

clude many mulberry trees that once nourished silkworms and many walnut and persimmon trees that appear to be, if not abandoned, at least neglected.

Since the official line is that Dazhai, in the past, paid attention only to grain production, village leaders today introduce a number of still-functioning enterprises that were built long ago as if they were new, as if they were another result of the reform. These include the brick kiln which previously earned 20,000 yuan (Hinton family members worked there in 1971), the soysauce and vinegar plant which contributed 10,000, and several tractors which contributed 10,000, earned by hauling freight on the road.

Legitimate new enterprises, other than the coal mine, include a flour mill, a rock crusher, and additional privately owned trucks and tractors engaged in transportation. The new trucks and tractors bring in around 70,000 yuan, considerably less than the amount lost by closing down old enterprises.

### *Agriculture in Decline*

The deterioration of agriculture since the reform is serious and plainly visible. With the exception of fruit from the expanding orchards, which Chinese class as a sideline, crop yields are falling. This year I saw only a few fields that had the kind of crops that made Dazhai famous in the days of Chen Yonggui—thick, dark green fast-growing luxuriant corn and sorghum. The plant growth standing in Dazhai fields this June reflected the wide range of management skills and commitment to farming that privatization has brought to the land. I noticed great variations in plant color, stalk height, seeding rates, germination rates, and crop care. I had to conclude that the contracting peasants of today are unlikely to match the collective crops of a decade ago, and the statistics bear this out.

The reformers like to dwell on the 1983 crop, the harvest collected during the first year of the reform. It was apparently bountiful, with an average yield of 149 bushels to the acre and a record total yield of 500 long tons of grain. The problem is that while this yield was often approached, even surpassed per acre, if not in total crop, in the past, it

has not been duplicated since. The weather behaved ideally in 1983, and the soil, under collective care for decades, had reached a high state of fertility. Since then the weather has not been so favorable, and the contracting families have paid indifferent attention to fertility, seed quality, and other crucial inputs. Yields have suffered accordingly:

|                          |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1984 .....               | 94 bushels per acre             |
| 1985 .....               | 105 bushels per acre            |
| 1986 (drought year)..... | 94 bushels per acre             |
| 1987 (drought year)..... | 35 bushels per acre (estimated) |

Before the reform Dazhai also suffered drought years. 1982 was one of them. The reformers like to compare the 70 bushels per acre yield of that year with the bumper 149 bushel crop of 1983. However, in 1975 Dazhai, as a collective, harvested 129 bushels per acre; in 1976, 132 bushels per acre; in 1977, 154 bushels per acre; and in 1978, 113 bushels per acre. Even if these figures are exaggerated, as critics now claim, they cannot be reduced by much. I saw the crops in 1977 and 1978. They were the best I ever saw in Shanxi. To be fair, one should match good years against good years and bad years against bad years, **not compare the worst with the best.**

From the mid-1970s right through to the reform in the early 1980s the crops in Xiyang county, influenced by Dazhai's example, were excellent on the whole. At various times I saw them, admired them, and even marvelled that mountain terraces could produce so much. Since privatization in 1983 the trend has clearly been downhill, not only in Dazhai village but also in neighboring villages once known for their bountiful crops. Here, for example, are some figures for Shiping and Nannao:

#### *Shiping*

|                  |                           |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1973 .....       | 70 bu/acre (drought year) |
| 1979 .....       | 103 bu/acre               |
| 1982 .....       | 47 bu/acre (drought year) |
| 1986 .....       | 38 bu/acre (drought year) |
| 1987 (estimated) | less (drought year)       |

#### *Nannao*

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| 1977 ..... | 110 bu/acre |
| 1979 ..... | 99 bu/acre  |