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DOWN IN THE KAILAN MINES

Chinese Workers: Past and Present



US-China Peoples Friendship Association

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DOWN IN THE KAILAN MINES

Chinese Workers: Past and Present

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Kailan (Kailuan) mines, located in the city of Tangshan to the east of Peking, has become China's largest coal center as well as the country's foremost coal exporter. This pamphlet presents several pieces depicting the history of these miners struggling against the foreign mine owners' brutal oppression before 1949, the miners' persevering efforts to transform the mines and build a new society during the last twenty-eight years and their heroism, dedication and organization in overcoming the devastation wrought by the mammoth earthquake in August 1976.

The US-China People's Friendship Association has reprinted these accounts of the Kailan mines in the hope that wider knowledge of New China's achievements will build broader and deeper friendship between the people of the U.S. and the People's Republic of China.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jack Chen is a writer, artist and lecturer who worked in China from 1950-1970. His books include: *New Earth, A Year in Upper Felicity* and *Inside the Cultural Revolution*. He is presently a research associate at Cornell University.

Janet Goldwasser and Stu Dowty visited China in 1972; their trip took them to 14 factories and numerous other work sites. Immediately before their trip Janet worked as a research clerk and Stu was a spotwelder in an auto factory. They are the authors of *Huan-Ying: Workers' China*.

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IN THE KAILAN MINES

JACK CHEN

Midway between Peking and Tientsin, the town of Tangshan sits on a lode of top-quality coal. There is enough coal there to make every man, woman, and child in town a millionaire. The pithead structures tower like modernist sculpture over the one-story houses. This is one of China's oldest industrial towns. People have been mining coal there for six hundred years, and there is much more to come out of the ground. But before industrialization began just a hundred years ago, men took what coal they needed in baskets and shovels. There were just a few sleepy villages and a pottery center there. Where the new town stands were open fields. Modern Tangshan with its crowded streets grew up with the coal industry.

The present mine was opened in 1870. Ten years later, British interests got wind of the lode and they quickly moved in. Up to that time, mining was a primitive handicraft operation. The British bought into the mining enterprise with a promise to invest and split the profits with venal mandarin officials of the ruling Ching dynasty. In 1900, while suppressing the Yi Ho Tuan movement, the British seized control of the Kaiping mines. Subsequently, Chinese businessmen organized mining

Yi Ho Tuan Movement: A peasant-based uprising in 1900 against foreign control of China, known in the West as the Boxer Rebellion.

at Luanchow. By 1912, the British controlled all these mines under cover of a joint operation with Chinese strawmen. Their Kailan Mining Corporation included the Tangshan, Kaiping, and Luanchow mines and soon became one of the principal moneymakers of British imperial interests in China. Kailan coal was in big demand for fuel in Tangshan, with its ancient potteries and new cement works, in the capital Peking, and in the big industrial cities of Tientsin and Shanghai. Its coal filled the bunkers of ships in both those major ports of China and fuelled locomotives on the key trunklines of the Peking-Hankow, Tientsin-Shanghai, and Tientsin-Manchurian railways.

It was a highly profitable operation based on labor conditions that would have shocked even Scrooge in the early days of capitalism during England's industrial Revolution.

Men came to work in the mines only when there was no other way to scrape a living. They toiled in the black bowels of the earth for thirteen to fourteen hours a day at starvation wages. Ventilation, lighting, transportation and sanitation were primitive. Death and disaster were ever-present. The miners worked under threat of the lash. They lived in indescribable squalor. And this was not back in the eighteenth century but within living memory.

Wang Tso-tsan, an old miner with a tired, gentle face, told me: "We were treated like animals, worse than animals. Hunger drove us to the mines, and now we know that behind that starvation were the feudal landlords, the Kuomintang government and imperialists. There was no machinery in the mines in those days. We had no proper work clothes, just patched rags. You had to buy your own rattan hardhat. When you walked to the coal face, you had to carry a load of twenty-five pitprops. The shafts were muddy and slippery, and it was easy to fall and injure yourself. We dug the coal with handpicks and pulled it out in a basket with a metal plate under it so that you could drag it along behind you. I remember when we dragged those baskets all the way from the coal face to the hoist. Each full basket weighed two hundred pounds. Later they brought in wooden wagons pulled by men and then metal trolleys hauled by mules. We worked like devils once we were down at the coal face, with the foremen always at us with whips. We had no time to eat a proper meal even if we had it. Down in the mine we ate red cornmeal crumbled in water.

"By the time you left the pit you were soaking with sweat. In winter, by the time you got home, you were caked with icy grime. Winter was a cold hell. You caught cold. You got sick. There was no medical treatment. All you could do was rest up in your bunk till you got better or died. We lived in barracks little better than cattlesheds, draughty, cold and damp in winter. Inside each room was a double row of two-tiered bunks. Twelve men to a room, and we paid half a sack of flour a month for the rent.

"We never got money for wages. Every eleven days we got a sack cornmeal and then another sack of cornmeal in the next eleven days.

Sometimes we got a bag of noodles. We were paid in scrip for food. We sold this scrip on the market, but it usually brought in less than its face value because all the miners were so starving that they were forced to sell at the same time and glut the market with scrip. There was one stove in each barrack of a hundred men. We had no canteen, no medical service, no pithead bathhouse. You can imagine the state in which we lived. There was no place but outside to wash or dry our rags. The whole place stank. The stove could only be used to cook our corn- or acornmeal on."

When Wang paused, the bitter thoughts ran through his mind and he fished them up sometimes disjointedly. He added suddenly: "When we dragged ourselves to the hoist, we were packed into the cage without gates, sixteen men to a cage that could hardly hold half that number."

They were treated worse than animals because animals were in fact worth more than men. If a mule got sick, it got medical attention. If a miner got sick, he was fired. A pit donkey received food costing forty-seven fen a day; a miner at the coal face, twenty-two. Once when twenty men and a mule were entombed, a rescue squad forced its way in and rescued the mule first. Another fall of coal buried several men. Lack of elementary mining precautions led to terrible disasters. As gas explosion in 1920 killed 400 miners. From 1900 to 1948, 5,397 men were killed in the pits. There were 200,000 cases of serious injuries. Disasters were so frequent that a permanent shrine to the God of Miners was set up at the pithead.

When a man signed on for work, he pressed his thumbprint to a contract, saying, "Should I die at work, my dependents will make no demands on the company." Everyone knew of the widow who came to the company office to ask compensation for her husband's accidental death at work. She was driven away by the company guards. Once in the mine a man was a virtual prisoner. For the slightest infringement of innumerable rules the foreman could dock half a day's pay. A high wall surrounded the compound, and the only entrance and exit for the miners was a guarded revolving gateway that allowed just one man through at a time.

The mine-owners maintained this regime with sadistic terror. Armed guards patrolled the area. Spies and informers mingled with the men. Troops were held in reserve in case of serious disorder. Wang Teh-hsin, head of the special service of the Kuomintang command in Teng-shan, killed seven Communists and five other workers with his own hands. A Belgian supervisor thrust his lighted cigarette into the face of the worker Fu Hsin-feng to punish his "insolent behavior." When the miner Tsang Chi-fa came to work sick and as a result suffered an injury in the pit, the foreman had him carried out of the mining compound and dumped in the gutter on the road outside.

Chen Chun was the third generation of a family that had been trapped in this terrible trade. His grandfather died in the pit. His father broke his leg in an accident and was fired. Chen Chun's mother went begging to keep the family alive. When his leg was healed, his

father was pressganged by the Japanese, and the mother felt that she was lucky to get a job as a servant in a landlord's house. After two months she could no longer leave the children unattended and begged the landlord to let her keep them with her. The request cost her her job. One of her sons died of starvation. Only Chen Chun was left. Distraught, she attempted suicide by jumping into the Tu River. Luckily, she was saved by a passing miner. I heard this story from Chen Chun himself who is now a veteran miner working in the new Kailan mines.

A man had to be desperate indeed to take a job in these hellpits.* Tung Chi-tsai, now a member of the Party Committee of the Tangshan mine, told me that thirty years ago he was one of a peasant family of six. Poor to the point of destitution, they rented two *mu* (one third of an acre) of land and tried to scrape a living from it. It was a hopeless struggle. When she was twelve, Tung's eldest sister was sold to a landlord's family. It was either that or starvation. To make matters worse, his father fell sick. Before he would lend the family any more money the landlord demanded the next daughter in repayment of an earlier debt. That night the family fled to Tangshan and became mine workers. Another mine worker, Sun Hsu-shan, became an orphan at twelve. With no one to turn to, ready to work for a bare pittance just to stay alive, he offered himself to the mine owners.

The miners lived in wretched shacks of wattle and daub with thatched roofs. Unpaved lanes of dust or mud, depending on the weather, ran between them. Latrines were unsanitary holes in the ground, barely protected from the weather, which in Tangshan varies from tropical heat in summer to freezing cold in winter.

The misery of the miners contrasted to the opulence of the foreign owners. Foreign managers and technicians lived well away from the mine in tidy, European-style villas with asphalted roads and pavements, shaded trees and gardens. The area was closed to all Chinese but servants and deliverymen. In the forty-eight years from 1900 to 1948, the British and Japanese owners took two hundred million tons of coal with a net profit of 328 million silver dollars in 1941 prices.

But the despised Chinese were learning. It was Chinese engineers and workers who built the first all-Chinese steam locomotive, the Engine No. O, for the nine-kilometer Tangshan-Shihkousan feedline. It carried Tangshan coal to the canal edge where it could be shipped cheaply to Tientsin.

* Conditions in the French-owned tin mines of Yunnan were worse than those at the Kailan mines. Because of the low ceilings in the mines child labor was employed. Those who survived were permanently deformed.



FIRST STRIKE

After decades of sullen despair and long-suffering patience, the Kailan miners began to understand that there was nothing inevitable about their fate. There had been spontaneous outbursts of anger against their oppressors before, but they had lacked organization and were speedily and brutally suppressed. The ringleaders were disposed of in one way or another—dismissal, arrest, murder. But in the 1920s, new elements of organization, solidarity, and class consciousness were injected into their struggles. The men who founded the Chinese Communist party in Shanghai in 1921 went back to their home areas and began to organize mass support for the Party's policies particularly in the industrial centers. In 1921, Mao Tse-tung went to the Anyuan coalmines in Kiangsi Province, and the experience acquired there in organizing its twelve thousand workers was communicated quickly to organizers in other areas. A Party Committee was set up in Tangshan and immediately began preparations for a strike to improve working conditions and pay. Five Kailan Corporation mines with fifty thousand workers went out on strike on October 19, 1922. On the third day of the strike the British owners resorted to their usual strike-breaking methods. There were mass dismissals, and four hundred troops reinforced by a British contingent of Tommies were brought into Tangshan from Tientsin. But this time they were confronted by three thousand angry, determined and organized miners at the mine with thousands more with their families outside. The strike leadership was both open

and underground so that it was impossible to behead the movement, as in the past. Solidarity with the other mines and mutual aid prevented intimidation. Force was met by force.

Wang Tso-tsan, the old miner, told me: "I remember the strike. was just thirteen years old. Prices then had been rising fast but wages not at all. The Communist Party got us organized and we demanded higher wages. As usual, the mine owners refused our demands and called in troops. In the past this had usually beaten us, but not this time. We struck the mine and would let no one in to work it. The soldiers had their rifles but we workers had our picks and cudgels. Our men crowded round the gate and beat up the scabs the owners tried to send in. If the soldiers had opened fire, I think the mine itself would have gone up in flames. Thousands of miners demonstrated in the streets of Tangshan. They held up traffic. The mine lost thousands of tons of coal a day and finally the owners gave in. Our wages went up. This was the first time the Kailan miners dared stand up for their rights and they won."

The Tangshan miners won because they had nationwide support. The Tangshan students backed the strike and spread news of it through the student movement, drumming up support throughout the country. The Tangshan cement workers voted solidarity action. The newly formed China Labor Federation called on workers everywhere to support the Kailan strikers. Workers of the Anyuan Mine Workers Club, the famous Changhsintien Railway Works and the Peking-Hankow Railwaymen (who later staged the great February Seventh strike in 1923) pledged support. Since this was no isolated outbreak, the northern warlord government of Tsao Kun and Wu Pei-fu, already faced with civil war against other warlords, were afraid to commit too many troops to Tangshan for fear of outbreaks elsewhere. They and the British owners decided that compromise was the best policy for the time being. After twenty-five days the strikers won. To this day the strikers there preserve two mementoes of that first successful challenge to the powers against them: a wooden cudgel and a tattered banner with crossed picks.

JAPANESE INVASION

In July 1937, the Japanese pushed their invasion of China south of the Great Wall and occupied Tangshan. In March of the next year, the managers of the Kailan Mining Corporation, thinking that they had the backing of the invaders and anxious to curb the workers, published even stricter regulations governing the activities of the miners on mining property. But this was not the old days. Backed by the workers of the Tsaokchuan mine nearby, the Tangshan miners called a strike, smashed up the pass-office and raided the hitherto sacrosanct manager's office.

(When I went to Tangshan in 1973, I sat in a strange building set amid shrubs in the compound. It had tiled corridors, high ceilings, with electric fans, a veranda with tiled floor and wooden pilasters at its front. It seemed completely out of place in the setting of a mine and would have been more appropriate on some Indian plantation in British imperial days. I asked what it had been. A member of the mine revolutionary committee said carelessly: "This is the old mine manager's office. In those days we were not allowed to step onto the veranda. If we had stood where we are now, we would have been kicked off!")

Word came through the bamboo telegraph that the Japanese planned to commandeer all stocks of coal at the mine. They wanted coal to move their troop trains south. The miners immediately took action. The coal was buried or hidden in a thousand cottages. When the Japanese came they could find nothing. The hide-and-seek struggle went on for forty-three days but the invaders went away empty-handed.

This was only the beginning. Kailan coal was one of the reasons why the Japanese armies had invaded China. A punitive expedition was sent in, and there was a reign of terror: raids, arrests, beatings, killings.

The Japanese, like the British before them, said that they were doing this in a spirit of altruism, "for the natives," who could not rule themselves, were falling victim to communism, and needed "law and order." Li Ching, a leading cadre of the Mining Bureau, bony-faced, broad-browed, told me: "We thought we knew what hell life could be under the British and Chinese capitalists, but we were mistaken. It is difficult to picture what the Japanese did."

Japanese barbarities intensified the resistance. Tangshan was soon surrounded by a sea of guerrillas coordinating their operations with the Communist-led Eighth Route Army. The Japanese pressganged men to dig a moat all around the town and mine. They filled it with water from the Tu River. The only way to cross it was by a few drawbridges that were hauled up every night. The bridges and towngates were usually guarded by puppet troops under ex-Kuomintang commanders or if there was a serious threat of attack, by Japanese. To cross a drawbridge, one had to bribe the guard, puppet, or Japanese.

"I used to pass through the South Gate where the old Chiaotung University was," said Li. "Forty to fifty farmers in the village would chip in to pay the bribe once a month. One of them who knew the guards would go through with a few baskets of vegetables or fruit and 'forget' one or two at the guardpost as he went through, or slip a guard a packet of money 'for tea.' Every villager had to carry a pass and if he belonged to a village that had paid its collective bribe, he was allowed to pass; otherwise he was barred unless he himself paid.

"When you had made your way through this control point, you still had to get through the minegate. There you had to open your shirt to be searched. Your passtag hung around your neck, and if it were not clearly shown, you were kicked or slapped in the face. At the slightest whim of the guard, you could be humiliated, forced to take your hat off, drop your trousers and hobble in like that.

† Cadre: An administrative and political leader.

"Next you had to line up at the window of the mine office to get your lamp. There were not enough lamps to go round, so usually one miner collected lamps for a number of his pals. If you had no lamp, you were not allowed to go down into the pit and you lost your wages for that day.

"The fourth control point was the foremen and the gang bosses. You had to bribe them, too; otherwise they would stop you working. You queued up by the hoists where they checked you over. To show their authority they carried whips and used them. They drove us into the hoists like cattle, and there were many accidents due to overcrowding. They said that they didn't want us to lose time, but by the time you got through all those control points and finished your shift and returned home, sixteen hours had passed. Most of us were too tired to do anything but snatch a meal and throw ourselves on our bunks. Some of the married men were even worse off. Their wages were not enough to live on, so they had to take extra jobs like pulling rickshaws or scavenging.

"And yet the struggle went on all the time. The underground Party members never gave in. They gave us hope and certainty that one day the Japanese occupation would end. One side or the other would have to give in, and certainly it was not going to be the Communists. They put up leaflets. They stole explosives from the mine right under the noses of the Japanese devils and sent these to the guerrillas and the Eighth Route Army. We never saw the Kuomintang here except those working with the Japanese. When the Japanese found out about the explosives, the men involved had to flee to the guerrillas themselves. They came back later to lead the guerrillas in raids on the Japanese warehouses and arsenals. That time they got away with more explosives, cement, and food."

The spirit of revolt and freedom never died in Kailan. When a posse of Japanese came to arrest Chi Cheng-ko, one of the miners' leaders, he snatched the commanding officer's own samurai sword, killed three of his guards on the spot, and escaped. He joined the guerrilla detachment operating from the mountains just north of here, part of the East Hopei guerrilla base. Late that summer he was back here in Tangshan. He contacted the Tsaokchuan mine's underground Communist Party committee and organized a raid on the local police station. The Japanese garrison and Kuomintang puppet troops were killed and hundreds of rifles and boxes of ammunition seized. Thousands of miners went off to join the guerrillas, and by the summer of the next year, a well-armed worker-guerrilla force, skilled at dynamiting, was keeping the Japanese on the jump. With their backing, 100,000 miners and other workers went on strike and paralyzed the Japanese efforts to get Tangshan industry working for them.

The Kailan miners' guerrilla detachment was in action till the end of the Japanese occupation. It took over Tangshan on V-J Day. Chi, however, did not live to see that day. After a battle with the Japanese

in 1940, he went to inspect enemy casualties, and an officer who had been feigning dead shot him point-blank. After his death part of the Tangshan workers' detachment joined the Eighth Route Army forces under the command of Teng Hua and Sun Shih-lung in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Anti-Japanese Base.

AFTER V-J DAY

V-J Day was the hoped-for day of deliverance but that hope was soon dashed. United States officers came to accept the Japanese surrender. Then Chiang Kai-shek's picked troops, which he had carefully husbanded during the Japanese invasion, were flown into Tientsin in United States transport planes. From there they marched into Tangshan. The guerrillas warily kept their arms but handed the town over to them. A confrontation was avoided. But the troops were soon followed by Kuomintang officials determined to set up the old dictatorial regime and by the British mine-owners and their "running dogs." Wei Tun, one of the biggest compradors of the British, was the first to return. He represented the Pi Mo Company and was in a fever to make money out of the mines again.

The British owned the mine and took the lion's share of the profits, but these Chinese comprador-capitalists like Wei Tun were contractors who were responsible for getting coal out and hiring workers for various parts of the mine. They did most of the dirty work for the British. They hired and fired workers, and their gangbosses and foremen ruled underground. For instance, the ninth tunnel was run by a comprador-capitalist named Wang Tse-chao, and he in turn employed gangbosses like Lei Yang-san, the Second King of Hell in the old miners' song that I quote later on. "We had to pay half our wages over as kickbacks to these scoundrels," a miner told me. "They were the ones who did the daily beatings!"

In August 1945, the situation was not yet clear. But one thing was certain. Up to seven thousand Kailan miners had fought in the guerrilla detachments and the Eighth Route Army during the Anti-Japanese war and as long as the situation remained unclear, they would not lay down their arms. The Kailan miners would not agree to return to the old days of brutal exploitation under the British and the Kuomintang comprador-capitalists.

The Communist party and the liberated areas that the Party had organized and led behind the Japanese lines (including the East Hopei area) called for peace and a united, coalition government of the Kuomintang, Communist Party, and other parties to solve the nation's problems. Chiang Kai-shek at first pretended to agree with this proposal and even discussed it, but it soon became clear that this was simply a feint to gain time and deploy his troops for civil war. Controlling a population that outnumbered the liberated areas four to one, with a huge army and a store of modern arms, backed by the Americans, the

British, and other imperialist powers, he reckoned he could win. Yet from 1945 to 1947 only the immediate mining area and Tangshan was under Kuomintang rule. The surrounding countryside was a guerrilla area controlled by the democratic people's power.

The guerrillas and miners were in constant contact. The miners, as before, maintained an open trade union as well as a secret underground organization. They aimed to give whatever assistance they could to the guerrilla forces and to the Eighth Route Army against the Kuomintang and to preserve the mines for the people by avoiding any large scale military action that might endanger them. They were absolutely confident of the outcome of the civil war. They formed a trade union mine protection squad to patrol the mine and used the threat of forcible action as a constant deterrent to the Kuomintang hawks and bullies. The Kuomintang stooges were not allowed to forget that the Communist-led forces were only a few miles away. One scab and stool pigeon named Liu Shao-lung was captured, taken to the guerrilla area, given a lecture and told: "You have committed many crimes that deserve severe punishment. But if you change, do good for the people, and win merit, we will be lenient with you." That was enough to make him behave when he got back to the mines. His story was soon brought to the ears of other evil-doers.

"But in addition to everything else, the Kuomintang brought runaway inflation with them." Wang Hsu-chang, vice-chairman of the Kailan Mining Bureau's revolutionary committee, told me. "Prices rose every day. If you got a loan one day, it was worth maybe half the next." The Chinese compradors were redeeming scrip at half price. Conditions became intolerable.

"Then suddenly it was all over. One night the troops of the ninety-second Kuomintang Army began mustering in the street and in minutes they were gone. It was just after the big Liao-Hsi campaign in the Northeast, where 470,000 Kuomintang troops were routed. Fu Tso-yi,* who commanded the Ninety-second, knew that Tangshan was untenable, and he ordered all his troops to concentrate in Peking. The officers said loudly that their men were being transferred from garrison duty in Tangshan to Peking. Actually, they were running away before they could be encircled in Tangshan by the regular PLA.

"The Kuomintang actually had a plan to blow up the mine but never had a chance to carry it out because miners' protection squads constantly patrolled the area. Kuomintang officials in Tangshan thought themselves lucky to be able to escape just ahead of the miners' guerrilla detachment that was the first to reenter the town. Soon after that PLA regulars passed through on their way to liberate Peking and Tientsin. The people greeted them like their own brothers. They set up tables of food and drink on the streets to feed them while they rested and then cheered them on their way. It all happened so quickly we could hardly believe that it was all over, that Tangshan and the Kailan mines were free at last."

The long night of imperialist, warlord, and Kuomintang oppression

had ended.

Wang, the old miner who told me much of the foregoing, gave a long sigh when he finished his story. "I remember those days," he said, "I remember . . . I won't forget."



AFTER LIBERATION

Changes in Tangshan came swiftly after the Liberation. The miners, the guerrillas, and the people had already accumulated experience in governing in the liberated areas, and as soon as they formally established the People's Government, they went ahead with plans that had long been in their minds. A new state mining administration was set

up, headed by working miners, men like Ma Ching-yun, who began to work in the pits when he was fourteen years old and who now is vice-head of the Luchiato mine, a new mine built from scratch using the most modern technology. Bit by bit the old mines and the lives of the miners were transformed. The English racecourse is now a people's park with exhibition buildings and flower gardens. The British club, which had its inevitable bar and billiard tables, is now a people's gymnasium. The exclusive West Hill enclave where the high mine officials lived is now a workers' residential area.

While the narrow streets of the old town remain and are crowded with shoppers and pedestrians, a new town has been laid down outside the old with broad streets and tree-lined avenues, workers' apartment houses, and new public buildings: schools, theaters, cinemas, and department stores. In the morning and afternoon the roads are filled with cyclists. Phoenix Hill, craggy Tachung Hill, and the hoists of the mines still dominate the skyline. Many new factories have been opened. In the morning there is a haze over the town. They tell me it is mist. But I know better since living abroad. I say that it is smog and that they had better look out for pollution.

The first necessity was to restore production in the mine and get it into some sort of shape. After that a modernization drive was begun that lasted from 1953 to 1957. Proper ventilation, mechanized underground transport, coal cutters, secure propping and drainage were installed. In 1967 a second modernization drive got going and produced as well designed a mine as any I saw in the Soviet Donbas and better than those in the Rhondda in Wales. The hoist moved smoothly. Electric wagons took us along the shafts at a fast clip. Up-to-date combine cutters were at work. The air was fresh. Output in the Tangshan mine of the Kailan Mining Bureau was 4.32 times the preliberation capacity of a million tons a year. The Kailan complex of mines has produced more coal in the last twenty years than in the previous seventy. Here, as elsewhere in China, self-reliance is the watchword. Although the new capital investment was supposed to produce 600,000 tons of coal a year more than in 1953, by skillful improvisation and ingenuity it has been made to produce three million tons more.

They had a hoisting motor able to raise a six-ton maximum load, but as the mine's capacity increased, they needed one to raise ten tons at a time. Reluctant to spend the hard currency on a new import, they worked out a way of harnessing the large motor together with a smaller one to provide the necessary power. They called this the donkey helping the horse method because in north China you will often see a small donkey trotting along beside a harnessed horse and cart and taking some of the strain on the difficult sections of the roadway. A deep friendship often developed between the two. The large motor was trademarked "G.E." The small motor working tandem was a Soviet "Electrosil."

The Tangshan mine has been given a new lease on life. According to available data, in 1953 they had reserves to last another ten years.



But fresh prospecting to the north and the south revealed reserves totaling 180 million tons. The latest estimate is 400 million tons. The old British and Japanese managers were only interested in quick returns. They concentrated on easily-mined seams. "Difficult" seams were simply abandoned. The new administration has gone back to these "exhausted" seams and extracted another two and a half million tons from them.

"By the time we end the second period of innovation and modernization," concluded Wang Hsu-chang, "we will have raised output more than four times over preliberation capacity and given the colliery another seventy years of life."

Wang Hsu-chang guided me down the Tangshan mine. We smoothly and quickly descended 2,400 feet (there were another 120 feet of shaft below us). We were dressed in thick underwear — pretty hot in the August sunshine above but thankfully warm down below — with blue denim mining coveralls, caught in at the waist with a thick leather belt. A towel twisted around our necks kept the odd bits of coal dust from getting down our backs or chests. A modern miner's lamp could be held or clipped to the front of our plastic hardhats. Rubber boots came up to our knees. All this was standard issue provided for each miner by the mine.

Wang gave a running commentary on all I saw. He explained that in the old days the cage had been made to fit the small wagons then in use. Humans had to crawl into the for the journey up or down. At the bottom of the shaft we got into wagons drawn by a small electric motor. It was dark except for the lights we held and the headlight of the motor.

A few minutes later we left the wagons to enter a branch-tunnel leading to the coalface. We went through a door, an airlock that keeps the air circulating in the right direction, and soon reached the coalface where a great clattering, double-headed rotary cutter was hewing coal. Jets of water sprayed on the working face kept down the dust. Coal fell in a steady stream on a conveyor and was borne back in the darkness to the waiting wagons. Despite the ventilator, it was warm by the cutter and by the time I passed back through the airlock, I found that I was sweating freely. I used the towel around my neck to mop my face.

We sat down to wait till the wagons filled up and we could ride them back to the hoist. As we chatted I got to know my companions better. The grizzled old man who hardly said a word all morning turned out to be Wang Tso-tsan who had worked in the mines since long before liberation. What he could not remember, Yi Ching and Kao Ting-han, two old colleagues of his, could. Wang Hsu-chang, of course, and Wang Chen-chia, a worker-technician of the electrical generator unit, filled me in on the general administration and technology of the mine. Old Wang told me that in the old days most branch tunnels were half a man's height and you had to crawl along them. He recited the old miner's rhyme:

In these tunnels the King of Hell rules over man,
Past that gate begins the realm of Lei Yang-san [another foreman].
A new man works a month and still can't buy a bag of grain.
To eat, you sell your life and work in pain.

"Life was bitter in those days. Now we are called miners and that is a title of honor. Then we were called 'Coal beggars,' "

He slapped his rubber top boots. "Now we have special clothing to wear at work. We have raincoats against the rain, rubber boots — everything. In those days we went barefoot. We cut our feet on the stones. We drank water from pools in the mine. We took sand down in a sieve and drained muddy water through it if we wanted a clean drink. Now hot boiled water is brought down to us if we eat down here. I used to carry a heavy lamp with me in those days. With an open flame it was dangerous. Now we have these safety lamps.

"I retired in 1964 at full pay. I was over fifty and my health was not good any more. In those old days you didn't dare get sick or old. You would be thrown out like a dog to die. Now miners get regular check-ups. And after I retired, the leadership came to visit me to see if everything was all right.

"Of course it was all right! I could not get married before liberation but in 1949, I married and in 1952, my first son was born. He is working now in the coking plant. My second son is down in the countryside on a farm. My third son is in technical school, and my fourth child, a daughter, is in school. So I am well looked after and happy with a large family. Before liberation I was illiterate. I never went to school, but now all my children are getting an education. Anybody with four children in school in the old days would have been considered a real big shot. I wish you could come and see my home. I have three rooms. In those old days my home was a single bunk and all my possessions were in two bags hung on a nail in the wall. When I lay there I could

never have dreamed of the happiness of today. All I dreamed of was to escape from the mine. Now though I am retired I still come here. I have my friends and we study together. We read newspapers, discuss what's going on, and help where we can. We sometimes tell the youngsters what it was like in the old days."

IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Wang Hsu-chang told me about the events of the Cultural Revolution in the Tangshan mine. I asked him particularly about the effects of "ultraleftism" in the later phases. They were all so long past in his mind, those events of just four years ago, that he was able to be quite objective about them. Tall, lean, and quite a smoker, with energetic movements, he was, I imagine, quite caught up in the tides of 1966 and later.

"Yet we never once stopped production," he said.

"How was that?" I asked.

He thought a moment. "I think it was because the majority of the miners here are veterans. They are steady. They kept production going. They knew only too well what it cost the people to win these mines for themselves. So they strictly obeyed Chairman Mao's call to carry out the Cultural Revolution activities such as meetings and demonstrations and writing posters only after work hours and not let production suffer. I am afraid it was mainly the younger people like myself who sometimes left work early to write posters and debate. I was one of the rebels. When we heard the call to carry out the Cultural Revolution, we discussed matters and came to the conclusion that the old leadership had not always carried out a revolutionary line. They did not rely enough on the masses. They relied too much on the so-called 'experts.' And this hampered mass initiative.

"They did not understand the times we live in. They did not understand us young people or the veterans either. They thought that only money incentives could get more work out of us. But the critics of this wrongly went to the other extreme. They even threw out rational regulations along with the irrational and wanted all bonuses and differentials in wages to be thrown out as well.

"The revisionists here put technique first, not proletarian politics. That was shown in this same matter of material incentives. They offered prizes to individuals for higher output. In the summer these might just be watermelons, but such prizes split the ranks of the workers on a shift. Now we give prizes to a whole collective, such as a shift, for its good work. That brings people together and strengthens the collective. After correctly criticizing the idea of 'technique first,' some young workers went to the other extreme and didn't want to study technique! It's a pity that though we youngsters criticized the revisionists for 'forgetting class struggle' we ourselves later on did not see that our factionalism and our ultraleftist ideas were also a reflection of class struggle. In criticizing too many rules we became undisciplined. In

criticizing the the idea of leaving 'experts in command,' we did not pay enough attention to the technicians, and this put them in a passive position where they could not develop their initiative. We finally ended all the old titles in the mine. There were no technicians and no engineers. We went military. We called the chief engineer 'chief of staff' and the technicians 'deputy-chiefs-of-staff.' There was really no need for such 'transformations.'

"Yes," he said in answer to my query, "we also had a mass of big character posters here, great debates, demonstrations, meetings, and the like. We had two factions and then the PLA propaganda team came in to help us form a great alliance. Our RevCom was elected in January 1968. It had thirty-five members including a standing committee of thirteen members. Four represented the masses, six were veteran-leading cadres and three members of the PLA.

"What influenced me most seriously was the idea that 'all' the old cadres were no good. Now I know that this was one of the ideas spread by the Lin Piao clique. We had our share of mistakes here. But the mainstream of the movement was sound. That shows up in what we have achieved since 1968 when the new administration went into action. It could rely squarely on the masses whose spirit was fine and whose understanding of things had been raised. Production was in good shape before. Now it went up steadily. In 1966, coal output was 2,730,000 tons. In 1967 it went down a bit to 2,040,000 tons because we were making preparations for new technical innovations. But in 1968, it was back to 2,739,000 tons, and from then it rose steadily to 3,540,000 tons in 1971. Again, there was a drop in 1972 while we renovated the pits. It was 3,260,000 tons. But this year [1973] it will be nearly 4,000,000 tons* with the lowest production costs in the country."



A poster in the mines during the campaign against Lin Piao and Confucius.

Ultraleftist activities harmed production. In the drive against irrational regulations, rational regulations were thrown out along with them. There had been a regulation that when an explosion was made it had to be set off by gas ignition. In the extremist atmosphere fostered by the ultraleftists, this regulation was thrown out. Later, calmer discussion restored it. Transformation in the later stages of the Cultural Revolution led to a number of important improvements: the introduction of quickly adjustable steel props at the working face, standardization of wagons, improvements on wagons to avoid overspill. The after-shift meal is eaten in the mine canteen so that every man gets at least one hot meal every day.

In the old days, the mine administration shrugged off every responsibility it could as far as employees were concerned. Today's RevComs, elected by the miners themselves, assume responsibility for all of the 300,000 employees, dependents, pensioners, and children of the mining bureau in its several mines. Housing them is a top priority and, strangely, they prefer housing in one-story row houses, each with a tiny front yard. These are like the houses that the peasants like. Each worker gets a general medical check-up each year that includes an X-ray. Special attention is paid to the prevention of silicosis. Water is sprayed on coal or rock as it is being cut, and a special team regularly checks ventilation and dust content and can stop operations immediately if danger threatens. Coal dust must not exceed two grams per cubic meter. These measures alone have sharply reduced or eliminated silicosis.

Wages are from 60 yuan to 120 yuan a month for underground workers and up to 90 yuan a month for surface workers. The lowest wage in the eight grade wage scale is 30 yuan a month for a girl or young man in the canteen. There are three shifts: 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Usually workers prefer to stick to one shift. If a worker's home is 60 or more li* away, he or she gets twelve days off each year to visit spouse, parents, or other relatives. These are paid holidays with travel expenses thrown in and are enjoyed particularly by the young people. Because of the arduous nature of their work miners can retire five years earlier than ordinary industrial workers. They receive 70 percent of their original wages as pension as well as free medical care and other services.

* Output in the first half of 1974 was 14 percent above the corresponding figure of 1973.

* Twenty miles.

PLA: People's Liberation Army

Rev Com: Revolutionary Committee. A new leadership organization developed in Chinese factories during the Cultural Revolution combining rank and file workers, technicians and cadres, as well as the old, middle-aged and young.

A worker's wage of 100 yuan might be divided as follows: 5 percent (US \$2.50) for rent, heating, electricity; 20 percent for food; 20 percent for health, outings, pocket money, and small purchases (transport, entertainment, cinema or theater tickets, soap, toothpaste, cigarettes, etc.); 10 percent for newspapers, books, clothes; 45 percent for savings (for large purchases like a watch, bicycle, furniture, holidays, emergencies).

On the model set by Taching (the oil center that serves as an example to all on the industrial front, as the Tachai farm brigade does on the farm front), the Mining Bureau has organized the growing of vegetables for all employees. The green truckgardens spread right up to the pit-heads at Tangshan. Enough vegetables are grown for the canteens, and what is left over is put on the market for general use. Older men or those in need of lighter work are assigned to these vegetable garden-plots. This gives a new dimension to industry. It brings farming to industry just as in a rural commune, industrial enterprises bring industry to farming.

The Kailan Mining Bureau also runs a research institute, a technical school and a mining college where the teachers are engineers, technicians and veteran miners. The college was opened in 1971, following the example of Shanghai Machine Tool Works, which set the pace in training cadres on the spot. It teaches whatever specialties the mines need with emphasis on coal extraction and electrical engineering. All students are miners who must have completed a middle-school education and had at least five years' practical mining experience. They study three years. This is not a sparetime school, they stress, but a regular college.

Since Kailan is an old mine, it has a rich reserve of cadres. Over 10,000 workers and technicians from Kailan have filled posts in other new mines. Sometimes it has trained whole staffs for a new mine. One can find Kailan cadres wherever coal is mined in China today, from Kweichow in the southwest to Sinkiang in the far northwest and Shansi in the north, and they regularly return to visit their "alma mater."

I was in Tangshan the night the miners of Kailan heard about the Tenth Party Congress. They were listening intently around their radio sets. Peking radio in the late afternoon gave advance notice that an important statement would be issued that night. When it came, it was repeated: the communiqué of the Congress. Listeners took notes. Some listened to it several times to get its full meaning. Discussions went on till late that night. There was eager comment on the list of names of the Presidium. There was unanimous approval of the decision to expel the dead Lin Piao from the Party. The next day there was a festive air in the pits.

Party members — four hundred new ones had been admitted to the Party since the Cultural Revolution — pledged record outputs as their "gifts to the Congress." With broad smiles they told me that the second coalface colliers had overfilled their plan by 60 percent. Party

member Mai Pao-shan's night-shift loaded 723 wagons of coal, 423 above their plan. Li Shu-tien, an old miner, sent in a whole day's wages as extra Party dues in honor of the occasion. The mine produced five thousand tons above its quota for the day.

Since the Kailan collieries are a nationally owned state enterprise, all it produces goes back to the people. * *

A "HOUSEWIFE" IN CHINA

JANET GOLDWASSER

Although most women in China worked outside the home, there were some, mostly older women, who did not. We met Mo Tse-lien in Tangshan, Hebei Province, east of Peking. We liked her immediately; she was warm and friendly, the sort of person you feel at home with right away. Mo was a "housewife"; she had never worked outside the home and, since she was in her fifties, probably never would.

Mo and her husband had five children, four sons and one daughter. The eldest son was a steel worker; the second worked in another city; and the third and fourth sons were working on a commune in the countryside. Mo's daughter worked in a machine factory in Tangshan and lived with her parents.

Mo greeted us outside their family home and hustled us into the pleasant one-story house built of rocks and mortar. The house, like the others in the neighborhood, had been built by the Kailan Coal Mine in 1956 and 1957. Before Liberation, Mo recalled, almost half the families in the neighborhood had lived in slum housing: "We had no thought then of having new houses; all we hoped for was enough to eat. Some of us had to sell our sons and daughters, we were so poor."

She then proudly showed us her wristwatch, a gift from one of her sons who worked in the countryside. "Look at this watch! Just think — that a son can now send his mother a wristwatch! Before Liberation we hardly had money for food and none for things like watches."

Mo Tse-lien's husband had worked at the Kailan Coal Mine for many years. He was now retired and enjoyed a regular monthly pension of 70 yuan. They both received free medical care provided by the mine. The changes brought about by Liberation had certainly improved life

thick and fast in a way that Chia found most moving. "These are my class brothers," he thought. They must all be gotten out safely, even if he had to give his own life.

He summarized their ideas into a four-point decision. 1. Set up a temporary Party branch with him as secretary and an underground headquarters headed by him. 2. Assure the workers that the situation was far from hopeless and should be overcome with courage and struggle. They should follow discipline and help each other during the evacuation. 3. The order of exit would be: non-mine personnel, people from the surface who had been helping out below, miners, and finally the top leaders. 4. In any crisis Party members and cadres must if necessary sacrifice themselves to save others. They should put the interests of the masses in each unit first, of workers before cadres, who would be the last to go.

The decision, like a mobilization for battle, brought new confidence and strength to the endangered miners. The Party branch decided to leave some members underground at a few vital posts, and the response "I'll stay! I'll stay!" came from every Party member.

Though aftershocks were still racking the tunnels and shaking stones loose from the roofs as they made their way out, nobody panicked. Those who were uninjured helped the injured and they all encouraged one another. When anyone fell or was hurt there was immediately someone beside him to help him up or carry him. People frequently shielded their comrades from falling stones with their own bodies. Without crowding, one by one, they began climbing the narrow ladder toward the mouth of the ventilation shaft.

Chia Pang-yu asked those in charge of each unit to count heads before ascending to be sure nobody was left behind. Chu Yu-shan, a Communist who was director of the coal dressing plant and had also been working underground, found one worker missing. Risking his life, he ran back to search the workfaces for him. Once he came back to report that he had not found him yet, and then was off again. Finally he found the missing worker, who had been injured, and helped him out.

Four hours later, some time after 8:00 that morning, all 600 had returned safely to the surface. Even then they did not leave, but stayed around the mouth of the ventilation shaft, peering into it. Why hadn't Chia and the others come up yet? Finally someone shouted "Look!" All eyes turned toward the mouth of the shaft. In the distance there were several bobbing points of light. A Cheer went up.

"They've made it!"

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USCPFA Statement of Principles

Goal: To build active and lasting friendship based on mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of China.

Toward that end we urge the establishment of full diplomatic, trade, and cultural relations between the two governments according to the principles agreed upon in the joint U.S.-China communique of February 28, 1972, and that U.S. foreign policy with respect to China be guided by these same principles: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

We call for the removal of all barriers to the growing friendship and exchange between our two peoples. We recognize that a major barrier is the U.S. diplomatic recognition of and military presence in Taiwan. As the Joint Communique signed by the governments of the United States and the People's Republic of China states, Taiwan is an inseparable part of China and the resolution of the Taiwan question is the internal affair of China. We recognize that the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China.

Our educational activities include production and distribution of literature, films, and photo exhibits; sponsoring speakers and study classes; speaking out against distortions and misconceptions about the People's Republic of China; publishing newsletters and pamphlets; promoting the exchange of visitors as well as technical, cultural, and social experiences.

It is our intention in each activity to pay special attention to those subjects of particular interest to the people of the United States.

Everyone is invited to participate in our activities and anyone who agrees with our goal is welcome to join.

