

FISHERMEN'S CO-OPERATIVES

By CHEN HAN-SENG

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Nearly a quarter of the world's fishing areas are in Chinese waters. Innumerable villages on our coast are dependent on this occupation. Last summer I satisfied an old wish to visit some of them and see how the fishing people live.

2 Their lot has always been hard. The poverty and tyranny that drove one of them to kill his oppressor is portrayed in the well-known Peking opera based on a twelfth-century story, called *The Fisherman's Revenge*. Conditions no less hard are shown in *Fisherman's Song*, a Chinese film of the 1930's.

3 To find out what things are like today, I toured the Chiaotung Peninsula, the part of Shantung province which projects into the Yellow Sea and points toward the west coast of Korea. Shantung, where the philosopher Confucius was born, is one of the centres of our ancient civilisation. The peninsula itself has a population of eight million, and some of the country's best fishing ports.

4 In the past three years, the catch here has increased by an average of more than seven per cent a year. The chief reason is the development of fishing co-operatives, paralleling the nation-wide socialist reorganisation of agriculture. On the Chiaotung Peninsula, the fishermen, as well as the farmers, formed their co-ops on the basis of mutual-aid teams established in old liberated areas at the time of the guerrilla warfare against Japanese invasion. Ten fishing teams of this kind were established here as early as 1942. They multiplied rapidly after the People's Republic of China was established, and by 1954 there were 7,540 in the entire province.

5 Reorganisation into co-operatives began in 1952. In April 1956, these numbered 787 with a membership of nearly 76,000 households, and only about twenty mutual-aid teams remained. In other words nine-tenths of the fishing people in Shantung are now organised for the transition to socialism.

"WAVECREST"

6 On my trip last June, I took the train to Tsingtao and from there went on, by the newly-constructed railway across the peninsula, to Yantai (often known abroad as Chefoo). Then I travelled by jeep about 120 miles further east, to the tip of the promontory. On my travels I stopped at a number of ports.

7 In the outskirts of Tsingtao, a dozen or so fishing co-operatives are scattered. The "Wavecrest" co-operative at Shihlaojen, some 15 miles east of the city, is about average in both size and quality of organisation. On the way there I passed several villages with houses built of yellow stone, and encountered no less than three charmingly-dressed brides riding on donkeys on their first visit to their parents after marriage. The sky was serene. Everything seemed wrapped in peace. We stopped on a sandy beach, at the door of an old ancestral temple that is now the joint headquarters of co-ops: credit, agricultural and fishing.

8 Sun Ming-tsai, the chairman of "Wavecrest", was there to meet us. A handsome young man of thirty or so, he wore his cap at a tilt, and a fountain pen in the pocket of his jacket. He told me that he had fished here all his life except for the years during which he fought with the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea. His wife, I found, is a member of the agricultural co-op.

9 The fishing co-operative unites members of

227 households, about half the population of this and a neighbouring village. The agricultural co-op has members from 508 households, the credit co-op from 410. These facts illustrate how closely fishing and farming, and the different types of co-operation, are interlinked in local life.

中国的渔业合作化

① 漁業合作化是中國農業社會主義改造的重要組成部分。漁民在舊社會受剝削和壓迫，生活極其困苦。新中國成立後，政府採取了一系列措施，發展漁業生產，改善漁民生活。目前，全國漁業生產已有了顯著增長，漁民的生活水平也有了很大提高。

① 全國的漁業合作化，已達百分之七十以上。

② 我國漁業生產，在過去三年中，平均每年增長百分之七點五。

③ 了解漁民生活，是我多年夙願，到今年夏天我才如願以償。

④ 農民生活，是極其艱苦的。

⑤ 吃大碗的《打漁殺家》劇，我感觸很深。在舊社會，漁民生活極其困苦，受剝削和壓迫。

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⑦ 漁業合作化，是我國農業社會主義改造的重要組成部分。

⑧ 漁業合作化，使漁民生活，有了顯著改善。

⑨ 山東省是孔子的故鄉，是我國古代文化中心之一。

⑩ 豐富如黃河，在這些地方，是我國最優美的風景。

⑪ 三年來，山東省漁業生產，平均每年增長百分之七點五。

⑫ 主要的原因是，全國農業社會主義改造的深入，漁業合作化的發展。

⑬ 在農業合作化中，漁業合作化，是與農業合作化相結合的。在農業合作化中，漁業合作化，是與農業合作化相結合的。

⑭ 這些漁民，早在1942年就組織起來了。

⑮ 現在，山東省漁業生產，已有了顯著增長，到1954年，全省漁業生產，已達7,540萬斤。

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10 Sun told me that the fishermen had begun by organising three mutual-aid teams in 1954. At that time they did not put in their boats as shares; they only combined their labour and occasionally rented equipment from members. Two of the teams later broke up because the poorer members had no tackle and the few well-to-do ones saw no sense in continuing. The third team had these difficulties too, but it met them by moving forward—changing into a co-operative. It had 65 members. The 13 boats and the nets they owned between them were invested as shares. Now the co-op has gone still further to the higher type of organisation, the socialist collective. All equipment is owned in common; all members contribute to the running expenses and share in the proceeds on the basis of work done. The membership is 290, including the men who previously belonged to the teams that collapsed. Common property includes 57 vessels and 1,609 nets, and is valued at over Y200,000.

11 For work purposes, the co-op is divided into six teams, each with three sub-groups of three or four men who work closely together. Annual income from the sale of the catch—mainly red pargo, spotted mackerel and prawns—is about Y250,000, more than the value of the capital assets. A little more than a third is spent on the cost of operation and administration. Of the remainder, 10 per cent goes to reserve funds and 1 per cent for welfare. The rest is distributed to members, whose income last year averaged Y400 per head.

12 "As I figure it," Sun Ming-tsai remarked, "our earnings have doubled because of the co-op." When I asked how this has affected living standards, Sun turned to the accountant. The latter, a smiling middle-aged man who has never left the village, told me the story. "Before 1949," he said, "there wasn't a family here that had enough grain to see it through the year. Part of the time they ate potato leaves and stems, and wild grass from the hills. Now only a few households have to borrow grain, and they can get it on easy terms."

13 "What's more, one in three of the young men, in the old days, couldn't get married. A fisherman was so poor, and the risk of life at sea were so great, that many girls wouldn't have him. Today, government weather reports have made fishing far safer, a fisherman earns no less than a farmer, and practically all the marriageable men find wives. As for the children, enrolment in the village school has doubled and the only reason they don't all attend is lack of accommodation. We're planning to build more schools—for them and the others who aren't of school age yet. of course. with more families there are more children."

ON CHEFOO ISLAND

14 On my way to the north coast of the peninsula I saw on one side of the tracks, at Taotsen station some two hours before Yentai, a white monument to the revolutionary hero Li Chi, who died in battle against the Japanese invaders in 1938. On the other side were the extensive lands of a collective farm. Recollections flooded my mind and I thought of what great changes the years have brought. I learned more of these when I visited the "Dawn" Fishing Co-operative near Yentai.

15 This co-op is located on Chefoo island, ten miles from the city. Two things stand out in it. More than a quarter of the 198 members are women, and four women actually go to sea with the boats. The others, with a few of the men, cultivate some 50 acres of wheat and maize, and do auxiliary work connected with fishing.

16 In 1952, while the group was still a mutual-

aid team, some 40 per cent of its income was paid out to members for their work; a greater proportion was paid out in rent for land, boats and fishing tackle belonging to one or other of them. But on the eve of reorganisation into the "Dawn" co-operative, payment for labour had grown to 55 per cent of total income. The new co-op, while still in its lower stage, increased this to 60 per cent, with much of the balance going in dividends for property invested as shares. Now that "Dawn" is a higher-type co-op, i.e., a collective, the entire income—after deductions for production and administrative expenses, reserves and welfare—is paid out for work. Individual daily earnings vary from Y0.90 to Y1.70, according to strength and skill.

17 The chairman, Hsia Hung-tien, is 48 years old, and has spent 24 years behind the mast. He is of medium stature, his head close-cropped as is the custom of Shantung's sea-going men, his ruddy face and vivacious movements reflecting energy and robust intelligence. Hsia's two grown daughters work with him in the co-op, while his mother, wife and two younger daughters stay at home. From him too I heard of the frequency with which the young people were marrying; to the Shantung fishermen this is perhaps the greatest sign of their advance. "Since 1950," another member told me, "we've had a new slogan: 'new clothes, new furniture, new brides'. Now another phrase has been added: 'new fishing tackle'."

WEIHAI AND YUNGCHENG

18 Weihai, another famous harbour, is sixty miles east of Yentai. It was once the British naval base of Weihaiwei, just as Tsingtao was once the German base of Kiauchau and Chefoo was the summer station of the U.S. Navy's "China Squadron". All but twelve of the 800 fishing households have combined in co-ops, and those twelve have joined in agricultural co-operative.

19 The "Forward" Fishing Co-operative here has 555 members, over 20 vessels of from one to four tons capacity, and nearly 7,000 nets. The annual catch is about 2,250 tons. Li Hung-en, one of the older members, told me that ten years ago he did not have a single blanket or quilt in his house. The whole family slept under sacking and he and his son often had to beg for food. "In 1948 I joined the mutual-aid team and was able to borrow money for a seine" he recounted. "From then on things got better and better. We have plenty of bedding and plenty of clothes, I've repaired my house and even put in glass windows"

20 Going still further east to Yung-cheng on the tip of the peninsula, I saw many things from the jeep that impressed me. Dried fish and other food were still being moved by wheelbarrow, but the barrows now had rubber-tyred wheels. Few grave-mounds were visible in the fields; the collective farmers had moved them, by common consent, so they would not impede ploughing. Public roads were being improved and widened by the peasants, increasing the earnings of the farms. Village women were wearing more colourful clothes. The children hurrying to school along the roadside were well and gaily dressed.

21 Yungcheng county has a hundred miles of indented seacoast. A fifth more fish are being caught there than in 1952, when co-op organisation began and this year's target is 38,600 tons. Here I talked to bluff, cheerful Kao Heng-shan, chairman of the "Encircling Sea" co-operative with a membership of 358 men and 33 women. He had come back recently from a national fishing conference in Peking. The co-op, he said, had been formed last year through the combination of seven smaller units of the preliminary type. It now has eighty vessels and 3,000 nets, and the catch planned for 1956 is 2,000 tons.

22 Each member of "Encircling Sea" puts up money to finance the current year's operation, the investment varying, with working ability and family circumstances, from Y300

to Y500. Living expenses are drawn every month from the co-op treasury, against the members' final share of the income, which is settled at the year-end. Sharp ups and downs in livelihood hitherto so characteristic of the fishermen's existence, are thus avoided.

23 Headquarters is in a substantial stone house bought from a merchant who has moved to Dairen. Here the accountants are at work and the elected management committee meets each week. There is a mess hall where as many as sixty members eat at one time. It and the kitchen are clean and well kept.

At "Encircling Sea", I heard yet another story about the perennial subject, marriage—a tragic one with a happy ending. Some years ago, a young Yungchong man named Fan Wen-jen scraped together Y70 by working as a docker in Yantai, and came back to pay it to the family of a girl he loved. Her parents, however, wanted more and Fan's father, too poor to help his son get a bride, hanged himself in despair. Today young Fan is a prosperous co-op member. He has been married since 1952, has a son, and two daughters and has built on to his house so that he now has eleven rooms instead of three.

A BIG CO-OP

25 Rounding the tip of the peninsula, I visited the "Big Fish Island" co-operative at Shih-tao. It was the largest I had seen so far, comprising most of the port's fisherfolk. No less than 733 men work at sea, and 128 ashore, while 90 women members are busy taking care of the tackle. The equipment of the fourteen fishing teams includes two small motor ships. Assets are valued at Y80 million.

26 This year's catch, the members reckon, will be 8,900 tons, mainly of hairtail, long-finned herring, spotted mackerel, small croakers and prawns. Members' investments in production costs are scaled to their earnings.

27 The position can be seen from the following table, covering all 954 members.

Annual Investment in Cost of Production in the "Big Fish Island" Co-operative, 1956

Amount Paid	No. of Members
200 yuan	70
201-400	110
401-600	300
601-800	434
800 yuan	40

28 Total production costs generally come to about 35 per cent of the year's gross receipts. After these are deducted, the net income is divided in the following way.

Awards for good work	3%
Welfare fund	5%
Reserve fund	15%
Distribution according to labour	77%

29 In the division of earnings the minimum for any member is Y250 and the maximum Y1,100, with Y700 as the average. One important reason for higher production is that, since the organisation of their collective, the fishermen are busy all the time, with 340 working days a year.

BIGGER FISHING RANGE

30 Another advantage of the new form of organisation is vividly illustrated by the situation of the Erhchao "Bright Light" co-operative south of Tsingtao. Last spring it sent three sailing vessels, with a combined crew of 28, northward around the tip of the peninsula. Their aim was to fish for spotted mackerel near the mouth of the Yellow River, but owing to poor weather and other causes they caught only five tons. Since it would take two months to return and men were urgently needed in the co-op, 14 of the crew members took the train home and it was here that I met them.

31 Yun Teh-shun, a sharp-eyed, articulate young man of 28, was the first to attract my attention. As he talked, he occasionally

clarified his meaning by making notes with a fountain pen, which he carried in a little "fishnet" bag he himself had woven. He had fought in Korea, he related, and returned home only in 1954. The "Bright Light" co-op had 330 men and women members and 36 sailing ships, and it cultivated 165 acres of land. When I asked him whether the failure at the Yellow River mouth would seriously affect income, he said he wasn't worried. "You see," he explained, "we also sent a big junk with 19 men on a long voyage to the vicinity of Shanghai, where we got a hundred tons of small croakers. So what we lost at the Yellow River mouth we made up at the mouth of the Yangtse. "This is what a co-op does for us," he said emphatically. "A man fishing alone, or a small group, would stake a whole year's livelihood on the catch in one place."

INCOME GROWS QUICKLY

The income of Shantung's fishermen has grown much more quickly than the 7 per cent annual increase of production. In fact, it has doubled, and in some cases even gone up fourfold, in the last five years. That is not only because the co-operatives make work more efficient and constant, with shared income taking the place of risky individual venture. It is also because exploitation and usury by powerful fish merchants has disappeared forever.

Here is the income growth for the villages whose co-ops we have described.

INDICES OF FISHERMEN'S ANNUAL INCOME

(Former income for individual fishing =100 in each case)

Area & Village	Co-operatives		
	Mutual- aid Team	Lower grade	Higher grade
Tsingtao, Shihlao-jen	125	160	200
Yentai, Sikou	200	380	400
Weihsai, Shao Ko	147	282	323
Yungcheng, Fanchiatson	200	333	366
Shihiao, Tayutao	137	157	200
Erhchao, Wang-chiatson	153	223	280

To increase the fishermen's earnings still more, it is obvious that production must go up. But how are the co-ops to do this? The answer, I believe, is better financial administration, better organisation, abolition of illiteracy and modern fishery equipment.

On the last item, I heard a piece of good news. The shipyard near Shihiao is to turn out 120 motorised fishing boats this year. By 1957 it will have an annual capacity of 500 such vessels.