

Integrating With the Workers

by Cheng Tai-yu



Comrade Cheng Tai-yu

The chairman of the revolutionary committee of the Anshan Power Bureau, the author is an engineer who graduated from an electrical engineering vocational school in 1950. In the upsurge of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1968, he and the workers evolved the new technique of free live-line operations. Using light and simple equipment, electric workers can operate on the 220,000-volt high-tension wires without any insulators. This is a new leap in the technique of live-line operations. In the following article he tells of his experience in the living study and application of Chairman Mao's works and in integrating with the workers. — Ed.

THROUGH my experience over the past 20 years, I have gained the deep understanding that Chairman Mao's teaching "**The intellectuals will accomplish nothing if they fail to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants**" is absolutely correct.

Learning from the Workers

Although I come from a poor-peasant family, I was poisoned by bourgeois education for many years in the old schools and had only vague feelings for the labour-

ing people. When I graduated in 1950, I thought that since I was the first one in our family who had had an education I should not take part in manual labour all year round like my father and elder brothers. I strove to be an "expert." At that time, I admired bourgeois "experts," "authorities" and "professors" and patterned myself after them, consciously or unconsciously. As Chairman Mao has pointed out: "**Even those who come from workers' or peasants' families are still bourgeois intellectuals because the education they received before liberation was a bourgeois education and their world outlook was fundamentally bourgeois.**"

Once the leadership gave me the task of surveying and designing a 25-kilometre-long transmission line. The line had to go through a vast mountainous area which involved complex and difficult engineering work. The task was to be completed within a week. When I found the job too puzzling, the leadership sent four veteran workers to help me do it. One of them said: "The educational level of the four of us is limited, but we have experience in this kind of work. The task is urgent. We must finish it even if there is no surveying equipment, only experience to depend on. You've had more education than us and you know how to use instruments and meters. You should contribute a bigger share." His words made me feel ashamed of having vacillated before difficulties.

The work was done on the first day according to my planning. I made a topographical drawing first and then moved the model of the calculated sag of the line on it to decide the points and height of the poles. At night, two of the workers let me calculate how far we had gone. I was surprised to find that only a little over 1.5 kilometres had been covered. They said anxiously: "How about trying our way tomorrow." The next day, a veteran worker walked in front to select the points with a signal post. They decided the points and height of the poles on the plain just by experience. As to the complex terrain, they decided the points on the map they drew in relation to the sag of the line. By integrating their experience on the job with the necessary surveying and drawing, they progressed rather quickly. We covered six, seven or eight kilometres a day and finished the work ahead of schedule. This struck a responsive chord in me. I realized that in dealing with concrete problems workers were more capable than intellectuals.

From then on, I often took part in labour with the workers and discussed how to solve technical problems with them. But in my mind it was not the workers' ideology and character that I wanted to learn. It was

their technique. I was ready to take part in labour that I thought would teach me technique, otherwise I was not.

One particular incident impressed me very much. Several workers and I had to check a line and repair it. On the last afternoon a sudden downpour descended on us. As I was about to ask the comrades working overhead to come down, one veteran worker shouted: "Comrades, it's not likely to be raining all along the 300-kilometre-long line. Let's pay attention to safety and continue our work to finish the job on time." All of us responded unanimously. We went on in spite of the rain to ensure a smooth circuit.

Why had the workers and I approached the same problem so differently? Confronted with difficulties, I thought of retreat, but the workers considered things as a whole and were concerned about overcoming difficulties and fulfilling the task. I saw the ideological gap between the workers and myself. I realized that these workers were not only far better than me technically but also far better ideologically.

Since then I have become more conscious in learning from the fine qualities of the workers. I not only took part in ordinary manual labour, but also in hard work like working overhead or surveying lines at night. In the course of doing this, I made conscious efforts in overcoming selfish ideas and fostering the spirit of fearing neither hardship nor fatigue and the world outlook of devoting myself wholly to the public interest. As a result of long-term working, studying and living together with the workers, I gradually became closer to them and at one with them.

Long-term Task

It takes a long time to remould world outlook. The intellectual should never divorce himself from labour and the masses. Failure to integrate with the workers will at once lead to changes for the worse in ideology. I went astray for a time because I cut myself off from labour and the workers.

That was in 1956, when I was promoted to deputy-head of a section. I felt out of place at first when I found myself in the somewhat comfortable office my comrades had prepared for me. But I later became accustomed to doing my work there. In former days I had been outfitted almost the same as a worker, in overalls all day and with my tools. Now I began paying real attention to my clothes. Seldom going to the worksite, I had little contact with the workers. One day when I went there, they didn't tell me to sit down with them on the ground and talk and joke as they had done before.

During that period, too, I was eager to write books. I threw myself into this day and night. I was overjoyed when I saw "Cheng Tai-yu" on the front cover of a sample copy of my first book. Someone once said to me:

"Wasn't it the workers who found the methods and data on the operation you've written about in your books? But there's no mention of their contribution at all." I flushed when I heard this. I realized that I had written off the workers' role because I was only seeking fame in writing books. Then, when I studied Chairman Mao's teaching: "**Selfishness, slacking, corruption, seeking the limelight, and so on, are most contemptible.**" I felt that it got to the bottom of my individualist ideology. The following day, I asked the leadership for permission to return to the production frontline so I could take part in labour, solve production problems together with the workers and remould my ideology by learning from the workers. My request was granted.

Working with them, I saw that the workers had many technical innovations and creations to their credit. Summing up their work theoretically was of great value. Towards this end, several engineering technicians, including myself, wrote four books in over a year's time with the co-operation of more than sixty workers. Workers had told us about their experiences in detail. Many vivid experiences had been quite inconceivable to me when I shut myself up in my office. Our books were published in Peking.

A comparison between my different experiences in writing led me to realize that so long as the aim was to serve the working people and not personal gain and fame and the method was correct my books would improve in quality and be welcomed by the workers.

Through integrating with the workers for years, I have learnt more and more about the wisdom of the proletariat.

The experiment on the free live-line operation on high-tension wires we worked out was blocked and cast aside by the capitalist roaders and bourgeois technical "authorities," despite the opposition of the workers involved. A handful of absolutely unrepentant capitalist roaders were overthrown, as was the revisionist line of relying on a few experts to run an enterprise, in the Great Cultural Revolution. The workers insisted on carrying on experiments in this new method. And when a three-in-one group of veteran workers, leading cadres and technicians was formed, I was made a member.

After careful research, a technical programme was drawn up to ensure safety in the experiment. Several veteran workers asked to be the first to tackle the job. Deeply moved, I made the same application which was approved by the leadership at last.

I safely entered the "forbidden area" within two metres of a high-tension line. The experiment succeeded. This new technique has now been popularized in many places.

Taking part in the creation of this advanced technique, I have again benefited from integrating with the workers. And this has been a good education.