

# People Are the Decisive Factor

by a workers' philosophy study group of the Changchun  
General Glass Plant

A NEW high tide in industrial production is now emerging in China and the situation in revolution and production is excellent. Guided by the general line of **"going all out, aiming high and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism"** formulated by our great leader Chairman Mao, and his great strategic principle **"Be prepared against war, be prepared against natural disasters, and do everything for the people,"** we have armed ourselves with Chairman Mao's philosophical thinking and are giving full play to man's subjective activity in the field of production so that the mass movement to increase production and practise economy will advance triumphantly along the course of Mao Tsetung Thought.

## Creating Material Conditions We Lack

Last year our plant was given a new task — trial-producing an important spare part (called "water bulb," for short) for a precision instrument. Filled with great enthusiasm, the workers showed their determination to accomplish the task with credit so as to implement Chairman Mao's great strategic principle **"Be prepared against war, be prepared against natural disasters, and do everything for the people"** with concrete action. Requirements for this new product are that it will not be damaged at 60 degrees C. below zero or burst at 50 degrees C. above. To meet these requirements, the following three conditions are necessary in trial-manufacturing: Constant temperature, dust-proof and shock-proof. But our instrument workshop is only a house made of mud on a city street. Trams rumbling by rattle the doors and windows. Inside the workshop are earthen floors, mud walls and indigenous equipment, without any installation to maintain a constant temperature. What should we do to make up for these conditions? Some suggested we ask for state help. Most of the comrades disagreed, insisting that they should use their own hands to create what they lacked.

Certain material conditions are necessary for developing production and trial-manufacturing new products. Anyone who denies this is not a materialist. Manufacturing any kind of new product, however, often comes up against the contradiction resulting from an inadequacy in material conditions. In the eyes of those who advocate getting help from others, this means that they

need a sum of money, additional equipment and more materials from the state and that they will not start work until all the necessary conditions are present. These comrades only think of material conditions; they fail to see that the masses have boundless creative ability and do not understand that material conditions can be created by people armed with Mao Tsetung Thought. We, the working class, are advocates of using our own hands to create the things we need. In our opinion, it is people, not things, that are decisive in developing production and scaling new heights in the most advanced science and technology. As Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Under the leadership of the Communist Party, as long as there are people, every kind of miracle can be performed."** (*The Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History*) "Though there may be thousands of conditions," the comrades said, "people armed with Mao Tsetung Thought are the most precious condition. In the revolutionary spirit of hard struggle and self-reliance, we can create any material condition we lack."

"Awaiting" or "creating" conditions? The difference is only one word, but it reflects the struggle between the two world outlooks and the two lines. Asking for state assistance and waiting for the necessary conditions reflect the fact that the pernicious influence of the revisionist line in running enterprises has not yet been eliminated. Using one's own hands to create the necessary conditions is the fine style of the proletariat and the embodiment of Chairman Mao's great concepts of **"self-reliance"** and **"hard struggle"** and **"diligence and frugality should be practised in running factories."**

With their understanding increased, the workers immediately plunged into the battle to trial-manufacture the "water bulb." When they did not have the necessary machines, they worked with their own hands, trying to blaze a trail while working. Without modern equipment, they made indigenous equipment as a substitute. To guard against dust, they used a big glass-cover under which they trial-produced the "water bulb." In the absence of equipment to keep the temperature constant, they worked with a will and created the conditions for such a temperature: When the temperature was high, they opened the windows

to let in cool air; when it was low, they lit a stove to warm the room. To prevent vibration, they worked late at night, when everything was quiet and still, so as to place the "water bulb" in a fixed place or position. This was how they kept the workshop clean and tidy, created a constant temperature and guarded against violent shaking in the workshop where these conditions were lacking. They finally succeeded in trial-producing a "water bulb" which was up to standard. The workers said with a deep understanding gained from practice: So long as we are imbued with the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance and hard struggle, we can create what we lack materially; so long as it is scientific and sound, indigenous equipment can also make new products.

### Turning Unfavourable Conditions Into Favourable Ones

Our plant, an old factory with inadequate conditions, only has old equipment and old machines. The contradiction that old equipment cannot meet the needs of a new task arises in the face of a new production task. Some people said: "Since conditions in our plant are poor, we will do as much as conditions permit." They only wanted to keep things as they were and had no desire to make more contributions. In the eyes of these comrades, poor conditions make it impossible for them to accomplish a new industrial production task. They see only things but not people, and are not aware of the fact that potentially the masses have an inexhaustible enthusiasm for socialism. Thus, faced by unfavourable conditions, they became inert and were at a loss what to do.

Materialist dialectics tells us that contradictions are transformable. So long as people's subjective activity is brought into full play, unfavourable conditions can be transformed into favourable ones. The duty of us revolutionaries is to do the work of "transformation" and "change." In fact, in the process of production, so long as we think more and take action, undertake technical innovations and improve technological processes and management, we can often bring about a big rise in production and remarkable improvement in quality. Eloquent proof of this is the success in remodelling our plant's old tank furnace.

Our plant spent more than 600,000 yuan to build a tank furnace for producing ampoule tubes before the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Designed with undue emphasis on being big and modern in style, this furnace was unrealistic. From the time it went into operation, output was low, quality poor, coal consumption high and breakdowns occurred frequently. It can truly be said that a major breakdown occurred once every three days and minor troubles took place daily. During the Great Cultural Revolution, the workers scathingly criticized the renegade Liu Shao-chi's "slavish comprador philosophy" and the "doctrine of trailing

behind at a snail's pace." They made up their minds to transform the old tank furnace and turn unfavourable conditions into favourable ones. Following Chairman Mao's great teaching that "**it is wrong to appraise our work either from the viewpoint that everything is positive, or from the viewpoint that everything is negative,**" contained in his *Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work*, the workers analysed and studied the tank furnace in an all-round way. Taken as a whole, it had many shortcomings and had become a big problem to be dealt with. But as far as the parts of the furnace were concerned, they were not completely useless. Affirming everything will make one become conservative and lack the desire to make progress; negating everything or discarding everything will entail waste. We then decided to transform eleven parts of this furnace. We organized a "three-in-one" technical innovation group with the workers as the main body and leading cadres and revolutionary technicians participating. After more than two months of hard work, we finally transformed the furnace. After going into operation, daily output jumped from 1.5 tons to 3.5 tons, products that were up to standard rose from 50 per cent to 90 per cent, varieties of two to 100 c.c. ampoule tubes were made instead of two to 20 c.c. ones and daily coal consumption dropped from 11 tons to 9.5 tons. The comrades said: As man's thinking makes a new leap, old equipment will also make a new contribution.

The success in reconstructing the old tank furnace gave everyone of us a tremendous education. We came to understand that it was not the old equipment that could not cope with the new task, but it was our old ideology that lagged behind the new situation. The contradiction between the old equipment and the new task is, in essence, the contradiction between old ideology and the new situation. So long as we arm ourselves with Mao Tsetung Thought and give full play to man's subjective activity, we can repair broken-down machines, transform old equipment and turn unfavourable conditions into favourable ones.

### Let Limited Material Conditions Play A Greater Role

Glass factories consume a comparatively large quantity of coal. Having intensively studied Chairman Mao's great teaching that "**diligence and frugality should be practised in running factories,**" our comrades asked themselves: Can we turn out more products with less coal and let limited material conditions play a greater role? Some of them thought otherwise, arguing: It is stipulated that to melt a certain amount of raw material requires a definite amount of coal. It has been the practice for years on end that a round kiln should be supplied with 2.2 tons of coal. Raw material will not melt if coal consumption is less.

Chairman Mao has taught us: "**In seeking victory, those who direct a war cannot overstep the limitations**

imposed by the objective conditions; within these limitations, however, they can and must play a dynamic role in striving for victory." (*On Protracted War*) There is a certain limitation to the objective material conditions, but the question is how should we, within this limitation, give full play to man's subjective activity and let the limited material conditions play a still greater role. In the eyes of those people with conservative ideas, it is material conditions, and not the factor of man, that play the decisive role. They turn the conditions into fetters hampering their freedom of action. We maintain that conditions are something that is static while man is dynamic, that material conditions are created and managed by people. Only by arming the people with Mao Tsetung Thought and bringing their ability into full play, can we make the maximum use of material things.

The continuous successes in our plant in the campaign to economize on coal have fully shown that man's ideological revolutionization knows no bounds and that the latent power of material conditions is inexhaustible.

A campaign to save coal was launched in our plant last winter. The masses of revolutionary workers made proposals and advanced suggestions, tapped the latent power and looked for simple and better ways, thus rapidly bringing about a high tide in the campaign. Some of them renovated the old-style boiler, others improved their operation skills. They exchanged experiences among themselves. The revolutionary workers at the No.12 round kiln were the first to report the good news of their success in their first battle. Fearing neither hardship nor fatigue and squatting beside the kiln to observe and master the laws governing the burning of coal, they succeeded in improving their method of handling the kiln. As a result, coal consumption for the round kiln was reduced from more than 2 tons to 1.75 tons, thereby saving 20 per cent.

Some people at this point began to rest content with their achievements, saying: "The coal has already been burnt to ashes, and we can get nothing more from it." Was there really nothing more we could get out of it? Chairman Mao has stated: "**In the fields of the struggle for production and scientific experiment, mankind makes constant progress and nature undergoes constant change; they never remain at the same level.**" (*Quotations From Chairman Mao Tsetung*, p. 203.) Following this great teaching, we made further efforts to tap the latent potentialities and discovered that although the coal had given off the maximum amount of heat, yet it had not all been used in production. An old worker suggested: We must not let one piece of coal burn for nothing or the least bit of heat go to waste. After this, we went all out to utilize the remaining heat. We installed three boilers to contain the remaining heat from the tank furnace and removed two others that consumed too much coal. This resulted in saving more than 430 tons of coal a year and pushed

the mass movement to save coal further ahead in our plant.

Every bit of coal was burnt to ashes and the remaining heat utilized. It seemed there were no more ways or means that could be thought of or potential power that could be tapped. Someone said: "This time all the potential has been attained." Was this really the case? No! A new technique was adopted by the thermos flask workshop to replace the boiler for its production of distilled water. This enabled us to blaze a trail in turning out some products without consuming any coal and thus carry the saving coal movement to a new stage. In the past, this workshop needed 4 tons of distilled water daily. To produce this amount, it had to use two boilers, and supply them with two tons of coal to heat 100 tons of running water. Now, with this new technique introduced, it can produce 4 tons of distilled water out of 5 tons of running water without consuming any coal. With deep feeling, the workers said: "In burning coal, it is necessary, first of all, to remould our thinking; only when we are devoted to the work of revolution can we make the fire blaze. Only by bringing man's subjective activity into full play, can we make limited material conditions play their biggest part."

Our great leader Chairman Mao has taught us: "**Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people, not things, that are decisive.**" (*On Protracted War*) Whether we attach great importance to the factor of man or give emphasis only to the material conditions is not merely a question of knowledge but a question of whether or not we carry out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. So long as we persist in giving prominence to proletarian politics, firmly grasp the revolutionization of people's thinking, and give full play to man's subjective activity, we can use our own hands to gradually create material conditions if we do not have them, turn unfavourable conditions into favourable ones, and, when we have certain material conditions, make the limited materials play a still greater role, thus bringing about a continuous advance in socialist production.

