

Peasants Can Certainly Study and Apply Philosophy Well

by the Party Branch of the Chinchien Production Brigade
of Chiangshan County, Chekiang Province

IN response to the call of our great leader Chairman Mao: "Liberate philosophy from the confines of the philosophers' lecture rooms and textbooks, and turn it into a sharp weapon in the hands of the masses," the poor and lower-middle peasants in our production brigade began to study Chairman Mao's brilliant philosophic thinking in 1964. A mass movement to study Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking was launched during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. With profound proletarian feelings for Chairman Mao, we have in the past few years closely combined our study with the three great revolutionary struggles — class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment — and applied what we learnt in these struggles. With materialist dialectics as our sharp weapon, we have analysed and handled various contradictions, recognized and mastered some objective laws and overcome many obstacles on our road of advance. Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking has become the mighty ideological weapon of the poor and lower-middle peasants in struggling with nature, class enemies and with self-interest. This has enabled our brigade to bring about a flourishing new situation in revolution and production. We all agree: "Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking is a magic weapon. It is indispensable for continuing the revolution."

Living Study and Application of Chairman Mao's Philosophic Thinking Gives Impetus to Class Struggle in Political, Economic and Ideological Spheres

Our brigade's poor and lower-middle peasants always take class struggle as the main subject in studying philosophy. In the period when the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution entered the stage of struggle-criticism-transformation, we have taken Chairman Mao's materialist dialectics **one divides into two** as our guidance in overcoming many instances of interference from the "Left" and Right and kept the struggle-criticism-transformation movement advancing along Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line.

After our brigade won initial victory in purifying the class ranks, some people thought that class struggle was "almost over" and said: "It's like holding a shotgun without seeing a bird to shoot at." With this question in mind, the production brigade Party branch and the poor and lower-middle peasants studied Chairman Mao's teachings "Never forget class struggle" and "Contradiction is universal and absolute, it is present in the process of development of all things and permeates every

process from beginning to end," and discussed the question "Is this victory of ours the end or a new starting point of class struggle?" Recalling the class struggle, one round after another, from the time of the land reform to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, we have come to a deep understanding that in class society, class contradictions and class struggle are universal and absolute. Every victory we win is only a new starting point and by no means the end of class struggle. Someone had said: "It's like holding a shotgun without seeing a bird to shoot at." But the fact is "There are birds but the shotgun is not at hand." We soon brought about a new high tide in the movement to accuse and expose the class enemies, make mass criticism and purify the class ranks. Thus we ferreted out a handful of class enemies hidden in dark corners. This gave a strong impetus to struggle-criticism-transformation. The poor and lower-middle peasants were full of warm praise: "'One divides into two' is a magic weapon. It is indispensable for struggling against the enemy. When the poor and lower-middle peasants master it, they become sober-minded and high in morale."

Living Study and Application of Chairman Mao's Philosophic Thinking Gives Full Play to People's Initiative in Struggling Against Nature

Some cadres in our brigade used to pay attention to grasping only hoes and not people's ideology. Though the cadres were busy all day long with farm work, they did not do a good job in revolution or production. After studying Chairman Mao's teaching: "**Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary,**" we came to understand that people can think and the hoe is necessarily wielded by them. In the contradiction between man's thinking and the hoe, man's thinking is the principal aspect. Only by grasping ideology and doing a good job of ideological revolutionization can we grasp the hoe well, develop the collective economy and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat. If we grasp only the hoe and not ideology, we will do a bad job in production. Even if we get some temporary increases in production, we may lose our bearings and the collective economy will degenerate and political power change its colour. We have since firmly taken the road of giving prominence to politics and persisted in placing politics in command of production and putting the living study and application of Mao Tsetung Thought above everything else ever more consciously. As a result, the commune members

have further fostered the concept of farming for the revolution and developed the spirit of self-reliance and hard struggle.

Our brigade suffered from a serious drought, rarely known in local history, in the autumn of 1967 and the late autumn crop was only 40 per cent of the usual output. The brigade leadership organized a mass discussion on how to overcome the drought. During the discussion, the masses repeatedly studied Chairman Mao's teaching: **"In given conditions, a bad thing can lead to good results and a good thing to bad results."** We came to understand that difficulty versus success and good thing versus bad thing are all instances of the unity of opposites. In given conditions, they can transform themselves into each other. The condition is the factor of man and we can certainly overcome drought and all other difficulties provided that we have people armed with Mao Tsetung Thought and rely on our collective strength. With our thinking unified, the whole brigade waged a mass struggle against the drought. We turned up soil that was too hard to plough with hoes and carried water from a place 1.5 kilometres away. Though some commune members broke several hoes, we kept on sowing wheat and autumn vegetables plot by plot. Immediately afterwards the masses fearing neither cold weather nor frozen soil, launched a mass campaign to build water conservancy works. Hard work in the winter of 1967 and the spring of 1968 increased the storage capacity of the reservoir from 80,000 cubic metres to 220,000 cubic metres. Although no rain fell for more than 100 days in 1968, there were bumper harvests of wheat and rice, averaging a per-*mu* yield of 994 *jin*. This was a local record. Average grain output last year rose to 1,017 *jin* per *mu*. Pointing to the good crops, the commune members said with pride: "Look! This means that consciousness is transformed into matter."

Studying and Applying Chairman Mao's Philosophic Thinking in a Living Way to Remould Subjective World Greatly Raises Consciousness in Continuing Revolution

Some commune members used to think: "It doesn't matter if peasants have some selfish ideas and hanker after a bit of private interest." After studying philosophy, the masses have come to understand the theory of quantitative changes leading to qualitative changes and realized that we should never treat bourgeois "self" lightly. Some poor and lower-middle peasants said: "When rot first touches a sweet potato, it is still a sweet potato, but if we don't handle it in time the rot spreads and when a bigger part of the sweet potato is affected, there is a qualitative change and it becomes a rotten sweet potato." If the masses are a bit keen about private interest and put aside less for the collective, quantitative changes will gradually lead to qualitative changes and the collective economy will degenerate and capitalism will be restored. The masses said: "If you don't launch an offensive on bourgeois 'self' and attack it, it will attack you." Chairman Mao's brilliant philosophic thinking has raised the commune members'

consciousness of fighting self and criticizing revisionism. After the collective had harvested peanuts and tallow-tree fruit, some women and children would glean those left in the fields and think this was "reasonable." Now they understand that it is not a question of taking home a few things, but of selfish ideas. As a result, they all consciously hand the gleanings over to the collective. The socialist spirit of selflessly farming for the revolution has grown considerably and there are many instances of good people and good things.

Our Chief Experience Is:

1. Smash the mystery of philosophy. The renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-chi, Yang Hsien-chen and company in a hundred and one ways opposed workers, peasants and soldiers studying philosophy. They fabricated the theory that "philosophy is mysterious." Some people were affected by that poisonous theory and thought that philosophy was too deep and hard to understand. When our brigade began to study philosophy, some people said it was a marvel for tillers to learn philosophy. So it was necessary to smash the mystery of philosophy in people's minds before we could launch the mass movement for the living study and application of Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking. What we did was to organize the masses to study this teaching of Chairman Mao's in *On Practice* over and over again: **"The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature: it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality: it emphasizes the dependence of theory on practice, emphasizes that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice."** Everybody came to recognize that the philosophy of the proletariat is a scientific summing-up of the experience in proletarian revolutionary struggles. It originates from revolutionary practice and in turn guides revolutionary practice. What it is concerned with are revolutionary principles. Philosophy helps to make things clear and is no mystery. The two outstanding characteristics of proletarian philosophy show that the workers, peasants and soldiers are the masters of philosophy. If they could not learn it, there would be no proletarian philosophy. We poor and lower-middle peasants have hearts infinitely loyal to Chairman Mao and fight every day at the forefront of the three great revolutionary movements. We have rich practical experience and we are best qualified to study and apply proletarian philosophy effectively.

We also deepened the revolutionary mass criticism and sharply exposed and criticized Liu Shao-chi, Yang Hsien-chen and company for their crimes in wildly opposing Mao Tsetung Thought and the study of philosophy by the workers, peasants and soldiers. We vigorously exposed and criticized the theory that "philosophy is mysterious." The more we criticized, the deeper our hatred for Liu Shao-chi and Yang Hsien-chen and the greater our faith and determination in studying and applying materialist dialectics well. We

all said: "We poor and lower-middle peasants will certainly master this sharp weapon of philosophy to rebel against Liu Shao-chi, to rebel against class enemies."

We also keep summing up the experience of our study and use concrete facts drawn from practical struggle and life to illustrate the principles of philosophy, and further smash the theory that "philosophy is mysterious." The No. 2 Production Team reaped a poor harvest in 1967 owing to bad weather conditions. However, the team members not only had enough grain to eat but also some surplus, thanks to the strengthening of ideological and political work, the displaying of the spirit of self-reliance and the practice of economizing on grain. With this example in mind, the poor and lower-middle peasants studied Chairman Mao's teaching "**Bad things can be turned into good things.**" They discussed why it was that they could have a grain surplus in a lean year. They said with satisfaction: "If we poor and lower-middle peasants take the right path in studying philosophy, we can grasp everything of it just like parched fields absorbing every drop of rain. Why can't tillers study philosophy well?"

2. Combine study of philosophy with that of the "three constantly read articles" written by Chairman Mao—*Serve the People*, *In Memory of Norman Bethune* and *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*. Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking is the philosophy of proletarian revolution. It is in the service of the proletariat and the working people for their liberation. Only revolutionary people can master revolutionary philosophy. This is determined by the class nature of materialist dialectics. With the help of our kin the People's Liberation Army men, our brigade closely links the study of the "three constantly read articles" with that of philosophy and has thus brought the mass movement for the living study and application of Mao Tsetung Thought to a new stage, constantly advancing along the road of continuing the revolution.

We deeply recognize: The "three constantly read articles" are a guide for the proletariat in continuing the revolution. They are brilliant philosophic articles. We can have a clear purpose and get a tremendous impetus for studying philosophy and really master materialist dialectics only if we study and apply the "three constantly read articles" well and foster wholehearted devotion to the revolution. On the other hand, we must conscientiously learn and master Chairman Mao's materialist dialectics on the basis of studying the "three constantly read articles." Only in this way can we do a better job of knowing and mastering the objective laws of the development of things, avoid blindness in doing things, increase our consciousness, and continue the revolution for ever.

Comrade Tai Hsiang-mei, a Communist Party member and a cadre, studied the "three constantly read articles" in 1959 and became an active worker who was brave and daring. But she did not care much about her work methods. The masses had complaints, and

criticized her during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. At first she did not realize the meaning and thought she had been wronged. Then the brigade ran a study class where the poor and lower-middle peasants studied with her the "three constantly read articles" and Chairman Mao's teaching "**One divides into two.**" She began to understand that to make revolution well she must "divide herself into two." That is to say, she must be both a motive force and a target of the revolution and must have both revolutionary vigour and correct work methods. Now she strives to act in every way as the new Party Constitution demands, keeps close ties with the masses, listens to their criticism with an open mind, and is full of vigour and vitality. She says: "Dialectics is a magic weapon that is indispensable for continuing the revolution. Only by fostering the concept of serving the people and mastering the dialectics of 'one divides into two,' can we hold and wield power well for the people, and always follow Chairman Mao closely in making revolution."

3. Study and apply philosophy in a living way, combine study with application, and study and apply it in struggle. We had a period of groping in studying philosophy in our brigade. When the poor and lower-middle peasants began to study *On Contradiction*, they invited some people to help. They spent a dozen evenings studying the article but were still unable to understand it. Drawing lessons from this failure, we abandoned this method of study which was divorced from reality. Instead, we linked our study closely with the practice of the three great revolutionary struggles, with problems arising from struggle-criticism-transformation and with revolutionary mass criticism, and used Chairman Mao's materialist dialectical viewpoints to criticize all sorts of wrong ideas and to answer and solve practical problems. We got quick results.

Influenced by the sinister trend of counter-revolutionary economism, one production team in our brigade divided up part of its grain reserve last autumn. This caused a heated discussion among the commune members. Some were for exposing and criticizing this, but others were against this for fear it might spoil the reputation of the brigade as an advanced unit. Should the contradiction be faced or ignored? Should it be brought to light or covered up? With this question in mind, we repeatedly studied this teaching of Chairman Mao's: "**The interdependence of the contradictory aspects present in all things and the struggle between these aspects determine the life of all things and push their development forward. There is nothing that does not contain contradiction; without contradiction nothing would exist.**" We saw that contradictions exist objectively and that the correct approach towards them is to expose and solve them constantly so that we can constantly push the development of things forward.

The poor and lower-middle peasants made the penetrating point: "Where there is a contradiction, we must deal with it through struggle; and when we deal with it through struggle we will be victorious. If we

try to cover up a contradiction so as to keep the title of an advanced unit, we'll find that we are not preserving our title but clinging to our backwardness." We seized this incident as a typical example and made revolutionary mass criticism. This helped us further eliminate the pernicious influences of Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line, stop in good time the sinister trend of counter-revolutionary economism and ensure the implementation of Chairman Mao's great strategic principle **"Be prepared against war, be prepared against natural disasters, and do everything for the people."** Many commune members in our brigade now readily expose contradictions, combat mistaken ideas and wrong doings and criticize capitalist trends. As a result, the collective economy is being consolidated with each passing day. The poor and lower-middle peasants observe: "By studying and applying philosophy in relation to struggle, we find that the more we study, the better we understand and the more we can apply, the better results we get."

4. Grasp basic concepts and study and apply them time and again. Vice-Chairman Lin teaches us: "In order really to master Mao Tsetung Thought, it is essential to study many of Chairman Mao's basic concepts over and over again, and it is best to memorize important statements and study and apply them repeatedly." In accordance with this directive, we study Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking with stress on such basic concepts as "one divides into two," the relation between internal and external causes, the two leaps (from matter to consciousness and from consciousness to matter), the human factor being primary, the necessity of grasping the principal contradiction, the philosophy of the proletariat as that of struggle, that bad things can be turned into good things and vice versa, and the correct handling of the two types of contradictions which are different in nature. We repeatedly study and apply these in relation to reality.

Our practice is to grasp new trends in class struggle and study philosophy with these in mind promptly, grasp the living ideas that interest everybody and organize the masses to study philosophy with these in mind, study philosophy in relation to assigning, checking on and summing up work, and study philosophy regularly by having a fixed system for study. We study a philosophic concept with a specific question in mind, make a point clear and get a concrete result. After we were cited as an advanced unit in the province in the living study and application of Mao Tsetung Thought, we studied the concept of "one divides into two" and recognized that being advanced is not absolute, but is relative to being backward. So we resolutely resisted complacency and remained modest despite achievements and are continuing the revolution to make constant progress. The poor and lower-middle peasants say: "This method has many advantages. The first time we study a concept, it is new to us; the second time, we are already familiar with it; and after we study it many times, we are able to master it."

To grasp Chairman Mao's materialist dialectics, the masses must be mobilized boldly so that everybody gets into the trend of using philosophic concepts to analyse and discuss problems. Our production brigade has aroused the masses through such varied and lively forms as study classes, meetings to exchange experience in studying and applying philosophy, debates, short philosophic commentaries and wall-newspapers on the study of philosophy. The poor and lower-middle peasants say: "Dialectics is a method of analysis, a method for debating. The more we debate, the clearer we are able to distinguish right from wrong, and the more we debate, the clearer we see the truth." Meetings to exchange experience in the study of philosophy, in particular, are a good form for studying Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking; and the political evening school is an important place for such study.

5. Leaders lay the stress and activists take the lead in studying philosophy. Chairman Mao teaches us: **"Cadres are a decisive factor, once the political line is determined."** The Party branch of the brigade has fully recognized that, on the basis of studying the "three constantly read articles," the mass movement for the study and application of Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking in a living way is needed for the cadres and commune members to raise their consciousness of continuing the revolution and needed for the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Consistently following Vice-Chairman Lin's teaching that when confronted with a hundred and one tasks, we must grasp the fundamental one, namely, to put the living study and application of Chairman Mao's works above all work, we have set up a nucleus study group which consists of cadres and outstanding educated youth to organize and lead the masses in studying philosophy. We have also organized a spare-time writing group. On the basis of the study or exchange of experience in study and application by the masses, the writing group draws on instructive incidents as subjects for writing brief articles and commentaries on philosophy. Up to now, this group has written more than 200 articles and takes an active part in summing up experience, raising to a higher level and promoting the study of philosophy by the masses. In addition, we have also cultivated a contingent of over 80 activists. They are the backbone in study as well as in political and ideological work. The leaders and activists take the lead in studying and applying philosophy. This has promoted the constant development of the mass movement to study philosophy in the brigade.

The experience of our poor and lower-middle peasants in their living study and application of Chairman Mao's brilliant philosophic thinking fully proves that when the worker, peasant and soldier masses grasp materialist dialectics, it becomes an inexhaustible source of strength. This is of immeasurable significance in promoting vigorous development of China's socialist revolution and socialist construction and in further consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat.