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CHINA'S MODEL COMMUNIST
The Lei Feng Campaign

"Learn from Lei Feng" wrote Mao Tse-tung in his elegant calligraphy for the March issue of the Chinese communist youth magazine, and the nation-wide Lei-Feng movement began. Other leaders of the communist state followed with their own slogans: "Study Comrade Lei Feng's ordinary and yet sublime communist spirit" wrote Liu Shao-ch'i. Somewhat more verbosely Chou En-lai wrote: "We must learn from Comrade Lei Feng: his class stand in order to distinguish whom to love and whom to hate, his revolutionary spirit to conform his actions with his words, his communist style of placing public interests above individual interests, and his proletarian fighting moral of giving no regard to his own safety." All communist leaders and all public figures followed suit as the campaign got under way.

Since the beginning of this year, China has been burning with a Lei Feng fever. Public organizations, trade unions, the army and the youth league have called on their members to emulate Lei Feng, an unknown young soldier before his death last August.

What is to be learned from Lei Feng's example? According to the declaration of the Chinese Young Communist League, published in People's Daily, the League organizations "should guide their members to emphasize the following points": 1. one must be faithful to the Party and to the proletarian stand on the socialist cause; 2. one must consciously serve the needs of the mother country, set great store by the interests of the people, be determined to be a "rust-free screw" and possess the spirit of serving the people whole-heartedly; 3. one must care for one's comrades, find happiness in helping others, be unselfish, and possess the communist manner of serving others; 4. one must be persistent and brave in overcoming difficulties, work industriously and live frugally; 5. one must persistently be "red and expert", study Chairman Mao's writings, conduct strenuous study of one's work and fulfill one's tasks in an exemplary manner.

1 People's Daily, 16 February 1963.
League organizations all over the country were told "to regard these activities as an important part of communist education at present".

An appeal issued by the Army's General Political Department told members of the Army: "You should have a firm class stand, distinguish clearly between whom you should love and whom you should hate, never forget to whom you owe your emancipation, be loyal to the Party and Chairman Mao, and to the cause of the liberation of mankind".

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions, in its appeal, called on the workers of the whole country to emulate Lei Feng: "Trade unions on every level", the appeal said among other things, "must, under the unified leadership of the party committees... include the study of Lei Feng's life as an important element in class education. They must teach workers to emulate the high proletarian ideal and revolutionary spirit of Comrade Lei Feng and his indefatigable and selfless attitude toward work."

The mass emulation campaign inspired by the name of Lei Feng began late last October in China's northeastern Liaoning province. By the end of January, "more than 500,000 people had heard reports on the deeds of the late Lei Feng and had attended exhibitions of his deeds." However, the real success story began in earnest when early in the following month People's Daily dedicated much of its 7 February issue to the memory of Lei Feng.

"As we have embarked on the construction of the Third Five Year Plan," wrote the paper's commentator in the same issue, "difficult and complex tasks lie ahead of us. Like Comrade Lei Feng, we must adhere firmly to the class stand on the class struggle by dedicating ourselves, heart and mind, to the proletarian revolutionary undertakings. Like Comrade Lei-Feng, we must continuously study the works of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and continually raise our class consciousness and increase our knowledge of Marxism-Leninism!"

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2 People's Daily, 16 February 1963.

3 Radio Peking, 7 March 1963.
Since then, the Lei-Feng cult has been marching forward. One could say with fair accuracy that today in China there is neither child nor soldier who has not heard of Lei Feng's accomplishments. His life-story has been told hundreds of times, but perhaps the most eloquent of these stories was published in the Chinese Youth Daily under the title "An Immortal Soldier".\(^4\)

Who then was Lei Feng, China's No. 1 "un-rusting screw"?

Lei, we learn from the account, was born in 1940. For years he lived a terrible life: his father was killed by the Japanese aggressors. His brother worked in "a capitalist factory" and was discharged after having lost an arm in an accident. His younger brother died of hunger and cold. His mother, abused by the local landlord, hanged herself when Lei Feng was only six, after which the child had nothing to do but to tend the pigs for the landlord Tan.

After an unfortunate quarrel with the landlord, Lei Feng was dismissed and his life became almost unbearable.

"Bearing the pain, and with a heart full of hatred, Lei Feng left landlord Tan's house and wandered from place to place, sleeping in old neglected temples, wearing strips of tree bark for clothes, eating wild fruits, and drinking cold water. In summer, his body was covered with scars from the bites of mosquitoes and ants...But he did not shed one tear. He wanted to live and have his revenge!"

The great change in his life came, of course, with "liberation". For the first time now, "he saw the light of day". One of his first adventures was to revenge himself on the hated landlord.

"Red spear in hand, Lei Feng went to the forefront of the class struggle. He was leader of a children's corps in his district during the struggle for land reform. Standing on a platform at a "struggle rally", he stretched out his hand on which there were three scars caused by knife wounds. He grabbed Tan Lao-san [the wicked landlord] by the neck and accused him bitterly. He witnessed with his own eyes the execution of Tan by the People's Government, and had his revenge and that of all those who had suffered like him."
As a good communist (which he always was), Lei Feng was always where the Party wanted him to be. Sometimes he actually went ahead on his own.

"In the summer of 1955, Lei Feng was soon to graduate from junior high school. But the upsurge of agricultural collectivization just could not let him sit in the classroom. He returned to his home town to do labor and became a work-point recorder and a bookkeeper in a collective farm."

Lei Feng's further career was marked by similar moves from one place to the other, wherever the Party needed him most. A year later he was a tractor driver, because tractor drivers were needed. Then the "great leap forward" came. Lei Feng did not hesitate to leave the struggle for agricultural collectivization for the struggle for industrialization. From the seat of his tractor he leapt to the Anshan Steel works, where he immediately became an excavator operator. But his happiest moment came in January 1960, when he could "answer the call for military service".

Nor was he behind in the field of ideology.

"After he joined the Army, he still persisted in the study of Mao Tse-tung's writings. On weekdays he insisted on studying every day, and even on Sundays and other holidays he set aside some time for study. Sometimes, after a day of intense labor, and after his comrades-in-arms were already sound asleep, he would be still studying deep into the night. In this way the soldier read the four volumes of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung."

But the real highlight of his life was still to come.

"8 November 1960 was an unforgettable day for Lei Feng—the day when he joined the great Chinese Communist Party. That day he put down his emotions as follows:

"The great Party and wise Chairman Mao! I owe my new life to you!...It was you who turned me from a poor child who looked after pigs into a Party member with a certain degree of consciousness. Everything I have belongs to you...I will serve the people wholeheartedly...I am willing to go through a sea of fire and a mountain of knives for the cause of the Party, and for the freedom, liberation, and happiness of all mankind. I'll die for the Party. I'll never change!"

And Lei Feng went ahead happily serving the people.
At the Anshan Steel Works he always worked singing happily in anticipation of difficulties. He felt he had a very happy life, and he also felt that every blast furnace and every screw in Anshan were the pride and the strength of the mother country. He was full of affection for even a piece of brick and tile..."

Lei Feng would have made his mark as an excellent cub-scout.

"Whenever he took a train he would wear an arm-band of 'train representative', busily finding seats for aged women and children, collecting their baggage for them, and scrubbing the floor of the train. After he had finished these jobs he would sit back and read a newspaper for the passengers sitting around him, explaining the current events and the Party's policies."

There is no end to Lei Feng's good deeds. In any "backward" and "capitalist" society he would have been considered an insufferable young busybody. Not so in Communist China. There he was "thrice rated an advanced producer of the Anshan Steel plant, 18 times a 'standard bearer' and five times a 'red banner holder'. He also attended the Representative Congress of Young Activists of Socialist Construction held at Anshan. As he had established meritorious records in the Armed Forces on numerous occasions, he was rated a 'five-good' warrior, a standard bearer of frugality, and was conferred the title of 'Model League Member'. Accordingly he was elected a people's deputy for Fushun municipality." Just for accuracy's sake one must add that he was also a Young Pioneer counsellor when he had nothing else to do.

Lei Feng died on 15 August last year as a consequence of an unfortunate accident. (He was knocked down by a wooden pole while "anxiously waiting to have his army truck properly serviced outside the motor pool, not even caring to take a little rest"). His death cut short an extremely busy career, but in turn it started the Lei Feng movement.

The movement, as it is progressing, is reported to be having a deep effect on Chinese youth. To demonstrate this effect here is an excerpt from the report of a forum sponsored by the Peking Municipal Committee of the Chinese Young Communist League that took place on 13 April this year.5

"During the past few days newspapers which carried stories about Lei Feng were quickly sold out, and some people read the stories two or three times. Many of them could not help reading them aloud, and unwittingly warm tears rolled down their cheeks because they were so deeply touched. Many young

5 Chinese Youth Daily, 14 February 1963.
people also took down extracts from Lei Feng's diary in their notebooks for daily reference. Li Kuang-ting and several of his classmates of the Department of Chinese Language at Peking University found themselves unable to fall asleep after reading the newspaper accounts, and therefore composed poems to express their feelings. Yesterday they came to the meeting and excitedly recited the following poem:

What is the greatest happiness?
What is real youth?
Lei Feng has given us the best answer,
In his short but splendid life.

When we take up our books,
We hear the sound of his truck speeding forward.
When we enter our classroom
We see the shadow of his never-tired body.
We too start our revolutionary truck
Advancing along the 'red-and-expert' highway,
Toward the pinnacle of culture and science..."

As of April 1963, the Lei Feng movement is still going ahead with full speed and enthusiasm.

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Appendix A

When his time allowed, Lei Feng took down his impressions in his diary which at the time of his death fattened to a book of 200,000 words. The following are excerpts from the diary.

"The life of a man is limited, but rendering service to the people is unlimited. I want to devote my limited life to the unlimited cause of rendering service to the people."

"My happiest moment is when I can make the broad masses of the people cherish a warmer love for the Party, for Chairman Mao, and for the People's Liberation Army... Toiling a little more myself, and helping others to do some good deeds is my greatest joy and happiness."

"If it is said that this is foolish, I would rather be a fool, for the revolution needs such fools and the building of the country also needs such fools. I have only one purpose and one mind, that is, my heart goes out for the Party, for socialism, and for communism."

"As far as I am concerned, the works of Chairman Mao are like food and weapons, and the steering wheel. We must eat and in fighting a war we must have weapons. Without a steering wheel one cannot drive a car and without studying the works of Chairman Mao one cannot take up a revolutionary career."

"I want to be a pine-tree growing on a cliff on a high mountain; I do not want to be a willow tree along a river bank. I want to temper myself in the midst of a thunderstorm and in hard struggle; I do not want to live a quiet and uneventful life."

"As long as a man listens to the Party and to Chairman Mao and works hard, he can do many things for the Party. But a man's ability is limited after all. Alone he is like a small ditch, and if the water of this ditch does not flow into the sea, it will get nowhere."

"Some people say: 'The purpose of living is to eat...' I feel rather that the purpose of eating is to live. So to live is not to eat only. I live in order to serve the people wholeheartedly and fight for the liberation of mankind -- for communism."

"...I am willing to be a 'screw' forever. To remain free from rust, a screw must be constantly washed and cleaned. This is also true of the thought of men. One's thought must be constantly examined if it is to remain pure... I want to be a rust-free screw of the great revolutionary cause!"
Appendix B

The following letters were published in the "Letters from readers" column of the People's Daily (February 19, 1963).

1. The Days with Lei Feng

Lei Feng and I passed our childhood and boyhood together and suffered hardships in the old society together. It was the Party that saved us from extreme difficulties, it was the concern shown by the Party that made us first learn the meaning of "love", it was the Party that sent us to school and it was the Party that fostered us. Whenever we think of the Party, we feel warmth and endless strength in ourselves.

The short and yet brilliant life of the late Comrade Lei Feng has set an example for me. He often said to me: "We must not 'forget our pain when our wound has healed.' We must strive to do more work for the Party."

In 1958, obeying the need of the Party, Lei Feng gave up his personal wishes and came to the Steel Capital of the motherland - Anshan. He often wrote to me, encouraging me to study hard and strive to make progress. At the end of 1958, I wrote to him, telling him that I had joined the Young Communist League. He was so very much pleased that he wrote to me in reply, saying: "You must not be proud and complacent, but must try to make progress continuously. Complacency is the greatest enemy of progress..."

He unceasingly imposed exacting demands on himself in the proletarian spirit and helped his comrades with this thought. Comrade Lei Feng wrote the history of his life with his spirit of loyalty to the cause of the Party and the people, and carried out his promises with solid action.

Today, he has left us forever! But, his spirit will always live in my heart.

Today, the Party has fostered me into a university student. From a waif into a university student! This is something impossible even in my dreams! Like him, I must make myself a real communist.

Kuo Fang, a student of People's University of China

2. Learn the Noble Style of Work of Uncle Lei Feng

I was greatly moved when reading in newspapers the diary and the deeds of Uncle Lei Feng. I have made up my mind to follow his example and become an outstanding student.

Uncle Lei Feng has died, but his spirit of loyalty to the cause of the people will remain in our hearts and will be an example for us forever.
From time to time this scene recurs in my mind: Uncle Lei Feng was helping a woman, and, taking her things with one hand and her child in the other arm, accompanied her to her home. On his way back to his unit, he did not complain of fatigue, but thought happily about his work for the next day. Yes, Uncle Lei Feng held that one's greatest happiness was to help other people and do good deeds. I want to learn this communist style. Our school once held a movement of "doing good deeds for other people", but I did not carry out these activities well. Sometimes, I was not active in doing the work in class, thinking that the work was tiring and dirty and trying to do light jobs. Compared with the work of Uncle Lei Feng, I am far behind. I am ashamed of myself.

Only one rendering service for the people as Uncle Lei Feng did deserves to be followed by every youth. I should work hard continuously and strive to make myself a person like Uncle Lei Feng.

Sung Ching-shu, of Junior Middle Class No. 2, Peking Municipal Girls' No. 1 Middle School

3. What Do We Learn from Comrade Lei Feng?

For a long time after I have read the correspondence about the deeds of Lei Feng and the extracts from his diary which were carried in Jen-min Jih-pao, I cannot quiet myself. Comrade Lei Feng has been an honorable and great proletarian pioneer and soldier. He lived only 22 years; his life was a short one. But, as Comrade Kalinin said: "The value of life is not judged by its length." Truly, the brilliant life of Comrade Lei Feng will live in the hearts of the Chinese youth forever.

Comrade Lei Feng was born of a poor peasant family. He was deeply antagonistic to the feudal ruling class and had the excellent character of a laborer. However, only under the fostering and education by the Party and through practical training in the revolution could this admirable character be further developed and his consciousness increase.

Comrade Lei Feng first showed his consciousness by studying the writing of Chairman Mao. He said: "To me, Chairman Mao's writings are like food and weapons and like the steering wheel to a motor vehicle." Through his experiences in life, he also told us: "The deeper we study the writings of Chairman Mao, the more we can brighten our thinking and broaden our mind, the firmer will be the standpoint we take, and the more far-reaching will be the ideal we cherish!" These words are entirely true...

A revolutionary must properly study Marxism-Leninism and the writings of Chairman Mao and often impose exacting demands on himself, so that his behavior may in every respect conform with the demands of the Party and the people.

Chia Chen