

“The Engineers and Technicians Sent by Chairman Mao Are Excellent!”

— Report on Chinese agricultural, land reclamation and water conservancy engineers and technicians in Mauritania

CHINESE agricultural, land reclamation and water conservancy engineers and technicians are helping the Mauritanian people in developing the M'Pourie Plain in the Rosso Region in the lower reaches of the Senegal River, south Mauritania. They are making preparations to set up an experimental farm there for growing paddy rice. By relying on the invincible thought of Mao Tse-tung and with the solicitude and support of the Mauritanian Government and people, the Chinese engineering and technical personnel have overcome various difficulties and succeeded in the trial cultivation of paddy rice on small plots. They are now busily engaged in the construction of water conservancy projects. Their spirit of devotedly serving the Mauritanian people and their work attitude have won warm praise from the masses of the Mauritanian people who said, “The engineers and technicians sent by Chairman Mao are excellent!”

Success in Trial Cultivation of Paddy Rice

Long years of colonial rule had prevented Mauritania's economy from developing. Not self-sufficient in grain, the country has to use a great amount of foreign exchange annually to import rice. At the request of the Mauritanian Government, the Chinese Government sent the first group of agricultural and land reclamation technicians to Mauritania in August 1966 to help the Mauritanian people cultivate paddy rice. The Chinese technicians were warmly welcomed by the people in the Rosso Region north of the Senegal River wherever they were conducting surveys. The inhabitants gave them all kinds of detailed data and voluntarily brought them tea and food. One villager said, “All of us in the village want to learn to reclaim land and grow paddy rice from you.”

After field surveying, the Chinese agricultural, land reclamation technicians found that the vast fertile alluvial soil of the Senegal River — the M'Pourie Plain near Rosso City — is entirely fit for paddy rice. They decided to experiment on small plots there as a start. Just at that time, an “agronomist” from an imperialist country who had been in the Rosso Region for years without achieving anything spread the lie that “there is no way of overcoming salinization in grow-

ing paddy rice on the M'Pourie Plain; it is impossible to reclaim the plain because of the long periods of floods.” The Chinese technicians, armed with Mao Tse-tung's thought, were resolved to repudiate this nonsense with facts. They were determined to follow our great leader Chairman Mao's teaching: “Be resolute, fear no sacrifice and surmount every difficulty to win victory.” They set about opening up the waste land after selecting a spot for their experiment. Working against time, they did not even rest on Sundays. When the experimental plots were surrounded by flood waters, they waded to the plots. Their sun-burnt skin peeled and their feet became swollen after long hours in the water. But they still stubbornly went on with the battle. Deeply moved, many local inhabitants took up tools and joined the Chinese technicians in the work. An old worker said with great emotion, “Only China's assistance is genuine. The Chinese have really come to help us. The so-called ‘aid’ of the imperialists is only meant to rob us more quickly and ruthlessly.”

Thanks to the industrious labour of the Chinese technicians and the vigorous support of the local inhabitants, green rice seedlings sprang up for the first time on the M'Pourie Plain. The good news filled the local people with great joy. To help the rice shoots grow healthily, the peasants in four nearby villages voluntarily contributed more than 10,000 kilogrammes of farmyard manure. Afraid that the cattle grazing near by might trample on the young shoots, a watchman pitched a tent near the plots and moved his whole family there to keep watch day and night. At harvest time, the peasants in the vicinity came in groups to help gather and thresh the rice. An old peasant picked up a few heavy ears of rice in his hands and examined them over and over with great feeling. Moktar, the technicians' driver, selected some 20 ears of rice and made a special trip of more than 200 kilometres to the capital, Nouakchott, to report the good news to his friends and relatives. News of the success of the experiment spread far and wide. Peasants came from some 30 kilometres away to ask for rice seeds. Many Mauritanian friends came to congratulate the Chinese technicians. The success of

growing paddy rice on the M'Pourie Plain has smashed the shameless lies of the imperialist "specialists."

Working Against Time Before the Floods Come

After the successful experiment, the Chinese Government undertook to help Mauritania in projects of land reclamation and farm building on the M'Pourie Plain according to the China-Mauritania Agreement on Economic and Technical Co-operation signed in Peking in February 1967. The first project in opening up the M'Pourie Plain was to build a flood-prevention dyke 13 kilometres long and more than 2 metres high. It had to be completed before the flood season in mid September 1968, otherwise the other projects would have been held up. There were only a little more than four months left before the floods, and it usually takes more than six months to complete such a project. Could they meet difficulties head-on and finish the work of more than six months in four, or would they run no risk and just wait till next year when all the flood waters receded? The Chinese water conservancy engineers and technicians, who have been tempered in China's great proletarian cultural revolution, decided to make war on the difficulties. Guided by the brilliant thinking of Chairman Mao's "three constantly read articles" (*Serve the People, In Memory of Norman Bethune and The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*), they threw themselves into the battle of dyke building together with the Mauritanian workers in late April. When construction was at its height, many of the Chinese personnel worked nearly 30 hours at a stretch. Even those who were ill refused to rest but kept on working.

The plain which was overgrown with weeds in the past became a scene of humming activity with machines rumbling day and night. Citizens of Rosso City which is 7 or 8 kilometres away often came by twos and threes at night to visit the construction site. They told the Chinese engineers and technicians, "The 'specialists' from imperialist countries never did anything with their own hands; they only ordered others about. They complained about the heat even while shutting themselves up in their air-conditioned offices. If they go anywhere, they go by car. But you work day and night in such hot weather. We have never seen good foreigners like you."

After more than three months of intense battle, the dyke was completed more than 20 days ahead of schedule.

Happiness Comes to Dieuk Village

Not far beyond the flood-prevention dyke is Dieuk, a bigger village with 250 households of more than 1,000 people on the M'Pourie Plain. The villagers' main occu-

pation is farming (growing sorghum in particular) with weaving straw mats, fishing, etc., as their side-lines. But as a result of the flood damage, agricultural production there has remained stagnant for a long time. Every year, during the flood period of the Senegal River, the inhabitants found it impossible to engage in production.

When the dyke under construction reached the vicinity of the village, the Chinese engineers and technicians decided to help it reinforce a dyke guarding it, so as to end the flood menace. The completion of the flood-prevention dyke itself will enable the villagers to open up more land for paddy rice in addition to guaranteeing harvests from the 300 hectares of land, already reclaimed by them behind the dyke, against both drought and flood. The whole village was astir with the news that the engineers and technicians had now volunteered to reinforce the village dyke too. Many people shouted with emotion: "Long live Chairman Mao!" In no time, the villagers set about removing garbage from around the village dyke so that the engineers and technicians could effectively operate their excavators and bulldozers. In six days and nights, more than 10,000 cubic metres of earth were added to the more than 2,000-metre-long village dyke, greatly increasing its height and width. A road more than 170 metres long was also built between the village dyke and the big dyke to facilitate transport and travel for the villagers. As a result, they can enter or leave the village freely during the flood season. When the village dyke was being reinforced, many Mauritanian friends frequently came to the work site to sing and dance for the Chinese technical personnel. One evening, the three oldest peasants in the village (one 90 years old, the others both 88) paid a special visit to the site. They enthusiastically praised China for its disinterested aid to Mauritania. They were so excited that they forgot to take a rest and chatted with the Chinese personnel till the following morning. They said, "Our whole village of Dieuk and all the people of Mauritania are grateful to China for its disinterested aid! The Chinese technical personnel have not only helped us reclaim the plain and develop our economy, but have also trained our own technical personnel." They shouted with great emotion, "We wish Chairman Mao a long, long life!"

Recalling the moving facts they had seen or heard, many Mauritanian friends praised the Chinese technical personnel. An old man from Rosso City said, "You Chinese work hard and lead a simple life; you treat others as equals. We regard you as our brothers!" The Mauritanian friends said in praise, "The engineers and technicians sent by Chairman Mao are excellent!" Many shouted enthusiastically: "Long live Chairman Mao!"