sputnik constitt even wages were less important than the great dream tion. It stated that "people's communes . . . have may that nobody in the area should be hungry, that famine

precedented advance . . . in farming . . . and the As one traces the history of the rise of the people's demands of rural industry for manpower . . . this ne communes, one is struck by the constant presence of form has become the proper form to accelerate sociali communist leadership and yet by how little it takes construction . . . and carry out the gradual transition the form of "orders from Peking." Communist leaderto communism." The township is recommended as the ship exists from the township to the nation's center. The local Communists seek to organize the local people for the satisfaction of their demands for a better life. When they lead badly, as they did in 1957 in Changshih through apathy and in Honan Province through choice of a mistaken line, they are brought up short by actual failure, shown by small harvests and a poorer life. Mistakes of this kind provoke their own correction and may even introduce a new advance.

Meantime the Central Committee publicizes the successes in the press, studies the failures, and analyzes n what ways and forms the people's demands may best be achieved. A popular drive is encouraged; this goes as far and as fast as the people will take it, and give birth to hundreds of new ideas and forms that at fire are not restrained by criticism from above. "The fi requisite of a people's movement is that it shall move that the people have chosen a direction but that man again. details are disputed or tend to excess. Now the time for analysis, criticism, the crystallizing a form. Then the Central Committee speaks, fixing the new line in a formal resolution. It is significant that the line thus fixed does not go as far as the mo advanced examples; it goes as far as the Central Cor mittee judges the great mass of the people are read to go. But it also indicates a future trend furth than the most advanced have gone.

This technique of leadership, deriving policy from the demands and actions of the people, analyzing the and giving a clear form and returning this to the peop to encourage a greater drive, is what is called "mass line." The Party Resolution on Communes August 29, was passed after thirty per cent of the pea ants had joined communes. It predicted "an upsurge and the upsurge quickly came. By September's e ninety per cent of the peasants were in communes a many of them, excited by their bumper crop, we going far beyond the Party resolution and declarit "free food." Many of them were competing somewh to excess in the number of free items they offered.

Through October and November they advanced a dozen directions with a force of explosion, creatif

new industries, mines, forestry, fisheries, dining-rooms, schools, housing, according to local demand. Not until ninety-nine per cent of the peasants were in communes, and two months' experience again began to said a Peking Communist to me, "and premature con show what methods were succeeding and which bore ment might halt it." After a few weeks it is cle seeds of failure, would the Central Committee intervene

SLEEPING ON THE HILL

With iron pick for pillow And feet against a rock, With earth beneath for mattress And sky my bedding quilt, The north wind woke me, But I turned over and said: "Blow there! Blow the moon down! You won't blow me off the hill Till our dam is done."

(Shantung)

2. Autumn Upsurge

west and west.

leased incredible figures. The grain crop — this pounds to one pound of grain - was estimated 350,000,000 tons, a ninety per cent increase over 1951 the previous year. But the September estimates wer startling enough.

Reasons for the gain were found especially in the increased irrigation. Since the previous National Day October 1, 1957, new irrigation brought water for eighty million acres, more than twice the increase

during the five years of the First Five-Year Plan. China now watered 166,000,000 acres, one third the world's total. Soil erosion had been checked on over 320,000 square kilometers, more than had been done in the previous eight years. Over sixty million acres had been planted to trees, half again as much as in the previous eight years.

The upsurge predicted by the August resolution The organized effort of the peasants, the ministry came in September. The month began with thirt deduced, had accomplished far more than centralized per cent of China's peasants in communes: 8,634 com direction by the state. These results "exploded the munes with thirty-seven million households. Hona theory" that agriculture could advance only by and Liaoning provinces led; almost all their peasant mechanization. For this advance was made "without were in communes. By September 10 five mor many tractors or much chemical fertilizer, by peasant provinces reported their rural areas entirely the initiative, by water conservation, farmyard fertilizer, organized: Hopei, Shansi, Chinghai, Kwangsi andeep ploughing, soil improvement, close planting, se-Heilungkiang, from farthest north to farthest south lected seed, pest and disease control, much cultivation and improved tools." . . . "The triumphal results On September 23 the Ministry of Agriculture rehave forced industry to run forward to catch up with in agriculture," claimed the ministry, noting that the cludes potatoes and sweet potatoes on a ratio of fou new drive for a doubled steel production was partly to meet the new peasant demand for tools.

"A revolution in agricultural science" was given as No such increase had been seen in history. The figur the third result. "The peasants have asked the agronwas to be revised upward two months later after thomists how much grain a mou of land can be made to late rice crop brought the grain to more than doublyield. But their own results on experimental fields are now far beyond what the scientists said were possible."

> "This swiftly-rising farm production is causing the ise of people's communes," concluded the report. China is now in an epoch when, in the words of Marx, twenty years are concentrated in a day.' The aim is

to change the face of China in three years' hard battles of ten million metric tons of staple grains, two and a The peasants are achieving miracles."

53 per cent of these having been established since counties averaging 110 bushels per acre in grain. June. Seventy per cent of Honan's communes were On September 30, in an announcement made for providing their members and the members' familie National Day, it was stated that 90.4 per cent of all with a free supply of staple food, and competition had peasant families in China had now joined people's developed in the number of free services offered, which communes: there were 23,394 communes, averaging often included clothing, housing, education, medical 4,797 families each. The movement "went much care, maternity care, costs of weddings and funerals faster and more smoothly" than any previous drive of and even haircuts, theater tickets and fuel. These the co-operative advance. Everywhere it was being reports were highly stimulating to the rest of China celebrated with drums, cymbals, fire-crackers, and by though later it was felt that Honan had gone too far oyous gatherings, featured by locally-produced poems, in some details.

northwest, was the tenth province to announce that ided advance in the rural areas. What was called all of its peasants were in communes. "Except for the the military organization of labor" - stable workingpastoral areas" was the qualification made. Kansu also quads going together to the fields — was estimated to had had "a massive water-conservation campaign" at lave raised efficiency twenty to thirty per cent. Water the year's beginning, which had brought rice cultivation, road building and manure accumulation tion to three million acres (1.2 million hectares) "of vere going ahead at unprecedented rates. The comdry hills that had been drought-stricken for centuries. Thunes had also brought rapid growth in industries,

half times the crop of the previous year. Wushan Reports from the new communes began to appear in County of Kansu announced that through "better September. Honan, with all of its peasants now organization of labor," it had been possible to send organized in 1,378 communes, reported that 262,00 one hundred thousand people to work on soil and water public restaurants and 341,000 creches and kindergar conservation, and they had thus completed the control tens had been organized and these had "freed sever of erosion on 144,000 square kilometers. Kansu million women from household tasks." The increase proudly announced that in yield the province had alof labor power thus available and its better organiza ready reached "the twelve-year agricultural target" tion had made it possible for Honan to set up 380,00 ten years ahead of schedule, and that for 1959 the goal workshops, mines and factories under the commune was to become an area of "thousand-catty counties,"

songs, dances and operas.

Kansu, that arid, sparsely-settled province of the Everywhere the reports showed also a sudden, many-This, with other measures, had given Kansu a croft Orestry, livestock, fisheries and other sidelines. Pri-

mary and middle schools, libraries, and the organized exchange of knowledge known as "Red and Expen cinemas and hospitals.

education and health; labor and welfare; internal a fairs. There were also a planning commission and a inspection commission.

The labor force was organized in twenty-seve "production corps or contingents" (there is no exact English equivalent), and these contained eighty-seve "production brigades or teams." The larger group, corps, pooled the draft-power and implements and kept the accounts for a cluster of villages: the "team hops turned out clothing, paper, edible oils, pottery, or smaller group, usually contained the labor forcelain, iron tools, fire brick, cement and fertilizer. from a single village, from eighty to one hundred an fifty workers. Public canteens, nurseries and kinder y the end of the year; industrial output was expected gartens were organized by the hundreds, convenient to surpass agricultural output in value in 1959. every village and home. The "Happy Courts" for the The commune had taken over the former township aged who had no relatives, and the "Red and Experdministration, as well as the branch banks, shops, Universities" for self-education, were organized underain offices of the national government. These changes the larger unit, the production corps.

In agriculture, the Sputnik reported that the autumn grain harvest averaged fifteen metric tons per hectare Universities" were also booming, as were drama group, 220 bushels per acre). This was partly due to "more than fifty water-control projects" built since April Details of the famous Sputnik Commune's achieve which ensured water for eighty per cent of all arable ments were published in October. Organized in Apriland. A thousand acres of low-lying land, formerly as an enlarged co-operative, though its constitution of little use, had been drained and converted to riceas a commune was adopted only in August, it had not paddy, with excellent crop. The superiority of the a history of a full half year. The management, electe commune form was shown by the fact that in early by the congress of the commune, consisted of fifty-fiv spring two of the smaller co-operatives had tried to members. Under it came seven departments: agricul build a joint reservoir but had been unable to agree ture and water conservation; industry and communica on division of funds and labor. Each therefore built tions; forestry and animal husbandry; finance and trade its own smaller reservoir but had been unable to finish in time to save its fields from a dry spell. When the commune was organized, it had quickly completed these two reservoirs as well as many others.

Industry also had prospered. Formerly the only ndustry in the area had been a small carpentry coperative and two blacksmiths' forges. In six months he commune had set up 1,142 workshops and factories n which 10,000 people worked. The largest was an ron-mine with three thousand workers in shifts. Other The commune had plans for seven hundred more shops

ere reflected in the local market. Former peak sea-

the commune began in September to pay month hundred gas engines and two hundred and twelv logging and ensure against any ordinary drought. horse-drawn harvesters. Such were the six month Industry also was booming. The county, which successes reported by Sputnik Commune.

Similar successes were reported from other piones communes, now in existence for six months or more Changshih Commune in Kwangtung and May the Fire Fishing Commune have already been noted; in bot of them the 1958 income ran five times that of 195 from the eight communes of Kangping County, which the full use. Others would follow suit. also claimed to be "among the earliest in China had always been menaced by shifting sands from t north. Their yield was always low.

sons came twice yearly, at crop accountings, but since The release of 26,000 women for farm work, through the canteens and creches, and the better general wages, the market showed a monthly peak. Fewe organization of labor, made it possible in summer of small tools were bought; the commune itself had mad 1958 to spare 100,000 people for watering the fields in 14,154 small farm tools for its own use. Large pur a bad spell of drought. Threatened fields were watered chases had, however, been made of horse-carts, water from one to three times, hoed several times, and subwheels, double-share ploughs and big cooking uten fed with manure several times, a practise never used sils for public canteens. Cash purchases had greatl before. The county's grain crop came to 1,400 catties decreased, being replaced by check purchases, sinc per capita, twice that of the previous year. Water remost commune members as well as the commune itselserves for the future also made headway, six reservoirs had bank accounts. With the realization of the autum having been built between June and September and a crop, the commune had placed orders for three hundre hundred deep wells begun. These projects, when more horse-carts, twelve lorries, sixty tractors, or finished, would store all excess water, eliminate water-

formerly had little industry, was already dotted with ,900 small factories, mines and workshops, including thirteen coal-mines, many cement plants, tile and brick kilns, some iron-smelting, many fertilizer factories. Industrial output was expected to be more han six times that of 1957. One commune had sent out a team of one hundred and fifty people to survey From Liaoning Province in Manchuria report camell the township resources with intent to bring them

As these earlier communes announced successes, new Formed in April 1958 by the merging of thirty-fitureas, in which even the small farm co-operatives had agricultural co-operatives, they averaged 5,500 houshot been well developed, now followed the trend toholds each. Their county suffers from drought arwards communes. From pastoral regions of Inner water-logging; part of it, on the west of the Liao Rive Mongolia news came in November that half of the Perdsmen had joined people's communes and set up freameries, and workshops for tanning hides and dressmen's co-operatives had been first formed in 195 Kirin Province. Six farming townships with forty they had shown an annual increase in herds at leas thousand peasants and a vast forest area with twelve twice that of the individual herdsman. More than thousand lumberjacks combined. The area has valuable million head of their sheep were now "of improve minerals, fur-bearing animals and medicinal herbs. strain." Because of better stock, better winter pro The Ministry of Forestry had wished to develop its tection and better methods, 84 per cent of the mare resources but had lacked labor power, and had even and ewes had in 1958 produced offspring, an unheard had to import all commodities needed for the lumber of figure. Convinced by such facts, individual herd workers. By merging with the township farms, all

next to Tibet, news came of other grazing commune would quickly be self-sufficient in food and many com-Here also spectacular records in breeding were publi modities. It planned for self-sufficiency in iron and cized. One shepherd in Yushan Commune reporte steel in 1959 and in all locally-needed machinery by that of 429 ewes he tended, 91 per cent had lambe 1960. and 140 ewes had lambed twice, giving a propagation Even more significant was the combination formed rate of 116 per cent. Since even a rate of 100 pe of timber workers and peasants in Fukien Province, cent had always been deemed impossible, this shepher the coastal province still under fire from Chiang Kaihad become famous, and his methods were studied bishek's troops on Quemoy. The province is mountainous all the others. Stable settlements were appearing with much valuable timber: it had in the past few among the Chinghai nomads, based on creameries, so roads. As a result of the new form of joint organizafactories, tanneries, wool textile mills and supplie tion, an army of one hundred thousand peasants and through the commune with public dining-rooms, nurs lumber jacks got out in a few months three million eries, kindergartens and schools. In Hoka area wher cubic meters of timber, doubling the previous year's only twelve children attended the primary school 1957, now all the 275 children of school age went school. The same area had only twenty-five adul were thus reforested and 270,000 hectares (675,000 learning to read and write in 1957, but now there we 600 adults enrolled in twenty-eight classes for literates. The nomads were settling down.

ing furs, as well as iron and carpentry shops. Herd, A "timber commune" appeared in the far north in men were now flocking directly to the new commune labor would be used for farming in the busy season From the high pastoral areas of Chinghai Province and would fell timber in winter. The entire area

> output. Replanting of trees was adopted at the same time as felling. Some 70,000 hectares (175,000 acres) acres) closed as forest reserve, both these figures being greater than the totals for the past eight years combined. The peasants and timber workers were now

planning the entire area, part for crops and part forests according to soil.

From many parts of China came news of reclamati plans based on the new strength. The plans of Anh peasants to criss-cross their entire area with can bringing irrigation, drainage and water transport every county, which were noted the previous wint now began to be discussed for other parts of the Nor China Plain. Other spectacular reclamation w appeared of which I here note that of two province Kansu and Shansi.

Kansu, which was already bringing the Tao Riv waters over the mountains to irrigate two and a ha million acres, introduced another project, the reclam square kilometers in central Kansu, ruined by ce 1958, the provincial Party committee drew up a pla and four adjacent counties combined to handle work. They sent 37,000 workers to the area, terrac 56,800 acres of sloping lands, built ponds and chec dams on 7,400 acres, planted trees on 3,700, and dee ploughed 4,000 acres of arable land. They announce that they had "preliminary control of soil and wal guaranteed against a hundred days of drought."

Achievements in Shansi were to set a new precede This mountain province southwest of Peking, on

middle reaches of the Yellow River, was one of China's worst erosion areas; its soft loess soil ran down ravines in an annual loss of three hundred million tons. Its loess highlands rise nine thousand feet above sea level; winters are long and cold. Half of its former eleven million "arable acres" were classed as "sloping." In the past, these areas being sparsely settled, the peasants tried to make up for low yield by extensive cultivation, for which they lacked adequate labor power, tools and manure. Long years of such practise had reduced grain yield to a provincial average of eleven bushels per acre, and lower than that in bad areas or bad years.

Harvests increased after liberation, but this went tion of "Big Barren Mountain," an arid region of 1,5 slowly; the extended areas and poor tools left little surplus strength for soil improvement. From these turies of over-grazing and tree-cutting. The far efforts, however, the provincial Party committee co-operatives had halted the loss of soil and water finally unearthed an important fact. Some farming co-1953, but had not been strong enough to underta operatives in the Luliang Mountains, a bad area east of positive reclamation. The area was potentially the Yellow River that had averaged only eight bushels with good soil but lacking in water. In autumn per acre, were increasing yield year by year. They had stopped tilling the worst lands and concentrated labor on the better lands. They got not only higher yield on these lands but a higher total crop. Results were published; all over the province the peasants discussed it and made visits to the Luliang cooperatives. In 1958 the province adopted what they called the "basic farmland plan," the cutting of acreage to increase the total crop.

In 1958 Shansi planted to grain only 6,125,000 acres, just 65 per cent of the previous year. They deep-

ploughed this land to a depth of thirteen to forty inches They manured it deeply, with an average of fifty ton per acre. They levelled it as much as possible and built irrigation works to water it. They "garden farmed it." The land taken out of cultivation was planted to trees or fodder grass.

Results in crops were striking. The wheat yield for eight bushels per acre and where long erosion had made products as well as iron and steel. fifteen hundred ravines, cut its sowing area drastically. The "basic farmland system" of cutting acreage to total crop six times any they had ever had before. munist Party's December resolution.

In late August the province formed people's com. The livelihood of the people changed swiftly as a months of the year. Shansi Province announced that tire country to 375,000,000 tons of bread grains,1 more within one year erosion had been cut by one third 1 Earlier in Chapter 1 grain figures, also known as staple food saving to the province a hundred million tons of good figures, include rice, wheat, millet, sorghum, maize, barley and loess soil annually. As winter approached, Shans also potatoes and sweet potatoes, since these are also ground into announced that acreage would again be reduced and flour. Potatoes count as four pounds to one of grain.

even more intensively cultivated. Shansi would be "garden-farmed."

Visitors to the Taihang Mountains in Shansi already noted a new type of landscape. Instead of the barren hills there are wide, level valleys, criss-crossed by irrigation ditches, deep-ploughed and neat as gardens, from which rise grassy slopes to groves of saplings on spring and winter wheat combined averaged fift the hills. Fish are for the first time bred in the provbushels per acre, four times the 1957 figure. The total ince, in reservoirs built for irrigation. Seven thousand crop was ten million tons, which was 130 per cen new irrigation projects were planned for the winter of higher than the best previous crop, that of 1956 on a 1958-59 and all of these also would be used to add to much larger acreage. Records of individual countie the local fish supply. Other subsidiary jobs appeared were even more remarkable. Shihlou County in those for winter. Shansi hills have excellent coal; the com-Luliang Mountains where previous crops had beer munes opened mines and began to make coke and tar

tilling only 20,000 acres of the best, most level land - increase total crop was tried in 1958 in several provjust thirty per cent of the previous area — and got by inces, but nowhere so widely as in Shansi. Its success intensive cultivation 110 bushels per acre, with led to its adoption as a nation-wide plan in the Com-

munes everywhere, because "they wanted a wider result of these changes in crop. In late November the more flexible organization for bigger jobs." During the harvest of late rice in southern provinces, much of year they recorded the terracing of nearly four million which was cultivated and reaped after the communes acres, and the planting to trees of twenty-three mil were formed, came in at well above twice that of the lion acres, most of this being done in the last four previous year and raised the crop estimates of the en-

than double that of 1957. Canton announced that the neither fertilized nor cultivated and the yield was very placed on the amount.

Meetings and celebrations were held to greet the nor secure. Thus they had lived for ages. announcement, with songs, dances and "operas," and from which so many hundreds of thousands of Chinese in the past migrated overseas to live. This result had But when Kweichow Province, that hilly southern are known as one of China's poorest, also announced grain crop of 1,470 catties per capita, with free meals served by its 1,806 people's communes to all the three million-odd households in the province, then people al over China cheered.

Let us see how the communes came even to th primitive people, like the Lisus, a minor nationality i western Yunnan. For ages unknown they have lived in trackless mountains on the upper rapids of the Salween, locally called the Nu. Their primitive life had not even reached the stage of slavery, much less feudalism or capitalism. They grew maize by the slash-and-burn method, without metal tools. They

per-capita grain production of Kwangtung Provinc small. So winter brought empty bins and the people was 1,870 pounds, almost a ton. On this basis, at fed on grass roots and tree bark. Sometimes a child commune members and their families would get thre was sold for grain; sometimes corpses were found in daily meals without payment, with steamed rice a spring in the melting snow, of men who tried to carry every meal as well as other dishes, no limit bein packs over the passes for small pay and couldn't make it. The life of primitive man was neither comfortable

Liberation brought roads, national equality, some speeches contrasting the "old society" with the new welfare funds and some tools. Grain crops had Yang, leader of a production team in Chienchin County doubled by 1955 but were still not enough. By this told how in the old society his father had died of hun time the Lisus had an autonomous district and a few ger, and his mother had sold his sisters for food. Now Lisu organizers. These took the situation in hand. In hunger was conquered in Kwangtung, that province winter of 1957-58 the Lisus dug hundreds of irrigation ditches and opened 13,200 acres of rice-paddy, piling on manure. When a bumper crop gave them three been expected, for Kwangtung is a strong province quarters of a ton per capita, the Lisus were in happy trouble. No Lisu had ever built a barn. They filled tubs and baskets; the people crowded together and filled the vacated houses with grain. Finally they just had to build new buildings for grain, and discovered the problem of plenty.

> Next came the problem how to eat the stuff. Lisus had never cooked rice: they were used to ground maize, parched in a cauldron on a bonfire. So Chinese cooks came into the area to teach the cooking of rice and the making of bean-curd. But next came trouble with the maize. It had always been ground in wooden mortars, but what with the bumper crop and the public kitchens, the mortars wore out. So carpenters and masons came to the hills and taught the Lisus how to make water

wheels for grinding corn, in a technique practised in China for thousands of years, which Lisus had nevel known.

Lisus now have communes with all the fixings, in cluding public canteens and free food. The canteen serve both rice and cornbread, with one soup and on vegetable dish at every meal and meat once a fortnight In most of China this is now considered a low standard But the Lisus think they have jumped right over slavery and feudalism and capitalism into socialism skipping everything between. Their current song runs

Everyone eats full without pay,
Our ancestors never heard of it!
Is it a dream?
No, it's a fact!
Where?
Right here!
The east is red!
Hail to Mao Tse-tung!

Such was the great variety of people swept into the people's communes, in the upsurge of late 1958.

In Peking a flower bloomed
And to the vale of Da Liang Shan
Came fragrance.
In Peking a red flag rose
And the glow carried
All over Da Liang Shan.

(New folk song of Yi people)

3. Some Personal Visits

Nobody in the West believed the story of the people's communes at first. Nor can I blame them; I myself sat in Peking and could not believe. I travelled to Chengchow in Honan and nodded politely when the provincial Party secretary told me that all peasants in the province were now in communes. Privately I thought it a tall tale; doubtless he had them all listed, but down at the grass roots they could not organize so fast. I visited some communes and was duly impressed by them, but doubted still if they were as wide-spread as claimed. Only when Rewi Alley came back from long trips in the back country, telling how every distant mountain village and coastal fishing settlement had joined the communes, did I at last believe.

The first commune I visited was a cotton-growing one in Honan. Somewhat more than an hour by car from Chengchow we turned from the highway to a dirt road under a decorated arch which proclaimed that we were entering the lands of the Kushing People's Commune. It was another hour's drive through cotton fields, sweet potatoes, Chinese cabbage, and past several small villages before we reached the commune office in a former township center.

Li Chun-yi, manager of the commune, was a native pounds but with ups and downs from flood or drought. of a mother and younger brother. Working the family revolution"; he became a Party member, rose to be pounds, or twenty-three tons per acre! township organizer and later to handle grain and Figures like these had all China excited. Farm comknowledge of organization and accounts.

flat but becoming mountainous towards the west. Some 25,000 acres were arable: they were fertile but suffered from drought. Water storage was thus a main problem. Cotton had been promoted after liberation and was now the main cash crop. They also grew sweet potatoes, wheat and vegetables for their own food.

Productivity rose steadily after liberation, said Li Before liberation cotton yield was around 623 pounds of unginned cotton per acre; in 1951 the mutual-aid teams got 770 pounds; in recent years they reached 1,150

of the area, now aged thirty-one, wiry and efficient This year, the first in which they stored water, they looking in his blue cotton suit. He had been left father were getting 3,000 pounds per acre. Much higher less at the age of ten and had become the suppor vields were reached on the "bumper-crop field" of 43 acres, which this year would yield from 11,000 to small bit of land, he borrowed a neighbor's draft 15,000 pounds per acre: and highest of all was the animal and paid for it by also working on the neigh small "experimental plot" less than a quarter acre in bor's land. Only after liberation did he "join the size, which produced at the rate this year of 43,000

finance for the township. Somewhere along this hard peted with farm, and province with province, getting road Li had managed to get five years of school. The incredible yields by labor so intensive that nobody but commune congress had elected him manager because a scientist or an awakened Chinese peasant would think of his local past, his schooling, his proved energy, his it worthwhile. They dug land to a depth as high as five feet, and fertilized it deep down in layers, using as much Kushing Commune, Li told us, was set up on August as five hundred tons of manure and compost per acre. 17, 1958, by a merger of twenty-seven farming co- They watered, cultivated, and sub-fed with liquid operatives. It included four townships, 123 villages, manure at intervals, discussing details with other farms 11,000 households with 55,000 people of whom 20,642 and comparing results. They claimed that many exclassed as able-bodied workers. The land ran twelve perimental plots already "surpassed world records." miles north to south and nine miles east to west, mostly Of course the labor involved was far more than the immediate crop was worth. But the Chinese peasants, only lately literate, had fallen in love with "science," and pursued this science with passion, setting standards and working out new methods on "experimental fields."

Kushing Commune's biggest achievement of the year was its water storage. Like most of Honan Province, they had spent the previous winter building reservoirs and digging wells. Almost every depression I passed seemed to have been turned into a pond, some of which were now drying up into shallow pools

from the sun and also from the frequent dipping pail Of their 25,000 acres they now watered 20,500, though only 4,300 of this was by direct gravity into the field The rest was lifted from "2,332 plain wells and 2" electric wells," the latter being wells pumped by electric to be drawn by manpower or bullocks and carried to fication, and especially electricity for pumps.

two years ago, said Li, they had not fully fed them for those aged and disabled who have no relatives to could count on feeding themselves from half their middle schools and in an agricultural college which land, using the rest for cash crops.

yuan, about \$7,000,000, of which 580,000 yuan went provide some scholarships." to the state as tax. It left a gross income of \$600 per Statistics are dull, and I shall not list them in every family but the income would not be divided that way commune. Even in this single Kushing Commune a The final plan was still under discussion — the com full inventory of carts, ploughs and other properties mune congress would determine it - but some thing would cover many pages. It is, however, worth noting were clear. Everyone agreed that they must at once that the commune had acquired or developed a large extend electricity to their entire area — it now reached number of small industries, including 15 cotton gins, half the area. All hand pumps must be replaced by an oil press for making cotton-seed oil, 15 shops for electric pumps, so that fields could be easily watered making cotton padding for winter clothes and quilts, A motion-picture projector was already bought—it 45 flour mills, 30 carpentry shops, 15 iron working

stalled at least one per village so that every village could be reached quickly from the central office.

Tractors also were on the list. Thus far they had only two tractors and one truck, not for want of money but because there was a long waiting list for all matric power. From the "plain wells," water still has chines. Now, however, many places in China made tractors, and Loyang Tractor Center had agreed to sell the fields. Next year's task would therefore be electricated them eighty tractors, thirty trucks and one jeep during the coming year. All these things were considered by "Already we store enough water on our land so the the members more important than any immediate wage. if no rain comes we can still water and grow," said "We go on a wage system this month," said Li, "but Li proudly. It was a signal achievement for a province its details are still under discussion. There will be in which for thousands of years, survival had year by different wage levels according to kind and amount of year depended on the will of heaven, and where the work. We shall also provide free food, free medical proverb ran: "Ten seasons, nine calamities." Ever care, free nurseries, kindergartens and 'Happy Courts'

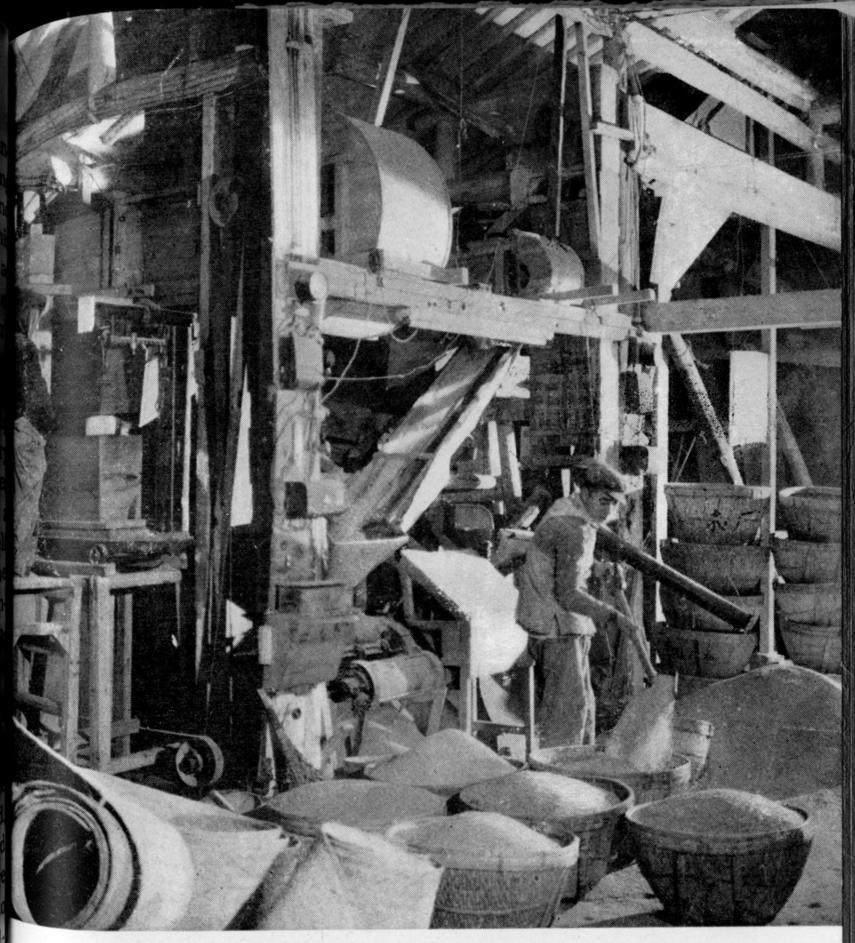
selves from their land in a dry spell, but now they care for them. There is free schooling in primary and we are setting up right here on our land. For good The commune's income for the year was 17,000,000 students who need to go elsewhere to study we shall

arrived during our visit — and phones had been in shops, 28 potteries making tile and brick and pipe, 85

shoe-making shops, 36 tailoring shops, 35 hand laudries, 6 places making chemical fertilizer and 82 making bacteriological fertilizer, one machine repair-shop at one bakery to make bread from sweet potatoes. The bread came in for lunch, warm and fluffy, but not good to the taste as wheaten bread. Here, as in oth communes, I found that sweet potatoes, the "poor materior" for centuries, would be lessened in the coming year and more land given to wheat.

For social amenities there were 254 public diniplaces, 216 nurseries, 93 kindergartens, 60 prima schools and nine secondary schools, 21 maternity hom and 20 "Happy Courts" for the aged. There was "Red and Expert University," a kind of do-it-yours college where people exchanged knowledge on the principle "the able teaches and the unable is appretice." Subjects taught included "law, finance, engineering," probably on a simplified scale . . . for local needs.

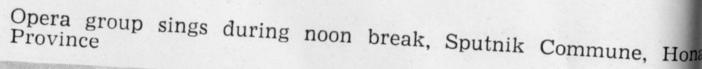
The large number of these workshops and "factorie suggests that they were not large in size. Most them in fact were very small, confined often to a sing room or to an open or half-open shed in a back yard. In these crude premises, on home-made tables at benches and even on the ground, young folks were developing soil bacteria in test-tubes according instructions sent by the county or provincial agricultural authorities, and local handicraftsmen were doing carpentry or iron work or hammering out ball-bearings. It was the inclusion of all types of handicraft in the commune that marked its initial difference from the



Food-processing factory, Kwangfu Commune, Kiangsu Province



Making bacteriological fertilizer, Hopei Prov.





farming co-operatives, and gave the members a sense of a rounded strength.

What most intrigued me in the workshops was that they actually made ball-bearings by hand and had put ball-bearings during the summer on all their 1,169 mule-carts as well as all wheel-barrows and water-wheels.

"Everything that turns," said Li.

One thinks of ball-bearings as made in enormous plants with a million dollar investment. I recall how proud Moscow was when its great Ball-Bearing Works went up in the Five-Year Plan. China today buys ball-bearings from Europe, contracting for the output of entire plants, but these cannot begin to supply her needs. There must be a billion carts, wheel-barrows and water-wheels in China, each needing many sets of bearings. They are not standardized and even if enough factory-made bearings could be bought, they would not all fit. So in summer of 1958 when the bumper crop clearly could not be handled without quickly improved transport, the drive came to put China on ball-bearings in three months. . . . It was accomplished in that time in almost half of China.

In Peking I had seen exhibitions of these home-made ball-bearings in all kinds of material: steel, iron, glass, porcelain. Szechwan even made ball-bearings of bamboo for the casings and round acorns for the balls: and these were said to hold a weight of half to three-quarters of a ton. Very round acorns are a peculiarity of Szechwan oaks.

All those I had seen in Peking. Now in Kushing Commune I saw them making the bearings in a couple of sheds in a back yard. From somewhere they got this iron rods and cut these into small cubes, about a quarter inch in size. Each cube was put in a mould and hammered by hand until it was roughly round. I went through several processes of smoothing and polishing. Then a pan of these small balls was heated to white heat and suddenly dunked into water to give a hard surface. The cases were also hand-made, and fitted to the carts. By this tedious process Kushing Commune had put all its carts and barrows and water wheels on ball-bearings, and thus more than doubled the load they would handle.

A very proud group of girls took me to the cotton experimental plot which, Li said, produced at the rate of 23 tons of unginned cotton per acre. I cannot testify to the tons, but I can bear witness that, unlike the usual cotton plant two or three feet high, these plants grew six feet high, so close together that I could not force my way through them, and they bore bolls all the way up the stalk, sometimes more than a hundred to a plant. There was certainly far more cotton to the square yard than I ever saw in a cotton field. This, said the girls was due to the deep ploughing and deep fertilizing which enabled the roots to go down very deep, and to the ceaseless cultivation and manuring during growth.

We trudged down a dusty road to the nearest "Happ! Court." There was one of these in every large village or cluster of small villages, since the old people would

wish to be near their old friends. The building was one of the better structures in the village, bright, clean but still crude and backward from a western view. Twelve women shared three fairly large rooms, but the outer door to the middle room seemed to give the only ventilation, for while all rooms had large windows, these had been nailed shut. However, tastes differ and nails can be pulled out when the women wish, which they surely will in summer. They were proud of having their own house and they poured out of it to drag me in and show me through the rooms. Most of them had no living relatives and had been living in the homes of other villagers with some help from the farming co-operatives. This house was not "poor relief" but their right as commune members, their own place where they were hostesses. This gave them a happy dignity. They said it was much better than before the commune: "better beds, better food and more company."

One of the women had a grandson who was an officer in the People's Liberation Army. She had held a grudge against the government for taking him and against the grandson as "unfilial" for leaving her, for even though he sent her money, she felt he owed her personal care. Now that the new society gave her a place like this with other women of her own age, she declared herself reconciled to her grandson's career. After all, the "new society" had to be defended, and her grandson had taken that honorable job. Her sense of feeling bereft, in a broken home, had changed to a

proud feeling of being part of a big home, for which her grandson fought.

trule .* ad bado * and thou * a western This visit to Kushing Commune made it clear that even a rather small commune could not be properly seen in a day or even in several days. Each commune included all the complex life of a township or of several townships. It would take a day at least to study the finances, which include budget, wages, free distribution, relations to state bank, state grain purchase and local market. It would take days to cover the industries even superficially, and days more for the field work, and other days for schools, nurseries, and the changes in family life. Beyond this came questions of the new combination of township government with the production organization. How were they related to the county? Who built the roads? Who ran the jails? It meant studying the entire structure of a new

I had neither time for such complete study, nor did I think the period for it had come, since the communes were still in process of consolidation, and many forms were fluid. I decided in future visits to specialize on seeing in each commune one or two new things. My future descriptions will therefore be briefer and concentrated on new details.

Paimao Commune, two hours by car from Shanghai, was visited by a small group of Americans in late October. It had been formed on September 15 by merger of fourteen farming co-operatives and one fishing co-operative: it had therefore existed for only

five weeks. The special struggle that made these peasants feel the need of wider organization was the fight against schistosomiasis, also known as blood fluke, a wasting and finally fatal disease, which has been for centuries a scourge of many rice-producing areas, since the parasite lives in an intermediate host, the small water snails of rice fields. Eighty per cent of the people in Paimao had suffered from blood fluke until recently but within the last years the disease had been brought under control, partly by medical treatment and partly by eliminating water snails, which had to be buried under nine feet of earth to destroy them.

This commune of some 21,500 people of a very miserable past, was not content to plan for just an ordinary present. Its slogan ran: "Equal Shanghai in conveniences and the West Lake of Hangchow in beauty." This they proposed to do in just three years! Since the area had as yet no electricity, they had some distance to travel. But already a twelve by twelve foot table model of their future way of life stood in the room, with a large painting of it on the wall above. No more buildings were to be repaired. They would build new ones, and the old buildings could rot and be taken apart for fertilizer. The new "Town for Industry and Commerce" would be on high land by the river, and the river itself would be drained and straightened for transport into Shanghai. The residential areas would be three in number, in sites chosen for beauty some distance from the industrial town.

They expected to do all this without asking the government for any money or even for any credit. "We make our own bricks, we cut our own lumber and all we need for building is some structural steel from Shanghai and even this we might be making ourselves within the year. . . ." They had worked it out — Chinese above all people love to calculate that whereas formerly the people were all sick and the crops very small, now with the people mostly well and with better tools and much bigger yield, they could feed themselves on 19 per cent of the harvest, and put everything else into a "collective improvement fund." This fund already amounted to nearly \$3,000,000, turned over by the co-operatives to the commune. The first \$600,000 would go for a modern irrigation system with electric pumps; the rest would go, step by step, towards the new town. . . .

Meantime they were going "high, wide and handsome" in their immediate plan for free commodities. Besides the normal free food, education and nurseries, their free list included: "free clothing, up to the limit of the cotton ration, all tailored to individual taste, free medical services, for which already they had 52 medical personnel, and a hospital of 32 beds now set up in a village but which would be moved to the new town. Free education was contemplated "up through the university"; free theater and cinema right in their midst; free haircuts and baths and barbers; free weddings, including needed photographs and wedding feast up to twenty guests; free funerals up to a cost of fifty yuan; free tooth-brushes, tooth-paste and cosmetics for "women between 16 and 45 years of age"; free laundry and mending.

The personal income was only to be this year some \$48 per capita, or about \$250 per family, but they thought this pretty good, considering that before liberation they got about \$20 per capita, and now they have all those lavish free things besides. "We could take much more income if we wished," they said loftily, "but we would rather use the money for a new town."

I personally judged, on the basis of other communes, that Paimao was a little "dizzy with success," and that their gaudy list of free commodities would be pared down when the provincial Party committee got around to see them, and gave appropriate warnings against voting too many free things too soon. However, it was a fine dream, and it was all their own, and they might go faster and further with the dream of a new town in three years than with a less giddy vision.

More interesting than even the commune itself was the new "steel base" to which the commune had sent some two hundred men. Being one of the 46 communes in a now much enlarged county, they had been asked by the county to send workers to one of five designated places where "our county will be making steel." Their "steel-making field" was at the base of a mountain named Yushan, not far away and easily visited on the same trip with Paimao.

Here, on a large area of wasteland at the foot of a mountain containing ore, some 11,000 people had come between September 15 and October 15, camped and dug in, erected furnaces and begun making steel. They had built 1,100 furnaces, 800 of them small

ones while 300 were relatively large, some five feet in diameter. They made coke and charcoal in pits dug in the earth. They camped in every kind of structure, often only a lean-to turned towards their furnace for warmth in the night. Among the 11,000 were not only the workers sent by the communes, but city volunteers, hospitals with nurses, and "music all over the place" from bands, orchestras and opera troupes. When the visitors from Shanghai appeared in autos, a band quickly formed to greet them with music. A good time was being had by all.

In five weeks they had not only built the furnaces but had begun turning out forty tons of steel per day which would reach 200 tons easily within ten more days. This was one of five approximately equal steel-making places chosen by the county, all of which had begun in mid-September, building furnaces from scratch. By the end of October the county expected to turn out a thousand tons per day. This was one of two thousand counties in China and all of them were doing it, some more and some less. At this stage, all labor was volunteer and nobody even asked who would pay for the coke or who would get the steel, or how much would go for farm implements and how much for rails.

They were making steel because it was patriotic, because China made steel before Europe existed and now China would "overtake Britain" again; because steel was needed for everything, for farm tools, rails and defense, and to industrialize their country; because they themselves thus became steel workers, no longer

mere peasants; because the American Seventh Fleet rode flauntingly in sight of their coast and an American side-winder missile had just brought down a Chinese plane far inland in the province to the south.

Making steel they felt themselves one with 650,000,000 people, all making steel and entering the modern world.

This was how China, in a single year, doubled steel production from 5.35 million tons to more than eleven million. At the height of the drive it was said that sixty million people made steel. Foreign experts stared in amazement, and said that if the cost of labor were counted, this steel cost a good deal more than gold. Chinese experts, from central and provincial governments, were busily studying the newly-found ore deposits, the new sites in relation to ore, coal, transport, labor, and deciding which localities should quickly be built into permanence by government loans and engineers and a steady purchase price for the steel, and which should be allowed to close down when the first snow sent the open-air campers home.

Steel would henceforth be made in every province and in most counties as a result of that autumn drive of 1958 — in giant plants, medium ones and small ones, according to conditions. The steel produced was doubtless very costly, as foreign experts said, if labor time was reckoned. But a nation-wide steel industry was built faster and at less cost than any similar industry was ever built. This was one of the first fruits of the new communes.

Till mid-November I thought of communes as only one of the many new things that appeared in China in the year of the Big Leap. But on November 14, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles picked them out for a special attack in a speech in Seattle to the eighteen "Colombo nations." He declared that China, through the communes, was "imposing mass slavery on 650,000,000 people," that they "degraded the dignity of the human individual," destroyed the family, ploughed up ancestral graves and made "a vast slave state." Since the Colombo powers include most of the states of South Asia, Mr. Dulles was clearly using the communes as a weapon to destroy the friendly admiration most Asians feel for China's remarkable advance.

The attack seemed to me so false and so injurious to international understanding that I felt I must at once gather more material on the communes. I wanted especially to know how much democracy and individual initiative existed in the communes and how the peasants themselves would react to Dulles' remarks. So I drove out from Peking two hours and drew up at the first place where signs of a commune appeared. Peasants gathered around and escorted us into a large, sunny room furnished with tables, chairs and three cots against the wall. It was the office.

A sixty-year-old man received us. He had lost most of his teeth and his thin, gnarled body bore other signs of long, hard years, but his shrewd, kindly intelligence became apparent as soon as he talked about the fields. His name was Shen To and the others intro-

duced him with a rather formal flourish as their Minister of Agriculture," a title which he accepted with a smile. The commune, he said, had decided to name its department heads "ministers," probably influenced by their nearness to Peking. Sometimes, in using the name, they would glance at us with a grin that said plainly: "Aren't we grand?" Shen To had been a poor peasant of this area. He learned to read and write after liberation and had been chairman of one of the small co-operatives that merged to form this commune.

A younger man with glasses proved to be teacher of literature from the People's University, who had come to help the commune as a volunteer. His name was Chou Kun. He slept on one of the office cots, for his home was still in the city and his salary still came from the university. He had been two weeks with the commune and did not know how long he would stay. He might decide to join permanently, in which case he would give up his city job and apartment and the commune would give him a room and ordinary member's pay. I asked if he were free to decide. He replied: "Of course I decide for myself, but the commune also decides whether it wants me."

The commune's name was "Evergreen," or literally "Four Seasons Green," referring to the fact that it produced crops through the winter, growing tomatoes, cucumbers, beans and paprika in greenhouses and frames. For their own food they grew wheat, sweet potatoes and vegetables. Their cash crop consisted of vegetables and fruit for the Peking market.

"Peking," they said, "contracts to buy all we can grow."

During our subsequent talk, miscellaneous members drifted in and out, curious to see the foreign visitor. There were men both young and old, girls with long black braids or with bobbed hair and an occasional older woman. Shen To gave most of the facts but others interjected comments. All were very free in talk.

Evergreen Commune, they said, was formed in August 1958 by eight co-operatives because the members, after investigation and discussion, decided they could irrigate and electrify their area more quickly and raise their standard of living by a larger combination. Their land ran twelve miles north to south by eight miles east to west, but not all of it belonged to the commune, since it was penetrated by various institutions of the city of Peking, chief of which was the People's University. The relation of the commune to the other institutions and residents was still to be worked out: the university gave a good deal of co-operation and since one of the commune's dreams was to give all members a university education, there was talk of some kind of joint membership . . . not yet very clear.

The commune had about 40,000 members, which included the old folks and children and some 13,000 able-bodied workers. They farmed 10,000 arable acres, of which one third produced their own food—sweet potatoes, wheat, peanuts, fruit, vegetables—while the rest grew vegetables for Peking. When 1

asked the number of households Shen To replied that there were 8,823 households but that he had given me the number of individuals, because the commune now listed people, not as households, but as individuals, since every worker now gets paid for his own work. Formerly all wages were paid to the head of the household, but this was no longer done.

It was clear at once that, contrary to Mr. Dulles' claim that the commune suppressed the individual, the commune was giving the individual for the first time his own wages and rights, whereas formerly he had been a dependant in a feudal family.

To my question how they came to organize the commune, Shen To replied: "The people demanded it." Everyone nodded. They said they had read in the papers about the communes in Honan and had sent delegates to see them. (I noted that they could read and write and travel, which for peasants was something new.) They discussed it in all the cooperatives and people wrote tatsepao about it. These are strips of paper several feet long and about a foot wide on which people write opinions, posting them in the streets and in halls. This posting of tatsepao continued until everyone put himself on record, not once but many times.

"The people wrote over 200,000 poems about the communes," said Shen To. To which Chou Kun added: "One of my tasks here is to classify these poems and bind them into books."

Chou brought out more than a dozen paper-bound scrap-books, each of which was a collection of short

verses, all produced by members of the commune. All over China, I knew, people were writing verses, and tens of millions of such poems had been produced, which students were collecting and classifying. The verses from Evergreen did not reach the standard of some I have seen, but I like them because they were given to me personally, a few days after my visit, in a small booklet of one hundred selections published by the commune. Here are a few samples:

THE PARTY AND THE PEOPLE

Melon and leaf are on one vine, Fruit and branch are from one root, Red flower, green leaf are from one tree, The people and the Party are of one heart.

A VERSE BY A SMALL GIRL

Sugar is sweet but honey sweeter, Cotton is warm but warmer fur. Mother and father have loving kindness, But Chairman Mao has more.

The custom of commune brigades of planting a red flag in the field to indicate their place of work or some advance in position gives meaning to the following verses by a woman:

RED FLAG

We lift our heads to the Red Flag flying. Strength fills us that soars through clouds,

Not to be stopped by high hills or great seas, Six hundred million people with one heart!

How many martyrs gave away lives
That the Red Flag should fly so high.
Now it is waving just as they wished
Over city and village and hill.

There was much variety, as might be expected from 200,000 poems. I turned over pages of several of the scrap-books. Not all of them dealt directly with the commune. Those that did were apt to be rather prosaic, either exhorting:

The People's Commune is now here, Let all with energy work,

and continuing with a list of duties, or celebrating:

The People's Commune is just grand, A blissful life is here,

and then listing benefits such as the kindergartens for children, the "Happy Courts" for the aged.

Many of the verses were illustrated by amateur drawings and cartoons. My attention was quickly drawn to a cartoon showing the heads of Dulles and Eisenhower, attached to two frogs who looked hungrily at a swan. It bore words of a defiant youth:

Their gaping jaws are ambitious,
The swan's flesh is delicious,
But they will not get a bite,
Their side-winders won't save them,
In the end King Death shall have them.

At this point a girl with two long black braids in sisted on showing me her favorite. It was a description, too long to give in full, of how "the Great Dragon of the East soars through the skies" and seeks out Chang Ngo, the fabled "Lady of the Moon," to call her attention to "your old country," which is "not like the old days." The verse goes on:

Now songs dance all around and a hundred flowers bloom together.

Show her the rippling rice and the wheat still higher and the factory chimneys like forests,

People taking wealth from mines, building great water-works, shouting down the Mountain God, chaining the Dragon King.

She asks: "Who made this vast work of ten thousand years?"

The Communist Party and six hundred million people.

After some weeks of posting tatsepao, in which everyone put himself on record, it was clear that everyone was for the commune, except some twenty or thirty ex-landlords. These opposed the commune, apparently quite openly, on the ground that it would "interfere with their freedom."

"In the former co-operatives," explained Shen To, "they would work when they felt like it, and sometimes they would not work but would do individual trading on the outside. This broke discipline and the co-operative could not know on what work to count.

But in the commune, if they were given free food, and then did not work, their neighbors would criticize them." This "criticism of neighbors" was all the penalty Shen To envisaged.

When it was clear that "the people demanded it," each co-operative elected delegates to a General Meeting, in proportion to the numbers in the co-operative. This General Meeting of 320 delegates became the Congress of the Commune: it elected a Preparatory Committee of fifty people to prepare a "plan of amalgamation." The Congress of 320 delegates discussed and accepted the plan, and then chose a Commune Committee of thirty members, with eight chairmen, one from each co-operative. These met and divided the functions into eleven "departments" which they called "ministries." They had a Ministry of Agriculture, under old Shen To, a Ministry of Forestry, of Livestock, of Planning and Statistics, of Finance, of Provisioning, of Culture, Health and Education, and even a Ministry of Armed Forces, which ran the local militia, or home guards.

Each co-operative turned over to the commune enough food to feed its own members until May, when the first food crop would come in. They also turned over all their reserve funds from past years. Each co-operative, however, kept all other income from 1958, from which it paid its working costs, its debts and made payments to members until the end of the year. With 1959 the commune would take over.

Evergreen Commune began with a reserve fund of about one million yuan, or some \$400,000. The co-

operatives, said Shen To, had had to get loans from the state, when they were first organized. But in recent years they had paid back these loans and most of them had a surplus. Together it made a sizable sum. "What will you do with it?" I asked. "Have you a plan?"

They certainly had a plan. They were opening an exhibition of their three-year plan that very evening and I must see it. The first needs of course were electrification of the entire area, with irrigation pumps so that all the land could be easily watered, and then a factory for chemical fertilizer. These two things would take most of the million yuan but would repay it in the next harvest.

At this point I brought out the report of Mr. Dulles' speech and asked them what they thought of it. Most of them laughed. Some of the younger ones got angry. The older peasants were more patient. One of these considered Dulles carefully and then said: "I never cursed anyone in my life," and turned away. He apparently meant that he would have to curse if he discussed Dulles and this was beneath his dignity.

Kindly old Shen To tried to reason with Dulles. His quality as local leader came out as he explained the advantages of the commune: the overall plan, with forestry, livestock, fishing, the larger area and larger manpower, permitting

From each man according to ability, From each soil according to fertility.

"What Dulles says is not according to conditions," he stated, clearly avoiding the use of harsh words like

"That's a lie." "It is not true what he says about homes and ancestors' graves. . . . We have the same homes but we will build better ones. We have our ancestors' graves but a nice cemetery will be healthier and, if the descendants wish, they can move their ancestors to a nicer place with trees and park."

I asked whether graves would be moved against the wishes of the descendants. Shen To was horrified at the discourtesy of the idea. . . . I recalled how, in the days of the empire, foreign-owned railways uprooted graves and thereby caused riots. The moving of graves is overdue but with men like Shen To it will be gently done. Later I knew co-operatives that called the new cemetery the "ancestors' co-operative," in the faith that ancestors would surely approve new ways.

The younger folk were angrier than Shen To. One youth spoke up: "For me, I laugh because Dulles is silly. But I am angry because he discusses my ancestors and they are not his ancestors anyway."

A girl whose clothes showed recent arrival from field work said emphatically: "For me, I am very angry. Dulles says the Communists make us work a lot and eat little. This is just a lie. Before liberation we were starving and now we eat more than we ever had. We have homes and ancestors' graves. Dulles slanders us to make other people distrust us."

I asked her age and learning that she was twenty, asked if she was yet married.

"A month ago," she said shyly. She had moved to the young man's home in the old Chinese manner

but she thought the commune would be building new homes. Later I learned that she was one of many people whom the commune had enabled to marry, for the young man came of a family with many small children, the cost of whose food would now be handled by the entire commune.

"Do you want to cook at home or go to the public canteen?" I asked the young wife.

"I like the canteen," she said emphatically. "They have all kinds of dishes and without any trouble. Nobody likes cooking at home now except on holidays. They can if they like."

They took me in early evening to their exhibition, in a large barn-like structure, temporarily very gay with posters. They dragged me from room to room and overwhelmed me by the size of the prize vegetables, the bigger size of statistics and the utterly incredible size of the future dreams. Two-thirds of their arable land was this year irrigated: next year they would irrigate it all with electric pumps. Fertilizer had increased from a quarter million tons in 1957 to a million and a half tons in 1958. Facilities for community life included: 134 public canteens (most of them rather bare rooms without running water as yet), 12 maternity homes, 86 nurseries, 68 kindergartens, 6 "Happy Courts" for the aged — a cartoon showed old men playing Chinese chess. Not only was there free food for everyone but there were 39 tailor shops with 132 sewing machines which would soon be making "free clothing at choice."

I was especially struck by two posters at the entrance and a table model at the end. One gaudy poster showed a man and woman holding a Bowl of plenty from which fruits poured in unending stream. Another showed a stalwart man pushing back a mountain to let a river through. It bore the words -these are now a slogan across China: "Let the mountain lower its head; let the river course be moved." I began to laugh at the thought of Dulles' words about "degrading human dignity." These people gave orders to the earth!

In the last room a 10 by 20 inch table model showed Evergreen Commune as its members intended to make it by 1961. A dream of paradise just outside Peking. It had an "industrial area," where thirty factories ministered to the members' needs or processed their products - meantime giving them jobs in slack season. It had a residential area with apartment houses three and four stories high. . . . I quarrelled with the high stories and was pleased to note that many women agreed with me. Most peasants begin by thinking apartment houses "modern and citified," but after discussion they are apt to cut the height. Everything was surrounded by gardens and fruit trees with yield increasing year by year. Culture would increase so fast that everyone could go to the university by 1961. . . .

I argued a bit on this point: I said they couldn't all be ready to enter in just three years. They demurred: "If the People's University combines with our commune, we can," they declared.

Dreams are dreams: they may yet become reality or it may take longer to get a university education than Evergreen Commune dreams. But one thing is clear: people who dream such dreams and base them on the power of their own organized labor bear little resemblance to Mr. Dulles' "slave state."

Dulles is wrong in his basic philosophy when he says that human beings have only two ways to change their material environment: either by "duress," which he claims is the way in China, or by "consent," which he asserts is the way of the West. Dulles never heard, it seems, of a third way, so much stronger than either "duress" or "consent" that it makes the word "consent" seem in China a pale and passive term. There is the way of a great people's initiative, when six hundred million say: "Let the mountain lower its head; let the river course be moved," . . . knowing that nature can be conquered when many men act as one.

We work at such white heat,
If we bump the sky, it will break,
If we kick the earth, it will crack.
If the sky falls, our commune'll mend it.
If the earth splits, our commune'll patch it.
(Hsueh Shan, Szechwan)

4. Women and the Family

My first hint of what the communes might mean to their women members came when Rewi Alley returned from a long trip into the least accessible areas of China's northwest. He had been caught in late October by a snowstorm in the Shansi highlands and while waiting to have his jeep dug out had attended a women's meeting.

"There were at least forty bound-foot women among them," he told me, "whose lives might have been considered finished, since their bound feet both handicapped them physically and tied them to the past. But they had walked as far as ten to fourteen miles on slushy mountain trails to organize the community dining-rooms, nurseries and kindergartens and old folks' homes. They were 'officers' of the provision department of the 'military form.' Regular Salvation Army martinet type, laying down the law on teachers, nurses, cooks and premises."

Till recently China's older women seemed almost a "lost generation." In youth they had suffered, being sold in marriage and sometimes sold as actual bond-slaves: they had submitted to parents and parents-in-law. When their turn came by right of age to give orders, the young folks had broken free, defying the

right of the old to rule. Now the commune gave them again an honorable authority, to organize the care of the children and the aged on a community scale.

For the younger women the commune's gift was more substantial. Despite their legal and political equality with men, asserted since liberation, the old patriarchal dictatorship was not broken by one blow. For thousands of years the Old Man of the family had ruled his sons and sons' wives, and the mother-inlaw had ruled the daughters-in-law. The land reform shook the foundation of this rule by giving the women a share of land equally with the men. The marriage law shook it still further, declaring marriage an equal partnership based on affection and outlawing the purchase of brides. The co-operative farm again shook it, when it reckoned women's work in "workdays." But, while the woman's work was thus recognized, the payment at harvest still went by custom into the hands of the father-in-law or mother-in-law and the young wife still had to beg for enough of the money she had earned to buy a spool of thread. So the saying went: "Workdays for women are nice like a picture of fruit on the wall: it is pretty but you can't eat it."

The commune dealt to the patriarchal rule what may well be its final blow. Not only were wages henceforth to be paid monthly and direct into the hands of the worker, but a vast network of community dining-rooms, nurseries, kindergartens "liberated" the women from household bondage and gave them the chance for the first time to work on a full equality with men. The word "liberate" will be taken

ironically by many American women, who have developed a love for their shiny kitchen and its many conveniences, and refuse to consider their housework as bondage, though, even in America, it deprives them of taking part in many rewarding community tasks. In rural China's peasant households, the woman's work was close to slavery. Often, though not always, she worked in the fields, and she also ground the grain for the household, cooked the meals on a primitive stove, hauled water from a considerable distance and then found a husband grumbling because the meal was not ready when he wanted it, or parents-in-law grumbling because they wanted their food at different hours.

To such women the commune's gift of direct wages plus relief from household drudgery meant a very welcome "liberation," and they took active part in promoting the communes. Many women told me: "With liberation we received legal and political equality, but only this past year did we attain real equality with the coming of the commune."

In Rocky Mountain Commune, in Greater Peking, the women were active for months before the men got under way. All through the spring and early summer of 1958 the women had been trying to take part in various community drives: for clean streets, for scrap-iron collection, for eliminating "the four pests: flies, mosquitoes, rats and grain-eating sparrows." In order to have time for such activities, they set up "child-watching stations" in which four or five households combined, leaving the children in one

house under the care of older women while the younger women went out on the campaigns. The men were so concerned with the problems of organizing this large commune, which included both farmland, urban areas and a section of the Western Hills parkland, that they neglected the facilities the women needed. Finally the women attacked by a campaign of tatsepao, those posted statements in which the people express their opinions.

"You think we aren't needed for socialism?" they asked. "If we are, why don't you help us organize?"

As a result of the women's energy, Rocky Mountain now has an excellent system of nurseries and kindergartens of three types, according to parents' demand. There are full-time kindergartens where children can be boarded, coming home on week-ends or at the parents' convenience, there are day-nurseries where the children are cared for during the parents' working day, and there are nurseries from which the children go home to lunch and for the mid-day nap. In Rocky Mountain the word "nursery" includes kindergartens, these being here combined in one institution, which is not usually the case. In most communes I have seen, nurseries for children under four are separate from the kindergartens for children between four and seven; children under four are not taken as "boarders."

In early December 1958 a congress of more than two thousand women met in Peking, chosen by their counties for some outstanding contribution to the country's life. Their sessions were in a big school auditorium in the southwest part of the city, to which they came by special buses from hotels all over town. Almost all of these women had been illiterate nine years ago, but I was struck by the efficiency with which they now handled a modern-style congress, with elected presidium, committee reports, printed speeches distributed each morning for the addresses of the day. Already they could not only read but run public affairs.

The hotels were full of them. Every morning they flooded the corridors of the Peking Hotel where I was living at the time, on their way to their autobuses lined up in the hotel's court. Often in the afternoon they flooded the corridors again. Since they were as curious about America as I was about China, I easily collected them in my room, sometimes by individuals, sometimes by small groups. Many were chairmen or vice-chairmen of communes, or commanders of production teams in the fields. The feats of others ranged from scientific research to voluminous production of poems and dramas or records in driving water buffalo at the plough.

The first that came to my room were five women from Kansu, that arid province of the northwest. All were from people's communes and each from a different county but they had travelled in a group to Peking. "Before liberation, peasant women like us Would never have had the chance to see the capital," they boasted at once. They had been enjoying the sights.

The youngest was a girl of seventeen named Yueh Lan-hsiang, chosen to come to Peking for her "work

in water conservation." In the previous winter the men in her co-operative farm had shirked working on a canal which the farm needed; it was eight kilometers long and the part through the mountains was, they said, "too cold and rocky." Young Lan—her given name means "Orchid," a popular name in China—had organized a group of three girls with the same name. "The Three Orchids" agitated for the canal and went themselves to the hills to dig until they shamed the men into finishing the job.

Since Lan was one of the few unmarried delegates I asked her what she thought the proper age for marriage. She replied that girls were formerly married off at thirteen or fourteen but now the law says eighteen, and she thought twenty was better or even twenty-two.

"You should study and your character should be formed before you take the responsibility of having children," she declared. The four others in the group, already married, nodded agreement.

I recalled what Dr. Ma Hai-teh told me about the attitude of young people today in China towards marriage. Their courtship is shy, he said, but he lives on a lake where a path makes a popular lovers' lane and he often overhears passing talk. "They walk sedately holding hands and they talk about her ideology, his ideology and their mutual steel furnaces," he said. "To American youth they would seem naive, but in things that count they are less naive than Americans. A girl will make a list of the ten things that matter most in her thinking, and will check the young man



"Home of Respect for Aged" in commune, Hopei Province

Dinner at home on rest day, commune near Harbin





Kindergarten, Shansi Province

Chang Chiu-hsiang in her cotton field



them before she lets her feeling go too far. They are choosing with great care the partner they expect keep for life. You see almost none of the type of trivolity towards sex that is frequent in America."

The second of the Kansu group, Wang Sha-wa, was twenty-three and married. "A feudal marriage," she said. She had been chosen to come to Peking for general excellence in farm work, steel-making, and in organizing the nursery and the old folks' home. She lived with her husband's parents in the old-fashioned way, but her five-year-old son went to the kindergarten every morning.

"Does your mother-in-law approve?" I asked, wondering, since the marriage was "feudal," if there was a clash over child control.

"She likes it fine," declared Wang. "He was a naughty boy at home, but he is much better since he went to kindergarten. They all line up with a bugle and shuck corn." Young Wang clearly approved of starting them young with useful labor in "the military form."

All these women "just loved the military form." They said that in the former co-operatives, it was very hard to get the field gangs to the fields together on time because of the lack of clocks.

"But now a bugle blows at six and you know it is time to get up, and it blows again for breakfast and again to go to the field. Everyone comes at once and the work goes better." I must add that, no sooner was convinced of the use of a bugle than I found communes that used dinner-bells instead. Some com-

munes marched to the field with flags; others used flags only for competitions. Some marched home from the field with a drum and found this "very good"; others did not. One woman told me that "bugles are most popular but they are all bought up; there is a waiting list for bugles."

The women were all annoyed at the comments made by Mr. Dulles and other foreigners about communes "destroying the home." They insisted that "home life is much better now" since so many sources of friction are removed. They insisted that community diningrooms, nurseries and kindergartens were conveniences that made home life easier, instead of destroying it. They insisted firmly that they had "freedom."

Wang especially expressed herself on this. "For good field work there must be discipline," she said. "We have discipline at work in the day. But all of the regulations are agreed in general discussion. When we come home at night we have freedom."

The great variety of women's achievements in to-day's China was shown by a group of four who came to my room the following day. Dr. H. C. Ching of Shanghai was a pediatrician who knew some English, and who had made important achievements in research into children's diseases. Her neatly-curled hair, prim spectacles and brown velveteen jacket were a city style that might have come from Europe. Next to her on the divan curled fifteen-year-old Hsieh, a mountain girl from Kweichow, dressed colorfully in a figured jacket, bright red hair-ribbons and vivid plaid pants. Her claim to fame was that she could

handle six buffaloes at once on six ploughs. She had inished primary school "just last year."

Formerly, said Hsieh, girls were not allowed to andle buffaloes. One man drove one buffalo which rew a heavy wooden plough. "Now we have double-hare metal ploughs and girls are allowed to plough and most girls can handle two or three buffaloes, but handle six. That is the county record but I'm trying ext for ten."

Young Hsieh showed me by motions and diagram tow to handle water buffalo. No reins are used. The buffalo plods slowly ahead with a plough attached behind. The driver walks alongside and hits the beast to slap him into place. When Hsieh handles six buffaloes, they walk one behind the other, and the trick is to keep each far enough behind and just enough to me side so that all the ploughs will make parallel furrows the right distance apart. It was a feat as williant and worthy of pride as a performance of a professional acrobat.

I note briefly Mrs. Chuin, a placid woman of forty, who spoke Chinese with difficulty because she was Chwang, a minority nationality from Kwangsi, head of the women's section in a large commune of mixed lationalities, and directly handling a working team of four thousand women who farmed an area two dilometers square. "When a plough breaks, I can lend it," she said. "My own plough and also the loughs of the others. . . ."

The last in this group was the most restless young person I have met in China. She had been moving

all over my room while the others talked and had absorbed three bound volumes of China Reconstructs in fifteen minutes — the pictures, not the words _ and had then seated herself in a deep chair where she constantly changed position and expression, sometimes smiling like a droll child of six, and sometimes squinting with half-closed eyes like an old shrewd mandarin, as old as China. When she came to rest. she was a small, compact girl of eighteen, my most colorful visitor yet, with bright blue trousers, floral blouse, red ribbons on each of two tight braids that stuck straight out at the sides of her head, and edges of different colored blouses and sweaters showing at neck and wrist. When she kicked her legs, which was often, the blue trousers rose, revealing long socks in circular colored bands.

Tsao was her name. She said she "commanded" a labor detachment in a commune in Kiangsi, but didn't know its size "because they elected me after I left and I have been travelling ever since to the county, the province and Peking. Just meetings all the time." The tone was blasé.

When I asked how her battalion managed without her, Tsao assured me that there were plenty of good deputy-commanders, and she was sent to Peking, not as a commander but because she "wrote fourteen plays and four hundred poems since July." Her election as detachment commander thus seemed to be a literary honor!

Tsao began to write in May of 1958. Her co-operative had organized a drama group and found no plays

"It never occurred to us at first that we could write, but after we tried many plays and found nothing we liked, we decided that nobody outside our county could tell our ideas anyway and we must write for ourselves." So Tsao began to write, and produced three short plays between May and July.

"Then came this idea of 'Leap Forward' and the county decided to publish my plays, so I hurried up and did fourteen more of them and four hundred verses besides," said Tsao. The county had published the plays and they were being performed everywhere in the county. The book sold outside the county but Tsao had forgotten to ask how many sold.

"Get any royalties?" I asked with a smile.

Tsao kicked both legs so high in glee that the blue trousers rose above the colored socks and showed her bare brown legs. "O, no," she cried. "I'm not that much of a writer."

To my query whether Tsao had a husband she replied that she had married recently. "Just a month before I left." I asked what her husband did without her, and she said prosaically that he worked on the farm.

"Wherever I go, he comes and just sits." I could well believe it. Tsao had enough motion for two.

If these are not enough to show that the women in communes are not "slavishly regimented" to a single type, I should mention twenty-eight-year-old Fan of Anhwei, who, against all the advice of the local black-smiths, made the first ball-bearings for the big water-

wheel in her farming co-operative, and thus started in her area the drive to put ball-bearings by local effort into "everything that turns." And eighty-four-year-old Liu Shu-po, whose knowledge of cattle is so good that even in advanced age she "supervises" a livestock farm on the western plains and came a thousand miles to the congress in Peking.

I conclude this gallery of women with Chang Chiuhsiang of Shensi, with whom I talked the longest and who told me the most about details of commune organization. She is a forty-nine-year-old grandmother, illiterate at the time of liberation, and now the first peasant woman admitted to the Academy of Sciences, because of her research into cotton yield.

With shining eyes Mrs. Chang talked three hours about the commune of which she is vice-chairman, but suddenly her eyes filled with tears as she said: "In the old society you could see your head in the bowl." When I did not get her meaning she explained that in former days she could seldom afford to eat whole grain rice or millet, but only gruel, diluted more and more with water as the supply of grain grew less until there was so much liquid that it reflected your head when you bent over to eat.

For Mrs. Chang and the millions of peasants like her, the "free food" now supplied by the commune, good steamed rice or millet, with vegetables and even occasional meat or fish, seems a very good life indeed. What meant to her more than her own improved living standard was the fact that, in all her area, no man, woman or child need suffer hunger now.

Mrs. Chang still works in the fields; her vice-chairmanship of the commune is not a paid office. In daily life she is an ordinary member of a production team in a village of sixty-three families. She is pleased that her married daughter, who by Chinese custom now belongs to another family, still lives in the same village and is on the same production team. The mother-daughter closeness, broken by the daughter's marriage, now reappears to cheer Mrs. Chang in the closeness of joint work.

Cotton, of course, is the crop in which they specialize, the crop in which Mrs. Chang won fame. Before liberation, she said, three hundred catties per mou (1,980 lbs. per acre) was considered a bumper crop. In those days the plant grew only two or three feet high. For the past four years, Mrs. Chang's fields have averaged over a thousand catties per mou. This year she took special pains and when she left the farm to come to the Peking congress, she had already 2,436 catties per mou and was still picking. The cotton grows over her head now, from two to three times as high as it used to be.

Three groups of Soviet experts visited her field and one group gave her a badge. Mrs. Chang, however, modestly states that her record is now by no means the highest in China. Some places have better soil and better climate; the highest record, she said, was 8,437 catties on a small experimental plot in Hupeh. Mrs. Chang is known for the fact that she gives all her ideas to her competitors and helps them beat her. When her production team argued against this, she convinced

them that the aim of the competition is not to beat others but to help all China's cotton fields get good crops. This is doubtless another reason why she was admitted to the Academy of Sciences, because she teaches methods well. She has, moreover, a scientific attitude towards her work, keeping records of plots, making experiments, and recording just what methods produced which results.

She gave a clear picture of the organization of life in the village of sixty-three families where she lives. There are one hundred and forty able-bodied men and women, and they form one production team with three squads of some forty-five members each. Each squad has its own canteen, or community diningroom, where one man and three women prepare the meals. Normally the meals are served in the village but at harvest the canteen moves with the working squad to the fields. It suits time and place to the needs of the workers.

"The bell rings at six in the morning," said Mrs. Chang—in her village they use a bell and not a bugle— "and the workers get up. But the old people and children do not get up yet: they have meals later."

The nursery for small children of three years and under is patronized by only about half the children in Mrs. Chang's village. The choice, of course, is made by the parents, and usually depends on whether there is a "granny" in the home. In the homes without "grannies," the mother normally gets up and goes straight to breakfast and to work, leaving the

baby asleep, unless she has to nurse him. "The nurse calls and takes the baby to the nursery," said Mrs. Chang.

The kindergarten is different. All children attend between the ages of four and seven. This is because of an unusual arrangement worked out between the kindergarten and the "Happy Court," the name given to the old folks' home. Only six people sleep in the "Happy Court" in Mrs. Chang's village, but sixty people eat there. The six who sleep there are old people who have no living relatives to care for them. Old folks who have sons live with their sons' families but go to the "Happy Court" for their meals.

"This is because the food for old people is different: it is softer and tastier and not so hearty. Also they prefer to eat at different hours. And since the best food is for the old and also for the children, the kindergarten goes for meals to the 'Happy Court,' because their grandparents like to have them there. The whole family, of course, comes home at night."

This cozy arrangement of grandparents mingling with the smaller children is not the usual one in the communes. It probably came from the small size of Mrs. Chang's village and other local conditions. I have found a similar arrangement in a few places but it is more usual for the entire family to patronize the same community dining-room, sometimes with a special room in which the old people get their special food. The noon-day meal is in most places taken separately, the kindergartens and the old people having their own meals, apart from the working teams...

though even this is not absolute. Breakfast and evening meal varies greatly: in some places the family eats together, in others the children get all their meals in the kindergarten and nursery and come home only for the night. Some places combine nurseries and kindergartens in a single premise: in other places they are apart.... These community facilities are organized by the mothers according to their desire.

Cooking in the home is not entirely ended. Even the new housing plans contain small kitchens and individual apartments. People may choose either to eat in the community dining-room, or to take their food home and cook it, or to use the community facilities for grinding the grain, and then do the cooking at home. Most people prefer the community dining-room on working-days, but often cook at home on holidays and festivals.

"It is a pleasure to cook with the family sometimes, especially on holidays, and especially when you do not have to do it every day," said Mrs. Chang.

Like all the women I met from the communes, Mrs. Chang assured me that all those statements made by foreigners about communes "breaking up the home" are "very silly talk." On the contrary "the home is much happier now, because the heavy burdens are removed." Formerly the young wife in poorer families would have to work in the field and rush home to get the meals on a very slow stove, and then stay up half the night to grind the grain, "which must be ground daily if the bread is to be fresh." Then perhaps she would be kept awake the rest of the night

by the baby. The husband would grumble if the meal wasn't ready at once when he came from work, and the old people would complain because they wanted their food earlier. . . .

"Now all of this grumbling is over," said Mrs. Chang.

Mrs. Chang's statement is doubtless more sweeping than she, as a scientist, should make; men and women are still human. But that grumbling has greatly diminished is testified on all sides. I talked for an afternoon with Li Pao-kuang, a secretary of the All-China Federation of Women, and herself a mother of six. She was full of tales of women whose marital happiness had been improved by the new facilities in the commune. Some were cases of women who had felt able to marry only because of the help the communes now gave, others of women whose friction with the "in-laws" had diminished, still others of women whose husbands had grown away from them because they were tied to the household chores, but who now gained a new companionship in "studying and going to meetings together."

Young Wang, for instance, was a girl leader of a production team in a farming co-operative, who fell in love with a young man but was deterred from marriage because he had a family of fifteen persons—Chinese families include parents and often brothers and sisters. Young Wang feared that if she tried to cook for fifteen, her career in production was over. As soon as the commune made plans for community dining-rooms, she decided to marry at once.

"The commune was your go-between," teased her friends. There are enough cases of this kind so that one may expect the birth rate to rise as a result of the "free meals," and this will still further scandalize the commentators in the West.

More sympathetic to Western view are cases like Fan and his wife Peng, whose household includes three children and Fan's old father. All use the community dining-room and both husband and wife draw wages... From their first month's wages they bought a new padded-jacket for grandpa, possibly to assure him that he would benefit from their love even if he no longer collected their wages. Peng said: "Since I don't have to cook any more, Fan and I go to meetings and study together." Behind this remark one feels the yearning of many women, who in the past were unable to keep up with their husbands in knowledge and development, and so lost contact, but who now are free to study as well as to work.

Statistics compiled by the All-China Federation of Women for International Women's Day, March 8, 1959, showed a total of 4,750,000 nurseries and kindergartens and 2,650,000 community dining-rooms in communes. This implies an average of 200 nurseries and kindergartens in each of the 26,000 communes and indicates that these are small, intimate institutions, close to the homes. Such seems to be the case. A single production team may have several nurseries and kindergartens. Thus the Hsiashan Production Team in a commune in Fukien has five nurseries for its 150 small children and two kindergartens for 157 older children.

these are staffed by 66 people, an average of one adult for every four or five children. Thirty of the children are "boarders," the rest come by the day. They all get regular physical check-ups and it is reported that "they have all formed hygienic habits and are well-mannered." Singing and dancing are taught and the older ones are given some elementary knowledge.

The teachers in these kindergartens are local women, chosen for their ability to handle children. They are all expected at once to take special study in child care. The provincial educational authorities set up courses, both for women who can come to the provincial capital and for those who must study in their homes. Figures from Anhwei and Kweichow Provinces show that seventy per cent of all the women, as soon as they "liquidate their illiteracy," enroll in some kind of study course, usually in connection with their new speciality in the commune, whether this be child care or cotton raising.

The teachers give special attention to the elimination of quarrels and fighting, and the proudest boast of any kindergarten is when they can state that "quarrels disappear." All women's magazines blossom with tales of how this is accomplished, and of successes which appear minor to all but the participants... In a Honan kindergarten, when a boy named Hsiao accidentally knocked down in a game a girl named Pao, and both got up, while Hsiao solicitously dusted off the small victim and play was resumed with smiles, the onlooker would have seen little but the teachers Put down a triumph. They knew that little Pao, when

she arrived, had cried on the slightest provocation, while young Hsiao had picked quarrels everywhere, struck people and lied about it. The teachers had given much thought to produce the change in these two small children. Incidents like these are published as examples to be followed rather than as universal facts, but the general testimony is that kindergartens make the children better behaved.

From the standpoint of national construction, and the tasks of the great "Leap Forward," the organization of the communes has probably added close to a hundred million women to China's available labor force. The change began in autumn of 1958. The All-China Federation of Women claims that most of the autumn harvesting and the ploughing and sowing of winter crops was done by the women, the men having gone on irrigation jobs and to local steel-smelting fields.

In Sputnik Commune of Laoan County in Kiangsi, four-fifths of the 9,700 able-bodied men worked last autumn in irrigation or iron-smelting, and the 9,400 women members became the main labor force in farming. They ploughed, harrowed and seeded 34,000 acres of land, after first taking training courses in how to do it. From the extra income thus acquired they now expect speedily to mechanize their farming, besides having irrigation for all their land. For even while all hands at present work hard, they have already set the eight-hour day as normal, and the six-hour day as a not-too-distant ideal.

Women also start and manage new industries in the ommunes. In the Leap Forward Commune, Taiho tounty, Anhwei, they set up a ball-bearing works, of thich 64 per cent of the labor force consisted of the labor force consisted of the up a cement plant, first sending a representative a big cement works to learn how: their plant within few weeks was employing 103 workers, making 60 tons of cement daily for their own use in building. In Kaolung Commune, in Kiangsi, eleven girls set up a pig farm and found ways to save grain by using fermented wild grasses as fodder, on which the pigs did well. They also learned to inoculate against infections and became amateur veterinarians.

To many American women these jobs will seem not only unrewarding but unwomanly, even degrading, no road to Utopia but perhaps to the break-down of lealth. Chinese women would reply that women have always done the hard, unrewarding jobs of the world and that now they seek no special privilege, but recoglition of the dignity of their labor and equality with men in all the choices of life. As for health, they hink they are better protected than when they came s child-brides to the rule of their mothers-in-law, or even perhaps than Western women in factories with hspectors paid by a distant impersonal state. The wles to protect women's health are devised by the Women's own committees. Three universally-accepted wles are these: that women shall work in no wet places Uring menstruation, that expectant mothers shall

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have light work, and nursing mothers shall have work near their homes.

The women in China's communes can point not only to maternity leave on pay, but also to the rapid growth of a system of maternity care such as no country in history has set up in such a short period, if indeed at all. The communes today have 100,000 maternity homes, an average of four to a commune, small places, with only a few beds, but near at hand for every home.

A typical example is Changyang Commune in Shantung which has eleven "maternity wards" grouped around one "maternity center," with a total of sixty-five beds. The "wards," each staffed by two or three midwives, are within quick reach of every home; they are planned only for normal deliveries. The "center" is equipped for simple operations, and in close touch with a hospital for difficult cases. All the service is free.

Just who invented the legend that the communes in China are moving their members from homes to live in barracks, is hard to learn. I have neither seen nor heard of any barracks in any commune that has come to my attention. But every school of architecture in China has been sending out hundreds of its students and teachers into the rural areas to help the communes design new homes to their own desire. There is here space to notice only two examples.

The South China Institute of Engineering in Canton announced at the end of December that four hundred

teachers and students from its Department of Architecture had been in the field since October, helping the communes in four counties design buildings. They had written four hundred treatises on the subject, because all their former planning related to cities and did not take into account the building materials available in the countryside. They had designed buildings for over a million square feet of floor space, and construction had begun on 180,000 square feet. This included hospitals, factories, palaces of culture, old folks' homes, community restaurants and housing projects. Complete plans had been made for nine communes.

More intimate was a news item December 22 from a multi-national commune in Chinghai, that high mountain province whose development has just recently begun after thousands of years of lonely desolation. A production team of sixty families were moving to new homes. The Planning Institute of the provincial capital Sining had submitted three designs to the commune; the prospective tenants had discussed them, criticized and modified them until the final plan was made.

The houses were wood and brick on a brick foundation with tile roofs. They were long one-storey structures in the shape of a big E, facing south, with several apartments in each structure. Each family had a separate apartment, depending in size on the size of the family. Thus the Chiu family, a couple in their early forties with a marriageable son who might be expected to add a wife, and two younger daughters who might be expected to leave the home, got four rooms,

two large and two small, plus a kitchen which does not count as a room. Each group of two or three houses was set in a walled compound, which had space for gardens and for domestic animals, including poultry. A question still debated in communes is whether pigs are domestic animals to be allowed near homes: the tendency grows to keep them further away. Eventually this may also apply to poultry.

What most struck me was the cost accounting in the final sentence. "The cost in cash per room is 50 yuan, mainly spent for glass, nails and varnish, since the commune makes bricks, tiles, lumber and other materials from raw stuffs on its own ground." I suggest you read that several times and ponder it, for a hint why outcry arose in the capitalist world against the people's communes.

An organization that can build its own brick and tile housing at a cost of \$20 per room plus its own labor is not dealing only in housing as a home convenience, but is showing an economic potential that challenges the economies of the world.

We fear nor heaven nor earth,
For a thousand families
Have become one family,
And though for three years
Heaven denies us rain,
See how our land has water
And golden flowers laughing.

(Laiwu, Shantung)

5. Winter Consolidation

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and other Farty leaders moved south th

As the autumn upsurge carried ninety-nine per cent of China's peasants into the communes, the Central Committee of the Communist Party prepared for consolidation. They have a technique in popular drives which can best be given in the terms of battle.

Any swift advance, in battle or social organization, produces rough edges. The foremost troops outrun the main force and take posts where the new front cannot yet be stabilized. The time to halt them is not when they are rushing forward, for this advance helps the general offensive and nobody yet knows how far the main force will go. Countless new ideas will be born of this popular initiative. A hundred flowers will bloom and this is the time to let them. But the drive has natural limits and a pause comes for regrouping. The general staff must be ready to fix the new front to which the main forces may quickly advance and which they can firmly hold. Some of the fore-Posts can be fortified, the rest drawn back for safety and the rear brought up. A new front is consolidated for some later advance.

The time to consolidate the communes was clearly early December. The peasants had all joined, the harvests were all in, and four winter months lay ahead

for tidying details of organization. The Central Committee prepared. Through November Chairman Mao and other Party leaders moved south through Honan, studying communes in the province which had organized earliest. In early November they conferred with local Party leaders in Chengchow; in late November they held wider conference in the Wuhan cities, and provincial leaders from all over China met. Anyone acquainted with methods of leadership in China knew that a Central Committee meeting was building up in Wuhan. It took place from November 28 to December 10. The most important item on the agenda was modestly entitled: "Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes."

The first thing about this resolution that strikes an outsider is that it was adopted after practically all the peasants had already joined the communes: it was therefore not an attempt to push people into communes but an attempt to consolidate the communes' work. The second thing clear to any conscientious news-gatherer is that, while this resolution is much longer and contains much more detail than did the early resolution of August 29, it makes no change in the basic line. All attempts of the foreign press to claim that the communes had "failed," or had "backtracked" were sheer invention. The Party suggested that some local organizations might profitably backtrack from too advanced positions, but had not itself back-tracked from the August position. It had gone forward, carrying the main forces to a new, stabilized front.

The third thing that especially delighted me as a writer, was the beauty of clear style in which the resolution is expressed. I quote in full the first paragraph, which describes the communes more clearly, briefly and beautifully than any words I could choose:

In 1958 a new social organization appeared, fresh as the morning sun, above the broad horizon of East Asia. This was the large-scale people's commune in the rural areas of our country which combines industry, agriculture, trade, education and military affairs and in which government administration and commune management are integrated. Since their first appearance the people's communes with their immense vitality have attracted widespread attention.

After this terse, yet comprehensive, description of the form, the next paragraph noted that "the movement has grown rapidly" and that "within a few months starting with summer of 1958, the more than 140,000 agricultural producers' co-operatives... reorganized themselves into 26,000 people's communes," and that this means "over 120 million households, or more than 99 per cent of all China's peasant households." From this point one must condense and comment,

for the document covers twenty-four legal-size type-written pages. The commune is defined as "the basic unit of the socialist social structure of our country," and "at the same time... the basic unit of state power." Its "obvious benefit" is stated to be that "labor power and means of production can be managed in a unified way... on a larger scale." Already all kinds of

local activity have developed under "unified leader-ship." "Tens of thousands of small factories have mushroomed. . . " "Large numbers of community dining-rooms, nurseries, kindergartens, 'homes of respect for the aged' have . . . emancipated women from thousands of years of kitchen drudgery." The "mass of peasants have begun to receive wages and . . . are able to eat without paying." This is the "most reliable form of social insurance. For the peasants all this is epoch-making news."

The importance of this new form goes beyond the increase of living standards for the peasants. "It has shown the country the way to the gradual industrialization of the rural areas, . . . the way to the gradual transition from the socialist principle 'to each according to his work' to the communist principle 'to each according to his needs,' the way gradually to lessen and finally to eliminate the difference between town and country, between worker and peasant, between mental and manual labor, and the way gradually to lessen and finally to eliminate the internal function of the state."

From this clear and glowing description, Western commentators in Hongkong hastened to file cables which told the world that the Chinese Communists had changed their policy, were dropping the communes because they had failed and were firing Mao from the presidency because of that failure! How was such an absurd conclusion ever reached?

In part they reached the conclusion by wishful thinking, in part because the Western press had already built up a fantastic picture of the people's communes,

and the resolution made it clear that their picture was incorrect. They had portrayed militarized gangs of slave labor, living in barracks, with complete and purposeful smashing of the family, and with all people eating from the same pot and dressed from the same cotton bolts, . . . a slave system, an ant-hill life. The resolution smashed that picture, hence the Western press declared it abandoned the communes.

Some sections need special attention: those on production, on distribution, on family life, on the military form.

The section on "production" makes it clear that communes are no longer "farming co-operatives" but develop industry and farming and trade, "both for consumption and for exchange." For farming the methods advocated are "deep ploughing and intensive cultivation" with reduction of acreage but bigger total crop. The goal set is "a ton to a ton and a half of grain" per capita within "a comparatively short period": China had in 1958 passed the half-ton mark per capita, which was twice what she ever had before.

In a lyric passage, well worth noting, the future ideal for China's farming is stated. By the "basic farmland system," tried in several areas in 1958, acreage is to be steadily reduced but each acre is to be "garden-farmed" with more water, manure, cultivation until China feeds herself from one third of her present farmland, gives another third to "fallow rotation, pasturage and green manure" and the rest to "afforestation, reservoirs, flowers, shrubs and trees, to turn our whole land . . . into a garden."

Communes "should go in for industry in a big way" according to local conditions. They should produce first of all for their own needs and also for commodity production "on as wide a scale as possible," switching an appropriate part of the labor force "step by step from agriculture to industry to develop . . . fertilizer, insecticides, farm implements and machinery, building materials, the processing of agricultural produce, manufacturing of sugar, textiles, paper, mining, metallurgy, electric power and other light and heavy industries."

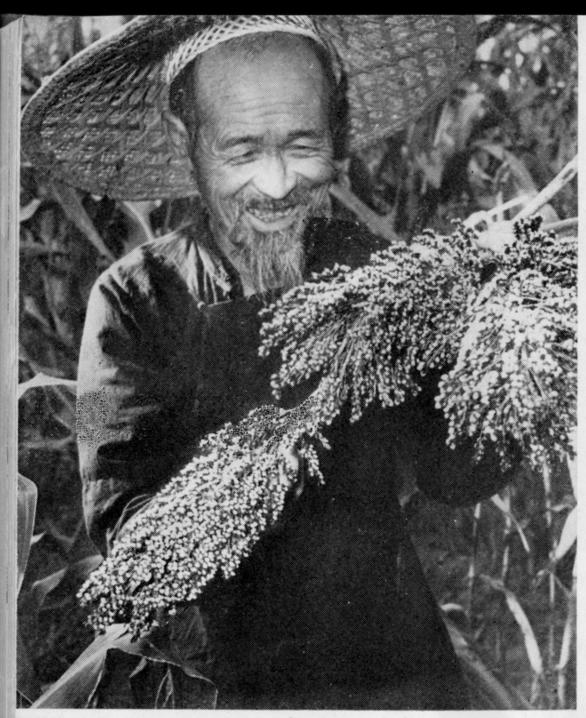
This is a clear call for widest development of industry on a decentralized plan. In addition to the big centrally-owned industries, which of course still continue to expand under central government ownership, the communes are to develop, under local ownership, every kind of industry their conditions and labor power permit. The people in each commune are to benefit directly by developing all the resources they can. This is the essentially new aspect of China's communes. Following China's tradition of decentralized social control, they combine economic and government power on township or county scale. Federations of communes on a county scale "have power to deploy" a certain part of the manpower for constructive undertakings on county scale or even beyond the county. This permits irrigation works and afforestation, the building of railroads and highways . . . beginning with the county but going beyond it. One might call it "the socialism in one county" plan. . . .



Maize harvest, Pioneer Commune, Shantung Province

Cotton pile, Honan Province





Good sorghum Heilungkiang Province





The section on distribution makes it clear that, for the present, the wage system is to be stressed. From the net income, after taxes and production costs are met, a considerable proportion is to be set aside as "accumulation fund" for new development, but the amount paid to members is to be large enough to keep wages rising year by year. Members' income consists both of wages according to work, and of free supply according to needs. But the resolution warns against putting too many items too soon on the free list. "Wages must take first place. . . ." They must "increase faster than the system of free supply." Any attempt to replace "distribution by work" with "distribution by need," is branded as "trying to enter communism before conditions are mature," . . . a "Utopian concept which cannot succeed."

This is doubtless one of the sections which caused Western commentators to say that the communes were "back-tracking." A comparison of this resolution with that of August will show that the Central Committee never advocated much "free supply," that even the "free food" came through peasant desire rather than through any Party demand, and was accepted by the Party because the demand was so universal. During the autumn upsurge, however, there had been a wide tendency of communes to compete in the number of things they put on the "free list," until this included clothing, theater tickets, barber, baths, fuel and many other amenities. This tendency was discouraged by the resolution.

This is no statement of failure. This is the pullinge," says the resolution, but creates "the demoback of the forward posts that have outrun the lintic home." As far as the Western reader goes, this which the main forces can hold. Anyone acquainte ument might have been better put. For while the with organization, especially in the field of co-operariarchal control is indeed destroyed by the individtives, knows that it is easy for a local enthusiast t get people to vote for a large free list. The people with large families vote for it because it is in their interests; the working couples without children als vote for it because they are not willing to appear self. ish among their neighbors. But anyone also know, that those same working couples will become unhappy when they see their wages diminished by the need of clothing all the neighbors' children, and that friction will grow over how fast those children use up clothes. It is against such trouble that an experienced Central Committee must safeguard local enthusiasts

specified. People's houses, furniture, clothing and bank savings remain private property and this in-emselves — who tried to get everything done at cludes trees around the houses, small gardens, small ce by working unduly long hours. . . . "Eight poultry and small tools. This also was a neededurs for work and two for study" is now set as standsafeguard, for trouble had arisen through different in-d in both city and country. This is part of the terpretations on this.

In Section Five, which discusses the way of life, the ecial emergencies the hours may be temporarily ex-Communist Party felt the need of arguing with Mr. nded, but "the way out of the present labor short-Dulles and pointing out to him that the communes doe" is flatly stated to be "not long hours but better not destroy the home or the family. Nurseries, kin-ols and organization of labor. . . ." In the future, dergartens, public dining-rooms first appeared under ix hours and even shorter" is the goal for the workcapitalism, and none of them are compulsory under g day.

the communes but are organized as conveniences. . . . The Central Committee also feels the need of argu-The commune does indeed destroy "the patriarchal g with Dulles about "the military form." The res-

wage direct to the worker and by the convences which permit the woman to work, the Chinesele large family, which includes three generations, exists in all the communes I have seen, and is planned for in all the housing projects. . . . is combining of grandparents, parents and children der one roof is what the West rather loosely calls atriarchal" and is by no means destroyed, as I have own in the preceding chapter.

The resolution breaks new ground by demanding, the first time in China, a basic eight-hour day in Private property in certain things remains and is rural areas. This was another detail made necessary excesses of local enthusiasts—and of local peasants clusion of industry in the commune's program. In

olution explains that what is meant is "the kind of disciplined collective work that is seen both in the army and in the factory" . . . and that large-scale farming also requires. The organization of the militia. which has been noted abroad as "militarization" is rather impatiently declared to be necessary because "the imperialist pirates" still try to wipe out the Chinese state. . . . If Americans are surprised that Chinese thus judge their intentions, let them recall that for more than a century foreign troops stood on Chinese soil and American armed forces still stand on China's Taiwan today, while the Seventh Fleet is visible along the China coast and American side-winders recently brought down a Chinese plane well inside the mainland. . . . The militia is civilian in control, part of the production teams and under the commune, a kind of county home guard.

"There must be both democracy and discipline in the communes," says Section Six, "both centralism and democracy in all organizations, including the militia. . . ." "It is impermissible" to use the military form or militia "to impair in the least the democratic life." The section concludes with words that deserve place in the anthology of democracy for their clear expression and sharp definition:

The people's commune is the basic organization of our country's state power; only by fully ensuring democracy in the commune will it be possible to create throughout the country a vigorous and lively political situation in which there are both central-

ism and democracy, both discipline and freedom, both unity of will and personal ease of mind.

Such was the official statement of the form and goal of the people's communes in the December 10 resolution. The resolution also stated that the coming winter months should go to "tidying up" the communes, that every province should set up "inspection teams" of one or two thousand members to visit communes, spread news of the best methods and criticize shortcomings.

In Peking the government ministries geared themselves to the communes. The first offer by the Ministry of Metallurgy to furnish blue-prints for "steelrolling equipment for use on farms" sounded fantastic. It was followed quickly by other offers from universities and machine-building plants, of designs and equipment by which communes could roll their own steel. The most interesting was from a metal works in Kweichow which advertised a steel-rolling machine "weighing only five hundred pounds, costing only 2,500 yuan, needing only ten kilowatts of electric power or a small steam engine" to produce on the farms "angular bars, square bars or steel sheets of several kinds." The notice added: "Easy to operate in any commune." Farmers who last summer made their emergency local railroads of wood or porcelain could how roll rails from home-made steel, and make steel for building construction.

The Ministry of Chemical Industry announced "cheap and easy" processes for making sulphuric acid. synthetic ammonia, fertilizer of many kinds and even synthetic rubber in communes. In early autumn of 1958 several communes began to make synthetic rubber from sweet potatoes: the number has doubtless grown. A few hours south of Peking the synthetic rubber works of Shangchuang Commune took only two months to build, cost only \$125,000 and was expected to return an annual profit twice the total investment cost. Almost any commune with excess sweet potatoes could buy itself a rubber factory unless it preferred to use the money for a power plant or railway spur. This was only one of a hundred ways communes began to use surplus labor in the slack time between farm operations, in order to grow collectively rich.

Railroads also began to gear themselves to the communes. The Minister of Railways told me how arrangements made with communes helped solve the bottlenecks in freight handling caused by the bumper crop in summer and the steel drive in the autumn. A small freight station worked out a technique that quickly spread to other such stations. By arrangement with a local commune, a production gang of a hundred stalwart men worked in the fields within whistle call. When a freight train arrived, the whistle blew, the gang downed tools and went to the railway station and unloaded or loaded the train. In some cases, they were able to unload and reload cars without detaching them from the train, doing the work while

the locomotive went for water and fuel. The minister said he believed China already has a record of fewer empty cars and less wasted time in freight handling than any country in the world.

From all these relations growing between the communes and the central government ministries, future lines of China's great forward leap begin to appear. China was industrializing on three levels: the big, the medium and the small. Big modern industries like Anshan Steel Works, owned by the central government, would make the steel and other products for big central projects; medium-sized industries, owned by provincial governments, would supply provincial needs; small industries, owned by the communes, would fill in the local gaps, producing quickly the things the peasants need or the commodities processed from the farms.

It has always been assumed that big industry is more efficient than small industry. Nobody really knows: no fair test was ever made. Big industry beat small industry under capitalism: was it by greater efficiency or by monopoly control of raw materials and also of scientific brains, for which big industry paid much more? When scientists compete in "rolling mills for farms," we shall have a test. "Efficiency," moreover, is a word of many meanings. An industry which displaces populations or keeps men part-time idle is not socially efficient even if it makes more per man-hour. Industry whose workers live on their farm and diversify their labor, has the advantage of small capitaliza-

tion and maximum use of manpower. It also offers a more balanced human life.

The many meanings of the word "efficiency" were illustrated for me in Liangko Commune near Canton, a commune without fame which I visited only because the health resort in which I spent a winter month was located on its lands. I was surprised to learn that it had eight "paper mills." Paper mills to me implied fairly large enterprise: that a single commune should erect eight of them meant to me either an unusual demand for paper or an economic waste. I visited one of the paper mills and ceased to be surprised.

At one end of a large rice-field on a rise of land against a hill stood a wooden structure, a shed with walls shoulder-high and the upper part open, topped by an overhanging roof. Inside there was a brick stove with a metal boiler, and a dipping vat with a wire netting for lifting and draining pulp. Outside the building a large pool had been made of boulders with the chinks filled in by cement. This was the total equipment needed to turn rice straw into paper of several kinds and colors. The manager explained that the seven other paper mills were of even simpler construction, and were in the hills where there were wastes from bamboo.

Why did they have eight paper mills instead of one? I asked. He explained that all eight cost less than 10,000 yuan (\$4,000) and it was much cheaper and more convenient to make eight near the various sources of rice straw and bamboo waste than to haul the bulky refuse to the mill. The purpose of these mills, he

said, was not to make a lot of paper, but to use up all their wastes and make all the paper they needed as well as make some income by selling paper. They expected, on the investment of \$4,000 and by the labor of some 85 people, to make about \$100,000 during the year. In the present state of China's transport, paper supply and wage scale, eight small paper mills were an efficient means of meeting a local problem. In the future, they might not always be.

Liangko Commune gave me another indication of the relativity of "efficiency" in its first power-plant. Because of its success, the manager said, they were now starting work on twenty-four. Twenty-four power-plants in one commune sounded fantastic. Why not get all the power from one larger plant? The manager replied that the commune was large, about a hundred miles by sixty miles in area, and much of it was unused hillside without people, and the cost of poles and high-tension wire was considerable, while the cost of the small power-plant was small. It was much cheaper to build a small power-plant for every populated spot.

So indeed it proved when I saw the power-plant. A small irrigation ditch had been diverted to send a stream some twenty inches in cross section through a wooden flume where it turned continually a homemade wooden turbine. From this a belt of woven hemp connected with a motor and a switchboard. . . . The cost of the project, including motor, switchboard and wiring to four hundred houses, was less than \$4,000. It furnished only about fifty watts of light

bulb per house, but this was brighter than kerosene and also cheaper.

"We can pay for it by one year's kerosene bills," the manager said.

These are the simple efficiencies with which the communes begin, but they do not stop with these. They go on to bigger industries, in some cases with incredible speed.

Four farmers sat in my hotel room in Peking in late December and told me about their communes in four different parts of China. They were all delegates to the "Congress of Outstanding Units," i.e. representing the best communes. All of them had been illiterate ten years ago. Now all were managers of big business. A commune is big business, harder to manage than a single big factory, for it includes many factories as well as farming, trade, and the manifold details of public kitchens and nurseries, and other amenities of life.

Some of their comments came with a shock of surprise to my mind, accustomed to other ways of figuring. Han An-sen, a heavy-set man in blue shirt and light brown sweater, managed a big commune in Kirin, Manchuria, which covered an entire county. I asked why they made it so big and he replied that it was "simpler that way." He added: "We needed a county reservoir, big enough for a large area."

This seemed a good enough reason till I asked what the reservoir would cost and Han answered that it wouldn't cost much because they had their own cement plant. He added: "We already built eightytwo small reservoirs in 1958 and some of them didn't cost anything at all."

Intrigued by his total omission of labor costs I asked who paid for roads, the province or the county.

"Nobody pays for roads," said Han cheerfully. "We just make them."

I later learned from more sophisticated officials that Han's debonair view of roads was not quite correct. Through highways of provincial importance are built by Provincial Highway Departments; county roads are built by the county; farm roads by the farm on which they lie. But Han was correct in assuming that, if the commune included the entire county, the farmers would "just make" most of its roads.

It was also intriguing to learn from Han that by taking over the county, the farmers "saved" about a million yuan of county taxes. "Not entirely," admitted Han. "Of course we have to use that money for schools and welfare, the same as the county did. But we save at least two hundred official salaries, and all those 'liberated' officials now work in industry and increase the commune's income. The county tax board was just dissolved, for the commune keeps books and pays all the taxes in one lump sum." Taxes, he said, were about five million, from a total farm income of thirty million plus an industrial income that wasn't calculated yet. Industry was mostly new and wouldn't be taxed this year.

Han seemed husky, efficient, and with much still to learn about cost accounting. What farmer wouldn't have?

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The prize story in that group, and in all the groups I met, came from Kuo Pei-fang, a black-jacketed forty-six-year-old farmer from the Shansi mountains, with a lot of giddy badges of merit on his coat. The idea that Chinese all wear blue denim today as a badge of uniformity is untrue: blue used to be usual peasants' wear and thus became Liberation Army wear, and is still widely worn. But other colors appear with a rising standard of living, and the girls especially blossom out in flowered prints and even in "perfumed cottons," one of the new fashions. But let us return to Kuo.

What drew my attention to Kuo was that last October, in the Shansi mountain area of his Red Flag Commune, some millions of dollars just began coming out of the earth. The area had never been good in farming: despite all efforts, it could not match the lowlands with their fertile fields. But coal existed; when fourteen townships combined on September 10 in a commune with 75,000 people, the county turned over to them twenty small coal-mines. There was also much iron-ore lying on the surface, undeveloped for want of technical know-how, capital and initiative.

"When the big steel drive began in October," said Kuo, "we began to dig out iron-ore. We sent delegates to steel mills to learn how to do it. We built one furnace and then another, and then we shot a big sputnik." (This is a special drive to see how much can be done in twenty-four hours.) And now we have seventeen iron works with 20,000 workers. When I left home in early December, we had made 76,000 tons of iron and 3,500 of steel. The government buys it

at 200 yuan a ton for first quality and 168 for second grade, and some of our first iron was third grade and we smelt it over again for steel."

I did a bit of calculation and said: "You must have made seven to ten millions from iron in six or seven weeks."

Kuo replied placidly that it was "certainly millions. The accountants must say how much. There are expenses. But the ore is there for taking, and the coal is open-face and the workers are fed by the harvest for a whole year and can wait for wages till we sell the iron, and the government lends machines and blasts and power. So expenses are not much."

"How much capital to start?" I asked. Kuo worked it out. The commune treasury put up 18,000 yuan and the state bank loaned 20,000, and the people "contributed" 12,000 in money and also 5,000 timbers and 400,000 fire-brick. "There is good material for brick in the hills and they went and got it," said Kuo. It appeared that on an investment of 50,000 yuan, some \$20,000 in cash, plus timbers and fire-brick, they had created seventeen iron works with millions of income in less than two months!

I put this up to Kuo and he said that was right. So I asked: "Do the iron works belong to the commune or to the state?"

"To the commune, of course," said Kuo, "but the commune is the lower basic unit of the state."

"What do you do with those millions?" I persisted. "Do you divide them among the members or send them to Peking?"

Kuo patiently explained that of course the state bank would get its loan paid, and the people would get the contributions paid. "They all got receipts." But nobody would take back money this year for everyone agreed all the money must go to expand and modernize the works. They had started with many small furnaces that one man could build in a day and that made only a ton of iron a day. Now they had bigger furnaces, making five tons a heat. But the works were far from modern; before spring they must be improved.

"We can't spare 20,000 workers for iron when the spring sowing begins," said Kuo.

Here was a commune manager who made millions in a few weeks from an initial capital of \$20,000, and who put them all back into production without worrying about details of ultimate ownership, but only about how best to apportion labor between farming and iron. So I inquired from more sophisticated officials in Peking. Who gets those millions? Does iron-ore belong to the township or to the nation? Can a single commune enrich itself beyond its neighbors on publicly-owned iron-ore? Nobody worried about it and the answers they gave were about what Kuo had given. Iron-ore was certainly the property of the nation. The millions would certainly go to the commune, and not to Peking because "rural development is what the country needs." The commune would not unduly outstrip its neighbors by monopolizing a national resource. . . . Some differences among communes would continue to exist. . . . How would all this be adjusted? There were many ways. . . . The present funds would go, as Kuo said, to modernize the works, and also to raise wages of iron workers. Later, workers might come from other communes if the works grew. Taxes might redress any imbalance. Details were for the future to settle. That was about all.

I told a leading Communist, a friend of mine from Yenan, what I thought of communes. I went overboard in enthusiasm for this organization that made millions on \$20,000 capital in a few weeks, and could "just make" roads and eighty-two reservoirs without cost. He pulled me up: fortunately for China, the Chinese Communist Party is more cool-headed than I.

"We put it this way: are the communes good or are they not good?" I stared at him, and he continued, "We think they are good but it will take us ten years to test."

Smiling at my deflation, he continued: "You have been seeing the best communes, the ones that send delegates to Peking, 'the outstanding units' which set example for the rest. The great potential you notice undoubtedly exists. But there are also communes which voted themselves free food yet do not have enough harvest to feed themselves till the next crop. These will have to be helped by the state. There are other communes who have established a wage scale but do not have enough surplus funds to pay these wages for very long. We think the communes are the form for us, but undoubtedly there will be some failures this winter. This does not matter. We shall all learn from the failures and they will reorganize

and finally succeed." I recalled how Changshih Commune in Kwangtung and the great drive in Honan had been built on the lessons of previous failures. If all of China thus learned both from successes and from failures, they were indeed unbeatable.

The task for the winter, said my friend, is to "tidy up" the organization everywhere, so that successes may be many and failures few. The great bulk of communes, he said, were neither the big successes, nor the ones which had courted failure by voting free food when they had not enough. . . . The big majority really had enough food for the first time in their history but did not have much surplus for wages, and certainly could not afford waste.

Immediate demands were therefore these. First, avoid waste. Most communes have voted free food. Never in history have Chinese peasants eaten freely. "Who knows how much they will eat? Nobody knows. We know that one extra pound of pork per person per year will wipe out all our pork export, unless we quickly get more pigs. We know that even a small waste, multiplied by six hundred million, can be catastrophe."

Next, management. To manage a big commune is harder than to manage a big industry: it is more complicated, for it includes industry, farming and the amenities of daily life. We have 26,000 communes and their managers are peasants who were illiterate a few years ago. They are honest and shrewd and trusted, because they were elected by the members, but they are not experienced in big affairs. Because of this

there will be failures which can only be offset if everyone is watchful and ready to help.

"Then the communes must quickly develop commodity production. Nearly all communes have enough food, unless they waste it, but very few communes have much surplus besides. The farm co-operatives did not pay wages: they gave advances against harvest and then divided the harvest. The communes announce wages, even though small. They do not realize how fast these wages will eat up their surplus. They must at once develop commodity products in order to pay wages until the harvest is in."

It was clear why the Communist Party devoted the four months of winter to "tidying up." As the winter advanced and reports came in from inspection committees I began to glimpse the extent of the problems. I noted, for instance, the case of a former co-operative, now organized as a production team in a commune, which had kept back and hidden a large quantity of grain because they were afraid the commune would not have enough to last till the harvest and they wanted to make sure for their own dining-room. I was surprised when my Chinese friends suggested, not the disciplining of the team which had hidden the grain but an improvement of commune practice.

"Fear of hunger is natural, and suspicion is natural until people are used to working together," they said. "The commune should avoid suspicion from the start by seeing that everyone knows where the grain is kept and how much there is; probably the grain should be stored in the areas that will eat it and checked out by

the local dining-room and the commune officials combined. . . . The danger is that a small bad practice like holding out grain by a group, can soon become corruption and bribery of individuals who hide the action. It must be checked before it grows."

Despite abuses that indicate that Chinese peasants are human, that rivalries and suspicions occur, and inefficient managers exist, my conviction grew that the people's communes were one of the great inventions of this era, that they combine the economic potential of the early American westward drive, and its local initiative, with the social planning of socialism.

For as winter advanced I noted that the previous year's experience of Anhwei Province in the digging of a canal network, had touched off the four adjacent provinces of the North China Plain. Shantung, Hopei, Honan and Kiangsu had all begun building canal systems like Anhwei's. Honan was digging canals in forty areas. Serious talk had begun of joining canals of five provinces with the Yellow River, the Hwai, the Grand Canal and the Yangtze, making an interlacing waterway of rivers and canals to regulate water and give transportation to the entire North China Plain.

Meanwhile on the great arid cattle-breeding lands of Inner Mongolia, which run from northwest of Peking to the Soviet border, where herdsmen have roamed for thousands of years, more nomads were entering the communes than had ever joined the farming co-operatives. They were developing ore-deposits, coal-mines, leather tanneries, brick and tile kilns, iron

works and carpentry. . . . Settlements were growing up around schools, stores, clinics, libraries and community dining-halls. Ice-roads were made by clearing snow from frozen rivers: traffic on these was faster than summer traffic. For a hundred and fifty miles along the Liao River, tractors pulled five or ten sleighs behind them, taking cattle products to the cities, and bringing back to the former nomads the city goods.

Szechwan, China's most populous province, with 62,000,000 people in the warm southwest, reported that its four thousand communes now owned 400,000 industrial enterprises, most of them set up since September. . . . And over in Chinghai on the edge of Tibet, the nomads of the Tangla Mountains, roving fourteen to sixteen thousand feet above sea level, formed a commune, and organized their first settlement around their first school. The school with eighty-one children of Tibetan nationality, opened with songs and dances to honor the new commune. The big achievement they chose to wire to Peking was that "all of the children came in new clothes." Herdsmen, who in the past were lucky if they got a new patch per year on old clothing, had chosen to celebrate their new future by giving all the children new clothes.

On New Year's Day the papers were full of the 1958 statistics. It was truly a great and glorious year. Production had doubled in the major items of farming and industry: in grain, in cotton, in iron, in coal, in machines. The water-conservation campaign had expanded irrigation on eighty million acres and controlled

soil erosion on 320,000 square kilometers. Changes of such magnitude had never happened in world history.

The major event of the year for China—and perhaps for the world — was that most of China's five hundred million farming people had voted themselves, through their communes, free food. And the major event of the day in Peking was that the Congress of Outstanding Units, with nearly six thousand delegates from the leading communes of China, was drawing to its final session to sum up 1958 and launch the new year. For more than a week they had been meeting, first in a big assembly and then in smaller groups, discussing paragraph by paragraph the Party resolution on communes and applying it to their local problems in every corner of China.

When they first assembled on Christmas Day I had predicted that Mao Tse-tung, who for two months had been absent from Peking, touring the rural areas and holding conferences, would "have to return" for these farmers. But when I went to the final session on New Year's Day, I had forgotten my prediction; I went to see the farmers without thought of Chairman Mao. In the new stadium, designed for economy and compactness, sat some six thousand of China's best farmers, mostly men and mostly young, but with a fair sprinkling of older men and of women. Most, but not all, wore new suits of blue cotton and all wore scarlet badges of the congress. They all had printed copies of the program. I looked at mine: there were seven items. I wondered how long it would be.

They began at four sharp with the National Anthem, then a brief chairman's report, then the "Ten Proposals for Agriculture in 1959." The first proposal was to raise grain to 525 million tons, some forty per cent higher than in 1958. Other proposals were similar in other fields. Each proposal was separately voted twice, in an unusual routine. The chairman asked: "Any dissent or amendment?" A pause followed by shouts of: "No!" Then the chairman asked: "Who are for it?" All arms shot high in air with clenched fists. Each proposal was thus twice approved, first by refusal to dissent or amend, then by affirmative fists.

Telegrams of greetings to Chairman Mao and the Central Committee were next approved, and to the "Fighters of the Fukien front," reminding us all that even as they organized the land for farming, there was war on the coast towards Taiwan and the American Seventh Fleet. The next item was listed as "Certificates and Badges" and my eyes turned to the great heaps of certificates that were stacked in front of the chairman's rostrum. They were certificates of merit, thousands of them, to be presented to several thousand leading communes, engraved in colors and gold and signed by Chou En-lai for the State Council, to be hung in commune offices as a challenge to their neighbors and themselves. . . . To save time, they were in bundles to be distributed by provinces, not by individual units.

Before presentation began, a stir came in the tribune and Li Teh-chuan, the woman Minister of Health who was acting chairman, said: "We have all hoped that

Chairman Mao and the Party leaders might be with us. They are here." As simply as that, Mao Tsetung, Chu Teh, Liu Shao-chi, Chou En-lai and others came through the rear door to the tribune and everyone rose, applauding.

The leaders did not stop in the tribune: they began to circle the stadium at the middle level, on the wide circular aisle from which the gallery stairs open. Only then did I notice that there was no division between tribune and audience: they were all on one circular aisle. The leaders went slowly, exchanging brief greetings by glance, by a few words, by a motion of hand. The entire hall followed their passage, with hands applauding, eyes seeking and bodies swaying towards Mao. When the leaders had come full circle to the tribune again, they sat down and the program went on. The certificates and badges were given out, the secretary of the congress made the final summingup. Mao and the Party leaders listened as part of the audience. None of them spoke a word.

For a time I kept waiting a bit restlessly for Mao to make a speech, to sum up, or at least to say some words of greeting. This did not occur. Finally I understood that silence was a stronger message, that silence said: "We Party leaders did our job when we passed the resolution. The present job is yours. For this we are just the audience. We are glad to be with you here."

At five o'clock it was over. That final session with its seven printed items and with the entrance of the Party leaders added, had been finished in just one hour. A few of the nearer delegates surged towards Mao for a final glance or handshake. The rest went swiftly out appropriate doors. They had launched the year's campaign for rural China and had received without words the blessing of their leaders. They were going home to carry the campaign through.

By the time I reached the door many autobuses had already left and others were leaving. The New Year had begun.

THE EARTH BECOMES A RUG

Wu Keng

Our village ends just where
The next begins; this slope
Joins with the next, the little streams
Merge with the big canals,
Until all earth becomes
A woven rug of green,
Criss-crossed with streams like threads
Of silver, and all closely interwoven,
Not easily to be torn.