

CHINESE LITERATURE

Monthly



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ASSISTANT EDITOR: Yeh Chun-chien

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LI CHUN

The Story of Li Shuang-shuang

1

Li Shuang-shuang, the wife of Sun Hsi-wang, a member of our commune's Sun Village Brigade, is about twenty-six or seven. Before the Big Leap of 1958 when communes were formed all over the country, not many people knew that she had a name of her own. She had married early and was soon tied down by three children. In the days of the agricultural co-ops, she rarely found time to go out and work in the fields. Even when she managed to score a few workdays, they were entered on her husband's record. Hsi-wang used to refer to her as "that one in my house."

Since she was someone "in the house," naturally she had little opportunity to show her face outside. But during the Big Leap, the name Li Shuang-shuang leaped out of obscurity. She not only appeared before the eyes of her commune members, she leaped right into the county and even the provincial papers.

Early in the spring of 1958 throughout our township a great drive was launched to lick the problem of irrigation. The young people of Sun Village, carrying banners and beating gongs and drums, marched off to build a reservoir at Heishantou. Those

Li Chun, born in Loyang, Honan, in 1927, used to teach in a secondary school. His first short story *Not That Road*, published in 1953, aroused immediate interest. Since then he has written many short stories and short novels, as well as the successful film scenario *The New Story of a Veteran Soldier*. Most of his writing deals with life in the countryside in New China.

left in the village had their hands full collecting manure, sending fertilizer to the fields, and raking the fields and planting sweet potato; they had no time left for the wheat fields. The shortage of labour was keenly felt.

The Party branch asked the co-op members to write their views on placards and post them up so that all could see and discuss them. The next day the walls were covered with "opinion placards." Lo Shu-lin, secretary of the township Party committee, dropped in at Sun Village that day. Walking down the street with the co-op Party secretary, Uncle Chin, he eyed the colourful placards with much interest. Suddenly one caught his attention. It was written in a clumsy, scrawling hand, but the content was very original. It read:

Household chores
Make us sore,
Though we've plenty of drive,
It's no use to strive.
We're tied by our chores
To the kitchen all day.
Help with the Big Leap?
We have no way.
Set up canteens
As quick as you can,
Then we women will challenge
Any man!

It was signed Li Shuang-shuang.

Secretary Lo nearly split with delight. He read the doggerel over and over again. "I say, old man," he said, slapping Uncle Chin on the shoulder, "we've got a good idea here. This is a very important suggestion, very important. If we can mobilize the housewives, our big leap will really take on wings." Then he wanted to know, "Who's this Li Shuang-shuang? She's really got something to hit on this idea. She's got what it takes."

"She might be Hsi-wang's wife," said Uncle Chin.

As they talked the slanting tree shadows slowly straightened to face the north. People returning from the fields gathered round the two secretaries and read the placard they were discussing.

"This was written by Hsi-wang's wife, I'm sure. Li Shuang-shuang is the name she used when she enrolled for the literacy class last winter," said one villager.

"That young woman's very intelligent," said another. "She's good at her studies too. Yes, she's quite capable of writing such a thing."

Hsi-wang, pushing a little cart, happened to be returning from the fields at this moment. Several years older than his wife, he also sprang from poor peasant stock. Before the liberation, he had worked in a restaurant for two years. One day he accidentally broke a couple of plates and ran away for fear of being beaten. He spent the following two years with a group of strolling musicians, not returning to the village until after liberation.

"Hsi-wang," a neighbour called. "Come and see if this was written by your woman."

Hsi-wang was startled to hear that his wife had posted an "opinion placard." "I hope she hasn't aired everything about that quarrel we had yesterday," he thought to himself. Since Secretary Lo from the township and the co-op Party secretary were looking at the placard, he was even more hesitant. He squeezed in for a closer look and anxiously read the verse on the wall. When he finished, he felt as if a weight had been lifted from his heart.

"Well put," Secretary Lo was saying. "It's got a point, this placard." Only then did Hsi-wang own up lazily, "Yes, that's written by the one who cooks for me."

A burst of laughter greeted this. Poor Hsi-wang, thinking they were laughing at the idea expressed in his wife's verse, quickly explained, "I'm afraid that cook of mine hasn't much of a head on her shoulders. You people mustn't mind what she says." Impulsively, he stretched out a hand to pull the placard down.

"What are you trying to do?" asked the co-op secretary grabbing his wrist. "This is an 'opinion placard,' don't you know? How can you remove it just like that? She's airing her views."

Awed by this mention of airing of views, Hsi-wang quickly withdrew his hand.

"Listen, Hsi-wang," said Township Secretary Lo. "Your wife has a good head on her shoulders. I'm going to take her

'opinion placard' back with me to the township Party committee. We'll call a special meeting to look into this matter."

Slapping Hsi-wang on the shoulders, he added gently, "I think it's time you changed those old habits. You shouldn't go on saying, 'The one that cooks for me. . .'" He folded the verse carefully, tucked it into his pocket and went to the co-op office with Uncle Chin. Hsi-wang's head was whirling with confusion.

Pulling his empty cart, he made his way home. On the way he kept thinking about his wife. "Now she's only a woman, it's true, but even Secretary Lo from the township thinks what she's written makes sense. That was a close shave. A good thing she didn't drag out that business of our quarrel. If she wrote an 'opinion placard' about me and posted it up for all to see, the neighbours would probably take her side and blame me for everything. She's really a headstrong woman. I'd better be more careful in the future."

2

Hsi-wang had quarrelled with Shuang-shuang exactly a week after the Spring Festival. It happened because Shuang-shuang, after having enviously watched other young people go off to build the Heishantou reservoir, learned that an irrigation ditch was being dug at the east end of the village to channel in the water from Hungshih River. She wanted very much to join in the ditch digging.

"Forget it," said her husband. "The brigade leader didn't say you have to go, did he?"

"What if he didn't?" argued Shuang-shuang. "I still want to go. It's so dull at home. Everyone's working and leaping forward. Why can't I get out of the kitchen and this little house?"

Unable to stop her, Hsi-wang had to agree to her joining the ditch diggers. The three children were put in the care of their neighbour Fourth Aunt.

After two days' work out in the open, Shuang-shuang's cheeks became ruddy. She talked more and laughed a lot. But she was finding it hard to keep up with her household chores at the same time, particularly cooking the three meals a day. She

would have to dash home before noon to get the fire going and put the rice on. But the gong calling the workers back after lunch always sounded before she had time to enjoy the food she had prepared.

The day of the quarrel, Shuang-shuang arrived home at mid-day, later than usual. She was greeted at the door by three hungry children, demanding to be fed. The morning's work had tired her and here were the children wanting their lunch in a hurry. Shuang-shuang felt cross and out of sorts. When she pulled aside the curtain over the doorway leading to their bedroom, she discovered that Hsi-wang had been home for some time and was lying comfortably on the bed, smoking.

"The children are crying for food and you lie there doing nothing," she said irritably. "You certainly know how to take it easy."

"Cooking is a woman's job," said Hsi-wang stretching out two fingers airily. "If I cook your meals, you'll be wanting me to wash the baby's diapers next."

"Can't you see how busy I am? Look at all I've got to do."

"Well, who asked you to take so much on yourself?"

Shuang-shuang had been slicing the kneaded dough into noodles. At this challenge from her husband, she slammed the chopper down on the board and said, "You just wait. When we've finished digging the ditch and have turned our land into irrigated fields, I won't let you have a bite of the crops we reap."

"You can't keep me from enjoying our bumper crops; what's more you'll have to cook them for me."

Shuang-shuang was furious now. "You won't get anything to eat," she said, tossing the chopper aside. Sitting down on the doorstep, she burst into angry tears.

Though she wept as if her heart would break, Hsi-wang ignored her, pretending that nothing unusual had happened. After a while he got up, went up to the kitchen table and looked at the noodles Shuang-shuang had sliced.

Without even a blush, he said, "There are enough noodles here to fill my stomach. I can boil them without your help." He dropped the noodles into boiling water, and got out a clove of garlic. This he peeled and put in the mortar to pound, adding a dash of vinegar to make a pungent sauce for his boiled noodles.

The more Shuang-shuang wept, the louder Hsi-wang pounded the garlic. Seeing how eagerly he prepared his own food, Shuang-shuang was beside herself. "So you think you can eat in peace while I cry my heart out," she thought. "Well, I'm not going to let you!" She rushed up to her husband and dealt him two hard knocks on the back.

"Are you out of your mind, woman?" shouted Hsi-wang whirling round, raising the pestle to hit back. Shuang-shuang was much quicker than he. With one jerk, she got the pestle out of his hand and then pushed him so hard that he stumbled backwards into the yard and landed on his rump.

He looked so funny that Shuang-shuang burst into laughter, spattering the ground with her tears.

Hsi-wang angrily scrambled to his feet, meaning to have it out with her. But Shuang-shuang went up to him calmly, saying, "Let's go to Uncle Chin and ask him to arbitrate. I join in the Big Leap but you don't like it. You find that you can't take it easy any more, so you make trouble for me. What kind of a head have you got? Come, let's go."

Hsi-wang had meant to poke her a couple, but what she said made sense. Knowing that he was in the wrong, he didn't want to continue the quarrel. He certainly didn't want to go to the Party secretary with her.

Flinging off her hand, he strode to the door. "All right," he said with pretended bravado. "You go to the Party secretary, I'll be along soon." In spite of his bold words, he slipped away and got out of sight.

That evening, after having put the children to bed and lit the lamp, Shuang-shuang sat by the window stitching cloth soles, meditating as she plied her needle. A glow in the east tinted the paper window-panes. She heard laughing voices in animated talk and the sound of shovels hitting gravel.

Peering out of the window, Shuang-shuang looked east. The villagers were working on the ditch. A long row of lanterns was strung up like a fiery dragon; beneath, a long dark line of young people swung their shovels and pickaxes. The stone earth tamper rose and fell with a rhythmic thud and a merry work-

song rushed through Shuang-shuang's window and into her yearning heart like a strong tide.

"Outside, everybody's leaping forward. Am I to be tied down for ever by this house and home?" Shuang-shuang's heart pounded and her cheeks burned. She simply could not go on stitching peacefully.

The door opened and someone entered. Thinking it was her husband, Shuang-shuang kept her head bent and refused to look up.

"Ho, what kind of a hostess are you? Are you dozing?"

Shuang-shuang discovered it was her neighbour Kuei-ying. "I thought it was my lord and master returning," she said with a laugh. "So it's you."

"Aren't you two on speaking terms?"

"The trouble with us is," said Shuang-shuang, "we find it hard to eat from the same pot."

They giggled at this and their laughter made the baby stir in his sleep. The two young mothers checked themselves.

"Where are your kids?" whispered Shuang-shuang.

"Just got them into bed."

"Why aren't you in bed?"

"I can't sleep. What about you?"

"Same here," said Shuang-shuang. "They say the water will soon flow past our front door."

"What's to be done with people like us?" said Kuei-ying. "Everyone else is leaping forward, but how are we to leap? The day before yesterday, my husband went to work on building the reservoir. I wanted to go too, but they said mothers with kids would be no use. I offered to cook for them, but they said there's no one to help me take care of my children."

"Have they got a canteen at the reservoir site?" asked Shuang-shuang, getting to her feet excitedly.

"Yes, and they use huge pots and big utensils to steam the rolls."

"Hey," said Shuang-shuang, tossing her cloth sole on the bed. "If they can set up a canteen at the reservoir, why can't we organize one here in the village?"

"Why not?" said Kuei-ying, clapping her hands. "That's an idea."



Delighted, the two young wives thought up many other ideas too. The more they talked the more animated they became. They discussed how to organize a canteen and what to do with the children, talking far into the night. Finally, Kuei-ying went home. Shuang-shuang then sat down and wrote her "opinion placard," making up the verse as she went along. By the time dawn broke in the east she had finished. She posted the placard before going to bed.

3

The loudspeaker under the eaves suddenly burst forth:
"Good news, fellow villagers. In order to organize ourselves better for a bigger leap forward, the township Party committee, at the suggestion of the masses, has decided to set up a canteen in Sun Village. . . ."

Overjoyed, Shuang-shuang dashed out of the house. At the gate, she saw Kuei-ying, Aunt Chin, wife of the Party secretary, and her neighbour, Fourth Aunt, hurrying towards her house.

"Shuang-shuang, that 'opinion placard' of yours has worked. The township office says we are to set up a canteen."

"Come on, let's see where it's best to put the stove."

"But who knows how to build a stove big enough for a canteen?"

"Hsi-wang! He knows how to build big stoves with proper piping."

"Where can we get big pots? I know. Erh-mao, at the east end of the village, has one."

Hsi-wang's yard was quickly thronged with excited people. Women, laughing and chattering, surrounded Hsi-wang and swept him off to select a suitable place to build the canteen stove.

The canteen was housed in an empty wing of a compound belonging to Sun Yu, a well-to-do middle peasant. A row of three large rooms facing the sun was whitewashed until it shone. Two large cooking ranges were built in beside the windows and on them sat two huge shiny pots. Next to the stove were a pair of water-vats as thick as an ox. At one end of the room, a heavy board measuring 12 by 8 feet was propped up as a work shelf and kitchen table.

The canteen opened by serving at its first meal millet and lentil noodles — what the villagers liked to call "carp darting through sandbanks." Since it was the canteen's very first day, the co-op Party secretary and the production brigade leader came to the kitchen in person. The cooks elected by the villagers included Hsi-wang, Kuei-ying, and Fourth Aunt who lived next door to Shuang-shuang. The villagers couldn't think of a suitable person to be superintendent. They decided to let Sun Yu's son, Chin-chiao, take charge for the time being. Chin-chiao was a primary-school graduate. As he was already in his late teens and still had not passed the entrance exams for secondary school, he had settled down to work in the village.

The Party secretary arrived bright and early. He helped light the fire in the brand-new stove and when that was done picked up a pair of buckets and a carrying-pole. Off he went to the river and was soon back with water for the huge vats. Hsi-wang was moved to see the secretary, who was no longer young, doing this heavy work. He finished kneading the dough for noodles, asked Kuei-ying to carry on with the slicing and snatched the buckets and carrying-pole out of the secretary's hands. Then he began bringing water from the river, filling the two vats to the brim after nearly forty trips.

All the villagers, old and young, men and women turned up at meal time. Shuang-shuang came with her three children. She thought her husband looked fine in the snow-white cook's cap and coat. The way he bustled about filling the bowls, taking

in meal-tickets, answering the villagers' calls and joking with them all the while made him seem ten years younger.

Shuang-shuang kept glancing at her husband with a significant smile as she ate. Delicately, she picked up the noodles in her bowl with her chopsticks, and lifted them high into the air before popping them into her mouth. She liked the food of course but she ate with extra special relish in order to show Hsi-wang, "See, I'm enjoying the food you prepared." Hsi-wang was aware of her meaningful glances but turned his head away, pretending that he had seen nothing.

The Party secretary did not sit down to eat but went from table to table asking the villagers' opinion of the canteen. When he got to Shuang-shuang's table, he asked, "How do you like the food here?"

"Too wonderful for words," said Shuang-shuang. "It saves so much time this way. After the meal, I just wipe my mouth and walk off. All I have to think of is how to leap forward in my work, I don't have to bother my head about other things." At this point she darted a glance at her husband who muttered to himself, "I must say you're getting what you wanted."

Hsi-wang finished the washing and tidying up in the canteen before he went home. Shuang-shuang was getting the two little ones ready for nursery school. Pretending not to notice the children's excitement at going to the nursery, Hsi-wang threw himself on the bed with a groan and a sigh. "Oh, how tired I am. I can feel my bones coming loose."

Shuang-shuang knew Hsi-wang well enough to understand that this was his way of bragging about the amount of work he'd done. She let him ramble on. When the children were ready, Aunt Chin, who was in charge of the nursery, came in to fetch them. Shuang-shuang waited until they were gone before she poured a cup of hot water from the thermos, and with a tender smile took it to Hsi-wang.

"Are you very, very tired?" she asked softly.

"I feel as if my bones have been crushed." Hsi-wang made a wry face.

Shuang-shuang brought in a basin of water. "Just take a look at yourself," she scolded gently. "That face of yours is all plastered up like an actor. And you've always bragged so much

about what you can do cooking in a big restaurant. For one thing you have no sense of cleanliness. Good thing we're only wiping out four pests.* If there were five, that would include you."

Hsi-wang sat up abruptly. "Do you know I made forty trips to the river, always returning with full buckets? You try it."

"I don't have to," said Shuang-shuang sympathetically. "I'm only too aware of the amount of work cooking involves. But preparing one meal never made me sigh and moan the way you're doing now. . . ."

"Talk's easy," said Hsi-wang, washing his face. "I suppose you've climbed high and are doing big work now."

"I'm not idle anyway," said Shuang-shuang. "Besides, all work is the same. Didn't the Party secretary tell us cooking is a very important job too?"

Hsi-wang cheered up at that. "Tell me," he said, "what did you think of my noodles?"

"Excellent. You got them long and fine."

Her praise was soothing to Hsi-wang. "Ho, you don't know anything about my finer culinary arts," said he. "Just this same kind of noodles, if I added a few shreds of chicken, a pinch of dried shrimps and a garnish of seaweed, would be so delicious you wouldn't believe it. Of course we haven't much of the finer ingredients in our canteen. In the old days. . . ."

"I don't want to listen," Shuang-shuang protested.

"I haven't finished my sentence. How do you know what I want to say?" retorted Hsi-wang.

"I know you'll go on about that town restaurant of yours again, isn't that so?"

Hsi-wang swallowed. "Well, what of it?"

"Why do you always go on about that wretched restaurant? I don't like to listen. That was in the old society. In those days you were cursed and beaten by the boss. No matter how good the dishes you prepared were, they all went to feeding the landlords, local despots and wicked oppressors. What did we

* As part of China's national health campaign, all rats, bedbugs, flies and mosquitoes are to be eliminated.

get to eat at home? Thin gruel so watery that you could see your reflection in it; bran muffins so rough you couldn't make the kernels stick together. We never saw white rolls even at New Year. Of course we still serve only plain food at the canteen but every bit of it is for our own working people. You needn't brag about that old restaurant. The way I figure it, if we keep on with this Big Leap we'll soon reap much more grain, feed many more pigs and have plenty of fish in the ponds. Sooner or later our canteen will have much better food than what was served in that restaurant you're always talking about. What's more, by pitching in with your two hands in the canteen, do you know how many pairs of hands you're freeing from household drudgery? I've been assigned to work at the pig farm. We're feeding thirty-eight pigs at present, by the end of the year we plan to feed 150. Before we had the canteen, I was too busy at home to raise even a single piglet."

Hsi-wang nodded silently. There was a lot of sense in what Shuang-shuang said.

4

A people's commune embracing the whole township was set up after the wheat harvest and all the people in Sun Village formed one production brigade. The reservoir at Heishantou had been completed and water from Hungshih River flowed through the village in a neat ditch. The fields all around were converted into paddy fields.

One afternoon, Hsi-wang, while steaming rolls, had a visitor. Sun Yu, a man in his fifties, strolled into the kitchen from his rooms across the yard. Since the rooms occupied by the canteen belonged to him and since his son Chin-chiao was superintendent, he came in often to prowl around, looking at this and fussing with that as if fearful that the canteen people might damage his house.

As Hsi-wang removed the bamboo top of the steamer, Sun Yu perched on a bench said chummily, "This is a good batch of rolls, Hsi-wang. You can tell a good batch as soon as the top is lifted because the rolls are white instead of dark."

"You seem to understand cooking," said Hsi-wang rather pleased. "These rolls are made from the new wheat. Here, try one." He tossed Sun Yu a piping hot roll which Sun ate gladly, letting his talk flow at the same time.

"The canteen serves white rolls only twice a day," said Sun Yu. "A few years back, even in our family as you probably know, we had rolls three times a day when the new wheat came in. Sometimes we had another snack in between."

"Maybe you got three good meals a day but I certainly didn't. I'm very glad that my three little ones are eating in the canteen as well as they are." However, the trouble with Hsi-wang was that he was too easy-going to make a strong retort to anyone and he didn't dare speak his mind frankly.

"Well, you know how it is. It's hard to say." With a sigh and a shrug, Hsi-wang let the subject drop.

Sun Yu could see that Hsi-wang was weak and easy-going, afraid to offend anybody. "I have a favour to ask of you, Hsi-wang," said he, coming to his point. "Tomorrow is the anniversary of my brother's death. I'd like to have a few dishes to offer to his spirit. We're a bit cramped at home and I'd like to get the food prepared here in the canteen so I can benefit by your superb talents."

Hsi-wang who cooked nothing but plain food in the canteen was only too anxious to show what he could do when given the chance. Sun Yu's subtle praise went to his head. "Just bring your stuff over," he said. "It isn't much to ask. Of course I won't refuse you."

Sun Yu turned up in the evening. He had told Hsi-wang he wanted five dishes but he brought along only one little chicken. At sight of the lone bird, Hsi-wang thought, "You've got me in a spot all right." But he'd already agreed to cook for Sun Yu. What else could he do but fill in with food belonging to the canteen. Besides using the canteen's oil, salt, sauce and other ingredients, he also put in a great deal of green vegetables and bean noodles. Chin-chiao, superintendent of the canteen, of course saw what he was doing, but he looked the other way.

Though Hsi-wang worked half the night preparing the fancy food, he himself didn't have a single bite. After everything had been removed to Sun Yu's place, there was still half a bowl of

gravy in the pot. "You take what's left," Sun Yu said magnanimously.

"You don't understand," said Hsi-wang. "After you've been cooking something for hours, you get so that you can't stand the smell of it."

"Take it home to your family then," urged Sun Yu.

"No, thanks. They don't care for chicken." The truth was that Hsi-wang's refusal had nothing to do with his family's taste for chicken. He was afraid of Shuang-shuang's sharp tongue, for he knew that she disapproved strongly of this sort of thing. In fact, after he started working in the canteen, she had cautioned him more than once not to let anyone impose upon him and the canteen.

However, in spite of Hsi-wang's attempt to hide the facts from his wife, the truth came out. As the saying goes, "There is no wall that's air-tight." Within two days people were talking about the incident, at first only in whispers but before long an "opinion placard" appeared on the canteen wall.

Hsi-wang was a timid soul. The sight of the "opinion placard" frightened him. "If they find out, they'll hold it against me. I'll offend everybody if I'm not careful. Best thing is to quit this cooking job. Then I won't get into trouble nor will I have to refuse people when they ask for favours."

Back home that day he heaved a deep sigh as soon as he saw Shuang-shuang.

Shuang-shuang who ate at the canteen near the pig farm knew nothing about the matter in the village canteen. "Whatever's the trouble now?" she asked.

"I simply cannot go on with canteen work any longer," said Hsi-wang shaking his head despondently.

"But you're doing so well. Why do you want to quit all of a sudden? You shouldn't mind hard work or be afraid of offending people." The last sentence forestalled Hsi-wang, who had meant to complain about the difficult position a cook is in and how much he hated refusing people and offending them. However, a moment's thought gave him a new idea.

"You see, dear," he said with a groan, "the smell of cooking nauseates me. It started in the days when I was learning to cook. Even the smell of steamed rolls turns my stomach. I

thought I was cured after all these years. Who would have believed that the hot weather would bring my nausea on again. It's not that I mind work. I'm willing to do even heavier work in the fields, carting manure or ploughing the ground, anything. I just can't stand the steam from those hot rolls. It makes me so sick I can't take a bit of food afterwards."

At sight of Hsi-wang's woebegone face, Shuang-shuang was taken in. "If that's all, you don't have to worry. We'll talk to the Party secretary and ask him to get someone to take your place. You can do some other job. Any work helps the Big Leap."

Picking up his white coat, Hsi-wang thrust it into his wife's hands. "Will you take this to the Party secretary then? Ask him to get someone as my substitute; I have to go to the clinic tomorrow to get something for this ailment."

Unaware of what was behind all this, Shuang-shuang took the coat and went to the brigade office. The Party secretary was there talking to Kuei-ying and Fourth Aunt, the canteen's other two cooks. Shuang-shuang repeated what her husband told her about his ailment. Before she was half-way through, the others started to laugh.

"It's not white rolls that make him sick, Shuang-shuang," said the Party secretary, "but his confused ideas. Here is an 'opinion placard,' someone has written about him." Shuang-shuang looked at the placard. It read:

To Comrade Sun Hsi-wang:

The evening before last, when Sun Yu came to the canteen with a tale about an offering for his dead brother, you used canteen property to prepare five dishes for him. If all the cooks were like you, how could we make a success of our canteen?

For a moment things went black before Shuang-shuang's eyes, she was that angry. "I've been at him day and night to be careful and not give favours. I even thought he'd improved a lot since the Big Leap. But he's still so weak and muddle-headed."

The Party secretary seemed to understand her feelings. He brought her a bench to sit on. "Shuang-shuang, don't be too surprised at what happened," he said with a smile. "Old habits

are strong. We've got to fight against them. We've got to understand where those well-to-do peasants stand. People like Sun Yu not only want to take advantage of the canteen, they'd like to see it dissolved. That's why we must have a clear political stand. As for Hsi-wang, since he doesn't want to continue as cook, let him be. He's too sloppy anyway. Still, we must have a strong hand in the kitchen. The canteen's very important you know. This summer we've got to cope with thousands of *mou* of paddy and we must water them properly if we want a good harvest. We must have a good canteen behind us."

The secretary's words were a spur to Shuang-shuang's enterprising spirit.

"Party secretary, what do you say to my going to work in the canteen?" she asked.

Her proposal was immediately greeted by a clapping of hands. "We've had our eyes on you for a long time," said Kuei-ying. "We'll be delighted to have you."

"Yes, Shuang-shuang is just the person for the canteen," chimed in the other cook. "She won't let anyone impose on her. She's not like Hsi-wang."

At home Hsi-wang was practising happily on his trumpet, following the tune played on the village loudspeaker. Shuang-shuang tossed the white coat on the bed with an angry sweep of the arm.

"Why have you brought it back?" he asked, dropping his trumpet.

"Tell me what is it really that's ailing you?"

"Didn't I tell you it's the steam from fresh rolls?"

"Don't try to fool me. What monkey business were you involved in with Sun Yu?"

Hsi-wang was stunned to find that she already knew everything.

"What have I been telling you?" she demanded. "Still you got yourself into this mess. We should listen to what the Party and Chairman Mao tell us of course, but that's not enough. We must also love the Party and defend the good things it helped us to set up. If anyone tries to sabotage we mustn't be afraid to struggle against him. But how have you stood in this business with Sun Yu?" Then she told him what the Party secretary had

said and about the "opinion placard." Hsi-wang hung his head in shame.

"I guess I am at fault in this," he admitted in the end. "Tell me what I must do now. Perhaps you will write a self-criticism for me and I'll post it up."

"If you think you should criticize yourself, write one yourself. Put down what you've just said."

"Do I have to go back to the canteen tomorrow?" asked Hsi-wang.

"No, don't bother. The secretary says you're too confused politically. They don't want you in the canteen now. The coat is mine. I'm going to work in the canteen."

Hsi-wang was taken aback. "So you are going to take up my work."

"Yes, I am and I shan't be like you."

"That, I'm quite convinced. But what shall I do? Let me work at the pig farm."

"You need a clear political sense at the pig farm too."

"Listen, you mustn't be so short-sighted. A person of seventeen doesn't stay seventeen all his life. Do you think I'm to be a rat's tail always and never change?"

Shuang-shuang smiled at the way Hsi-wang argued and said, "Go on now and write your self-criticism."

5

During her first day at the canteen as head cook, Shuang-shuang showed her colours. Sun Yu, who had been criticized for what had happened between him and Hsi-wang, felt that he had an axe to grind. At breakfast he patted his chest and said to no one in particular, "Really, a cook in a canteen must place his heart fair and square in the right place."

"I don't have to put it anywhere," snapped Shuang-shuang. "It's here already. Anyone who thinks he can impose on the canteen had better get rid of the idea this minute."

The villagers were pleased with her brusque retort. "This time we've got someone really upright and strong in the canteen," they said.



Shuang-shuang got the other cooks together before noon. "We should start a cleanliness campaign here in the canteen. Why don't we get rid of that pile of loose tiles and broken bricks out in the yard, whitewash the walls and make the place look nice and tidy? What do you say?"

Everyone was in favour but the superintendent, Chin-chiao said, "They're so busy in the fields, where will we get extra hands to help us?"

"We won't ask for extra hands. We'll do our cooking during the day and the cleaning at night. We can get it done in a couple of evenings."

"I have to do the accounts at night," said Chin-chiao.

"If you're busy, we'll do it by ourselves. It only means getting a little less sleep for a couple of nights."

"I don't mind turning in late at all," said Kuei-ying. "The folks in the fields often work quite late when they are trying to finish a rush job. Why shouldn't we?"

As all the cooks were very enthusiastic, Chin-chiao had to agree. "This pile of bricks and tiles belongs to my dad. He's been saving them to build a new house. Since you want to tidy the place, move them into our northern yard."

"Good," said Shuang-shuang. "Just show us where to dump them."

That night after the dishes were washed, the women set to work. With baskets and carrying-poles they moved the bricks and tiles, working until cock-crow when the whole pile was stowed away. The second night, Shuang-shuang got two loads of lime from the commune kiln and two vats, and she tied strands of flax into big brushes. They set to whitewashing the walls. Two more nights of hard work and the canteen yard was transformed.

Then they began work in the kitchen. Everything movable was taken out and washed and the kitchen was thoroughly cleaned. From pots and pans down to the work shelves—everything was scrubbed until not a speck of dust could be found. The Party secretary was very pleased when he came in.

"It's true indeed that work can solve anything. Your few nights of work have changed the whole appearance of the canteen."

"We want to be known as the cleanest canteen in the commune. I guarantee we won't let a single fly or rat remain alive. Oh yes, we would also like some gauze to cover the pots and vats."

"The gauze is easy to get. But I hope you'll really do a thorough clean-up. Don't let what happened last time occur again. Visitors had come to admire our canteen and I was just telling them proudly how we've got rid of all the rats when a big one scurried out from under that *kang*."

"You mean that one?" asked Shuang-shuang pointing to a broken-down old bed of mud brick covered with old canisters and jugs.

"Yes, that very one," said the Party secretary.

"Don't you worry," said Shuang-shuang. "We'll go all out another night; we'll break up that useless old *kang* and remove it."

That evening Shuang-shuang and the others began digging at the *kang*. The previous nights, when they were cleaning the yard and the kitchen, Chin-chiao had sat in his little room clicking his abacus beads; he did not come out to give a hand. But tonight when he heard the women digging at the *kang* he rushed to them in agitation.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

"We're digging out the rats. There are big ones in there," muttered Shuang-shuang, busily wielding her spade.

"Stop," said Chin-chiao, "there aren't any rats in there."

But the women did not believe him and went on with their task. Seeing that they were tackling the job in earnest, Chin-chiao, worried, took the pickaxe out of Kuei-ying's hands.

"Step aside," he said. "Let me do it. You women have no strength."

Chin-chiao didn't dig into the middle of the *kang* but worked gingerly along the edge.

"Why do you just make gentle little thrusts, Chin-chiao?" asked Shuang-shuang. "Are you afraid of scaring the rats?"

"Aw, there couldn't be any rats in there," said Chin-chiao.

"Don't stand in the way then," said Shuang-shuang and she sank her pickaxe deeper into the *kang*. However, the more earth she dug up the more spadefuls Chin-chiao put back. Shuang-shuang was annoyed and with a few powerful thrusts stuck the pickaxe further into the *kang*. There was a sharp clang of metal and Shuang-shuang's hands felt numb from the impact.

"What's that?" cried Shuang-shuang and Kuei-ying at the same time.

"Nothing," said Chin-chiao, beads of sweat bursting out on his forehead. "Probably just a piece of broken tile."

Shuang-shuang saw now that something was fishy. "Monster or devil, we'll get rid of it the way we are getting rid of the four pests." She and the other women dug with more vigour than ever. They scraped off the earth, removed the top and uncovered a Liberation brand water-wheel hidden in the *kang*.

Chin-chiao paled at the sight. This was a water-wheel which his family had hidden when they joined the co-operative in its

early days.* It had remained in the *kang* these few years. The canteen had moved into the empty rooms so quickly that Sun Yu had not had time to put the water-wheel somewhere else.

"Why is the water-wheel here under your *kang*, Chin-chiao?" asked Shuang-shuang.

"I have no idea," said Chin-chiao. "My father has lots of friends. Perhaps one of them left it here."

It was then nearly four in the morning. Shuang-shuang saw that she couldn't get an answer out of him and suggested, "Don't let's bother about whom it belongs to. We'll leave it here for the time being. Tomorrow we'll report this to the brigade office. Let's turn in now, it's getting late."

All returned to their homes.

Shuang-shuang found Hsi-wang sound asleep. Afraid to disturb him, she lay down on the edge of the bed without bothering to undress. Before she had had time to fall asleep, someone whispered under the window, "Hsi-wang, Hsi-wang!" Shuang-shuang recognized the voice of old Sun Yu but she said nothing. After a while Hsi-wang woke up.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"It's me, I've something important to tell you," answered Sun Yu.

With a groan and a curse, Hsi-wang got up, went out and unlatched the front gate. Shuang-shuang could hear Sun Yu whispering for quite some time but his words were not intelligible. Hsi-wang's voice was quite distinct as he said in a decided tone, "No, I can't do it. I've made up my mind to have a clear political stand. I won't bother with you."

"Hsi-wang, we have the same surname," Sun Yu pleaded. "We're probably relatives. Once this becomes known, I'll really lose face. It's like this. . . ." Shuang-shuang couldn't hear what came next, but soon Hsi-wang's voice rose sharply, "What do you mean — when the day comes again we two will share the water-wheel? Why do you hang on so desperately to your private

*When peasants joined the agricultural co-operatives they turned in their larger farm implements for which they received either money payment or additional shares in the harvest. Some of the wealthy peasants were secretly opposed to co-operation and were reluctant to do anything to help.

property? It's really time you gave your head a spring cleaning. The two of us don't go the same way, I can see. Get out of here now. You'd better not rouse Shuang-shuang, I can tell you that!"

"All right, don't say any more," said Sun Yu placatingly. "I'll turn in the water-wheel."

Shuang-shuang wanted to giggle as she listened to her husband. But she couldn't hear everything Sun Yu said. She opened her eyes when Hsi-wang returned.

"Who was that?" she asked.

"Old Sun Yu."

"What does he want with you?"

Hsi-wang hedged and stammered before he said, "Anyway, I've driven him off so you just go back to sleep." To Hsi-wang the whole matter could be dropped since Sun Yu was gone. What did it matter what Sun Yu said as long as he wasn't going along with him?

But Shuang-shuang sat up. "What did he say anyway?"

Though Hsi-wang had every intention of keeping the matter to himself, a few more questions from Shuang-shuang dragged the truth out of him. "Sun Yu said that if you promise to say nothing about that water-wheel you dug out of the *kang*, he's sure the others will keep quiet too. When the day comes that we need tools of our own, he'll share it with us. . . ."

Shuang-shuang did not wait for him to finish. Throwing off the quilt, she jumped out of bed. "The old rascal wants to go backwards and take the old capitalist road, eh?" So saying she rushed towards the door.

"Where are you going?" asked Hsi-wang.

"I'm off to look for him," said Shuang-shuang, buttoning her coat as she hurried out.

"What a temper," Hsi-wang said with a sigh. "She flares up quicker than a lit squib."

Shuang-shuang did not find Sun Yu at his house, so she went straight to Uncle Chin, the Party secretary, who had just returned from an inspection of the rice fields with several others, though it was barely daybreak. When he and the other people heard Shuang-shuang's report they were all angry with the old middle peasant who had kept his private property back.

"He told us he'd sold his water-wheel," said someone, "when he first joined the co-op a few years ago. But he went and buried it in the *kang*."

"The villagers can learn a good lesson from him," said the Party secretary. "When we said his kind would want to go the old way, quite a few people refused to believe it. This time we'll let everybody discuss the matter and see for themselves what kind of ideas these well-to-do middle peasants have. What's more, that Chin-chiao, though he's young, is also full of selfish ideas. We must help him take the proper road in life."

6

After Shuang-shuang became head cook in the Sun Village canteen, the work there improved quickly. The villagers were pleased with the food. Sun Yu was given a proper talking to and he sold the water-wheel to the commune.

At this time the county Party committee was calling on the canteens to mechanize their work and so it was decided that the water-wheel should be put at the disposal of the Sun Village canteen. The water-wheel was put up over the well. Two long pipes which were attached to it led to the water-vats in the kitchen. And so there was running water for the canteen.

This initial success showed that the key lay in improving the kitchen implements. The women became bolder and soon turned out two vegetable choppers and a rice rinsers. Later, Shuang-shuang who happened to visit the commune hospital was struck by the insulated food box there which kept rice piping hot for some time. Imitating it, she made two carts with food boxes to take rice or noodles to the people working in the fields. In another fortnight practically all the work in the kitchen was lightened and speeded up by simple mechanical devices.

At a meeting held after Spring Festival to examine the work of the commune's canteens, the title of Red Flag Canteen was conferred on Shuang-shuang's kitchen while she herself won the title of model worker.

It was early spring. The blossoming peach trees outside the village were like pink clouds in the March sunshine. Young wil-

lows swayed softly by the roadside shaking their golden tendrils and tossing off downy catkin.

In the bumper-crop wheat field water gurgling through the irrigation ditches harmonized with the gay laughter and chatter floating above the dewy green wheat, which was already knee-high.

Every morning, wheeling her insulated carts, Shuang-shuang brought food to a clearing under a big willow tree. She waved her towel as a signal to the people at work, and was soon surrounded.

"Sister Shuang-shuang, what have you for us today?" asked one young lad.

"Shuang-shuang's cooking is always good. For one thing, the food's absolutely clean. You can eat it with your eyes closed."

Shuang-shuang served piping hot noodles and pancakes and fondly watched the villagers tuck them away, happy that her work and the efforts of the others in the canteen were helping to produce the golden wheat and lush rice that meant so much to the country.

*Translated by Tang Sheng
Illustrations by Li Hu*

TANG KEH-HSIN

The First Lesson

The new Party secretary was going to speak at the opening ceremony of the "Red-and-Expert" Night School* that evening. So the workshops were empty less than half an hour after work stopped.

But in the cloak-room of the maintenance section someone had stayed behind. He was talking to himself and gesticulating like an inexperienced actor rehearsing a difficult part.

"Students! Our 'Red-and-Expert' Night School is starting today." He made an effort to disguise his dialect and speak "standard" Chinese. "I want to say something about the maintenance work of this section. I, myself, don't know much in this field. . . ."

He stopped abruptly and shook his head. "No, that sounds awkward. . . . First 'I' and then 'myself'. . . ."

Clearing his throat, he went on: "I don't know much in this field. I am actually very limited in my understanding. . . ."

Tang Keh-hsin was born in Wusih, Kiangsu, in 1928. Coming from a worker's family, he had two years only of formal schooling before becoming an apprentice at the age of thirteen. After the liberation of Shanghai in 1949, the Party gave him a chance for further study. In 1952 he wrote a sketch of a worker's life, *Spring in the Workshop*, which was well received. He has written a number of short stories, most of them describing the changed life of workers in New China.

* A kind of school attached to public organizations and factories to train their members to become politically advanced and professionally competent.



The last sentence struck him as too artificial, but he couldn't think of a better way of putting it. He looked again into the mirror on the wall and saw a round-faced lad with dark eyes under straight eye-brows, a short nose, full lips and downy cheeks. The sight depressed him. That boy in the mirror bore no resemblance to a teacher.

"How can a kid like you teach?" He made a face at his reflection. "Heaven help us!"

He was a very ordinary person, far too ordinary, he thought. In his short life he had never

distinguished himself or achieved anything remarkable. His father had been a worker in this textile mill too. But owing to the bosses' disregard of safety precautions he had died in an accident two years before liberation, leaving Little Wu, aged twelve, with his blind mother. Neither of them was capable of earning a living. But some of his father's friends had finally got him into the textile mill. He spent the whole day in a grease-stained overall, crawling in and out of the machines with his oilcan. Soon everybody called him Little Oiler. After liberation, he was transferred to the repair group. When the quick method of learning characters was brought to the mill, he enrolled in the first batch of students and was one of the first workers to rid himself of illiteracy. He went on studying until he finished the junior middle-school course. Like a blind man who is suddenly given sight, he was fascinated by the wonders around him. The world was full of marvels. "Why didn't I know that before?" he often wondered. He developed an insatiable appetite for knowledge. After finishing the junior middle-school course, he entered the spare-time secondary technical school. His work improved enormously too, till he became a sixth-grade worker. But all this happened so naturally that he was hardly conscious of the change. He still felt that he was the same Little Oiler. It was beyond his wildest

dreams that one day he would be asked to teach in the "Red-and-Expert" Night School. It had sounded like a joke when the dean came to him with the request. Not till an invitation on red paper was given him did he realize that they were in earnest.

"Little Wu. . . Hey! Haven't you finished making up yet? The meeting is starting."

Roused by the voice of his friend and assistant, Little Chin, he answered without turning round:

"It's easy for you to talk, but I'm scared stiff. I've this class at 6:15 and no time to prepare for it."

"Nonsense. You've been practising here every day in your spare time." Little Chin mimicked him: "'Students! Today. . . ' If you weren't preparing, you were carrying on like a lunatic."

Older workers claimed that the sun would rise from the west on the day that this pair of boisterous lads kept quiet. Yet today Little Wu paid no attention to his friend as he locked his cupboard and walked out, with Little Chin tagging after him, joking:

"Well, well! How high and mighty we've become!"

Usually Little Wu wouldn't have taken this. But today, as a teacher, he felt he must stand on his dignity.

The meeting had started by the time they arrived. The hall was very quiet. The speaker's voice struck Little Wu immediately. It was a pleasant voice and strangely familiar. When he looked at the platform he had the surprise of his life. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. No, there was no mistake. He stood rooted to the ground in astonishment.

"Say, Little Wu, isn't that our old friend Chu?" asked Little Chin, as loudly as if they were alone.

People threw them reproachful glances which neither of them noticed. Someone tugged at Little Chin's jacket and said:

"Don't make such a noise. You're disturbing everyone."

They quickly found seats.

"Who's that on the platform?" Little Wu whispered to his neighbour.

"Our new Party secretary." The other kept his eyes on the speaker.

"What's his name?"

"Chu Ping."

"There you are!" said Little Chin triumphantly. "I knew it!"

A fortnight earlier the personnel department had sent members of the administrative staff down for a short period of practical experience with the workers. One had come to Little Wu's repair team. He was a thin man of around forty, a northerner judging by his accent, with a gaunt, kindly face. He had clever hands and got the hang of things quickly. Little Wu took to him at once and soon they were fast friends.

The newcomer called him Old Wu at first, to everyone's amusement. Then he changed this to Foreman Wu. Of course, Little Wu was in charge of the team, but no one had ever addressed him as foreman before. It made him feel very uncomfortable.

"Just call me Little Wu," he said.

"But it's only right for me to call you foreman."

"I don't see anything right about it."

So Old Chu had to call him Little Wu.

Old Chu could see that Little Wu was straightforward and a skilful worker, with plenty of dodges up his sleeve. For example, even his oilcan and tool box were handier than anyone else's. But when Old Chu said that he had the makings of an inventor, Little Wu replied that he tried these things out for fun. It was then the autumn of 1958, when the Big Leap was in full swing, and the spinning and weaving departments speeded up their output remarkably within one month. This put great pressure on the preparatory room. Its winding frames were already working at a high speed. And its inadequate equipment made further acceleration almost impossible. This was holding up the weavers. Despite various experiments and improvements, they hadn't yet solved this problem.

"Is there really nothing we can do?" Old Chu asked Little Wu.

"Of course not! Get rid of those confounded winding frames."

"Can you do without them?"

"Sure! Just skip that process!"

It did seem to Old Chu that certain processes in the preparatory room duplicated each other. "That's a good idea." He took Little Wu at his word. "Why don't you raise it?"

"Act your age!" Little Wu smiled bitterly. "Don't believe whatever you're told. I was only joking. If it could really be skipped, they wouldn't wait for the Little Oiler to say so."

He told Old Chu that he had made the suggestion at a meeting sponsored by the chief engineer. But it was rejected immediately. He was informed that the men who invented the machines a hundred years ago had thought all these things out. The winding frames were indispensable. This had let him in for a good deal of chaffing afterwards. "You were born a hundred years late, Little Wu!" and so forth.

"How can the men of a hundred years ago compare with us?" Old Chu encouraged him. "Engineers aren't always right. Because they consider something hopeless doesn't mean that we can't tackle it. Sometimes they should learn from us workers too!"

"All we can teach them is the working-class outlook," protested Little Wu.

"No, they can learn technique, production and management from workers too. And that applies not only to engineers, but to the director, department chiefs and heads of workshops. . . ."

"That's simply a way of talking. . . ." Little Wu remained unconvinced. "I can tell you with my eyes shut how many oil-holes each machine has and the function of each spare part. . . . But that's all. . . ."

"Well, that makes you an expert," said Old Chu cheerfully.

Little Wu burst out laughing. "An expert! I like that. . . . If you were director, no doubt you'd make me chief engineer!"

"I can't guarantee that." Old Chu grinned. "In the first place, it's not the director's job to appoint a chief engineer. In the second, if you all become engineers, am I to be the only worker left? As a matter of fact, it makes no difference whether you're an engineer, a director or a worker except that you have different responsibilities. That's all!"

"No difference?" Little Wu disagreed. "Could you or I solve the big problems of the mill? Of course we must leave those to the director and engineers. . . ."

"That's a mistake!" A clear voice brought Little Wu back to earth with a start. He raised his head. The Party secretary was speaking hotly:

"That's a fallacy, my friends! Whom should we depend on? We should depend on the masses, the seven thousand and more cadres and workers of our mill. We can solve not only small problems but big ones too. We shall not only introduce one or two technical innovations but start a whole technical revolution in industry, because we are a liberated people. Besides being the masters of the political power, we are masters of culture, science and technique. . . ."

"Well said!" thought Little Wu. He had heard these ideas differently expressed, but had never taken them to heart.

"Hear that?" Little Chin nudged him. "The Party secretary was talking about you!"

"What did he say?" demanded Little Wu.

"He didn't mention your name. But he said he'd had a good foreman. He learned many things besides technique from him."

"Anything else?"

Before Little Chin could say more, applause burst out. The meeting had ended. People surged out of the hall and the two lads followed.

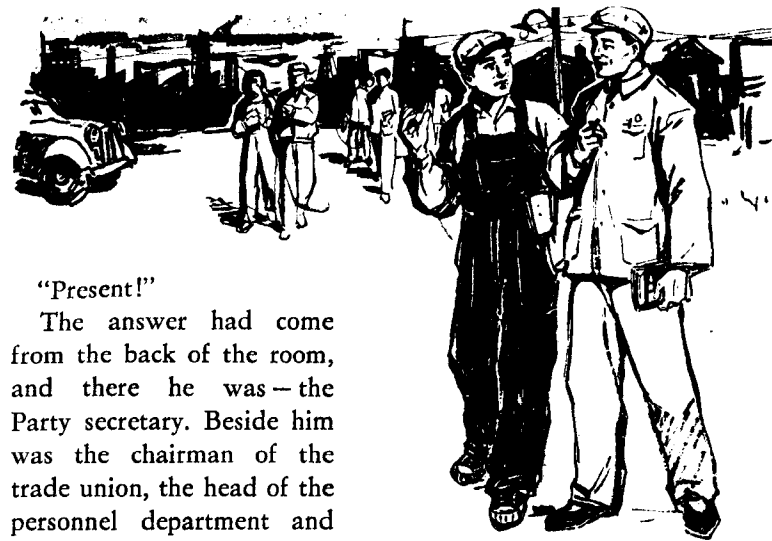
By the time Little Wu had collected his notes the bell had rung.

"Don't be afraid! You've been tackling machines since you were a kid, you've lived with them for more than ten years, you know them as well as your own hands and feet. And you've been through the spare-time technical school too, so you have rich practical experience as well as theory. Besides, the students are all from our own works. . . ." Although the dean had helped him to prepare his notes and encouraged him time and again with such words, it was no good. His heart was pounding with excitement and nervousness. His hands were trembling. . . .

The students were sitting in good order in the classroom. As he walked in, somebody called: "Attention!" Then they saluted him smartly. He was so embarrassed that he didn't know what to do. He glanced desperately around. But all his mind registered was Little Chin in the front row. . . .

"Don't hurry. Start slowly. . . ." Remembering the dean's advice, he pulled himself together to call the roll. But suddenly a name stunned him.

"Chu - Ping."



"Present!"

The answer had come from the back of the room, and there he was - the Party secretary. Beside him was the chairman of the trade union, the head of the personnel department and other members of the Party committee.

"Half an hour ago I was listening with thousands of others to his report. Yet here he is now as my student!"

As this thought flashed through his mind, it gave him a new insight into the world around him and his own place in it. His pulse quickened. He forgot his carefully prepared opening remarks. Sure, now, what he had to say, he began in a voice quivering slightly with emotion:

"Comrades, there's no need for me to introduce myself. You all know the Little Oiler. Yes, in the past I crawled under machines all day and slept on the streets at night. I lived like a dog. I never entered a school, I never studied for a single day, I couldn't walk where I pleased like other people. . . . But today, I've not only finished secondary school - I'm here on this platform as a teacher. And sitting in this room are my work-mates, the Party secretary, the chairman of the trade union. These men are my leaders and my good comrades too. . . ."

He was so worked up that hot tears ran down his cheeks. Not a sound was heard in the classroom. The others, much moved, were watching him approvingly. His eyes travelled to the back row where the Party secretary was smiling encouragingly, as if to say: "Well done!"

The first lesson was about the general theory of the preparation process. He conducted the class successfully, surprised himself by his own fluency and grasp of the material.

He left the last ten minutes for questions.

The first to stand up was the Party secretary.

"Winding and warping are more or less the same. Why can't we skip the winding and have the warps prepared directly from the ring bobbins?"

That question again! Little Wu flushed. He had thought this over before. The main problem was the piercing and tension of the yarn. But Chinese workers of the twentieth century who had all power in their hands could surely solve the problem of end breakage with the aid of twentieth century science.

"Yes, I'm sure we can skip it," he said confidently.

When Little Wu left the classroom, he felt like a grown man with serious responsibilities.

"Comrade Wu, when can we start studying how to dispense with the winding process?" Old Chu had caught up with him.

"Tomorrow," answered Little Wu without hesitation.

"Are you going to form a group? If so, count me in."

"What, will you be coming again?" blurted out Little Wu.

"Why not?" Old Chu laughed. "That was only the first lesson."

Talking, they walked together towards the hostel. . . .

Translated by Yu Fan-chin

Illustrations by Shu Lan

Holiday by Chiang Chung-hsing→

The artist is a young man in his twenties. He made this oil painting of nursery children while staying in a people's commune.





Anecdotes of the Long March

The following are some anecdotes about the great historical Long March, which the Chinese Red Army undertook in order to advance north to resist Japanese imperialist aggression. The valiant fighters broke through a cordon of reactionary Kuomintang forces and set out on the long journey westward from Juikin of Kiangsi Province in Central China, in October 1934. It took them through the most difficult terrain, including snow-covered mountains and swampy grasslands where they could get no food, sometimes not even wild herbs. But the heroes of the Red Army after overcoming countless difficulties in October 1936 completed their 25,000-*li* march through eleven provinces, from Kiangsi to Shensi in the north. These sketches printed below are true accounts written by men who took part in the Long March.

WU HSIEN-EN

* Crossing the Tangling Mountains

When we came to the foot of the Tangling Mountains,* headquarters ordered us of the supply department to reach the other side before half past two the following afternoon, to prepare food for the troops.

* A mountain range between Szechuan and Sikang, beside the Chialing River.

At three o'clock in the morning, we made a "hearty" breakfast off two-thirds of our grain ration — less than six ounces a head — boiled with wild vegetables. At half past three, we set out by the light of the fading moon and stars. The vanguard battalion took the lead, followed by the light casualties on horseback and the stretcher teams carrying the seriously wounded. We marched in single file up the winding mountain path, over sharp stones which pierced right through our straw sandals.

A cold wind blowing by fits and starts from the valley lashed dust into our faces and warned us that a storm was brewing. We should have to race to cross the mountain in time. For delay would not only mean spending a night with empty bellies in the wind and snow, but failure in our mission. I kept taking out my watch to estimate our speed and urging the men to make haste. It was the time, though, that went faster and faster, while our advance became slower and slower. The men's legs refused to obey them. Their swollen feet seemed weighted with lead. Every step cost a superhuman effort.

This was not astonishing, because in a month's hard marching we had not had a single square meal or one night's good sleep. The men drowsed off as they walked. They kept transferring the packs over their shoulders and the sticks in their hands from one side to another — even a pannikin felt as if it weighed a thousand cattiees. The stretcher-bearers had the worst of it, for though their shoulders were red and sore they had to take care not to tilt the stretchers and watch the path ahead of them like hawks.

When next I took out my watch to check the time, Political Commissar Chang was winding his. There was a glint of satisfaction in his eyes. Crossing this mountain would mean victory. Every step was taking us closer to victory.

Suddenly a stir went through the ranks ahead. Then bad news was passed back: A storm had risen on the mountain!

In no time, a gigantic pillar of dust shot up from behind the mountain to shade the sun. The wind, howling like a raging beast, flung snow and gravel into our faces. Linking hands, our men dropped to the ground. The pannikins on our backs clanged under the onslaught of the sand. Darkness fell, though it was noon.

A messenger from our vanguard panted up to tell us that the storm had swept a number of men into the gully. We were forced to give the order to encamp.

After dark the wind abated by degrees. We lit fires and set about boiling water for the wounded, changing their dressings, or drying clothes soaked by sweat. The horses started nibbling at the bark of trees before their grooms had time to fetch branches and grass. We killed two horses and gave the flesh to the casualties, the hide and bones to the staff. We kept our small store of grain for the next day's breakfast, to give us energy to cross the summit.

Before setting out we had heard that a wind on this mountain was invariably followed by a snow-storm. Now a heavy snow-fall began.

Late that night the political commissar and I made the round of the sleeping men. The snow was even heavier now, the trees were hung with icicles more than a foot long, many fires had been extinguished by the snow, and some of our men were buried in it as they slept. We lost no time in making sure that the casualties were safe and searching for the men buried in snow-drifts.

After this inspection, we returned to our tent. The political commissar had never been robust. Now his breath was coming in gasps, his face and neck were red with exertion. I patted his back, bent by twenty-seven gruelling years as a hired hand, till after a while his breathing became more regular.

"Old Wu!" He smiled and threw another branch on to our dying fire. "I doubt if there's a painter in the world who could paint such a magnificent snow-scene." He harked back to the heavy snow-fall there had been one night when he was working for the landlord. While he lay shivering in the stable, unable to sleep for the cold, the landlord had ordered him to cover his horses with quilts. "But that's ancient history," he said. "Let's come back to the present. Today's report showed another fifteen stretcher-bearers lost — we're up against it, all right. And tomorrow will be even more critical. In this deep snow we shan't be able to tell where the path ends and the precipice begins!"

We were discussing the climb of the following day, when we heard a voice behind us: "Department chief! Political com-



missar!" We turned and saw a man swathed in bandages crawling painfully towards us. His legs, outside the tent, were deep in the snow. With an effort, he raised his head. By the gleam of the fire we recognized Battalion Commander Chang.

We made haste to carry him in, and propped him up between us by the fire.

I could not fathom what had brought him, so seriously wounded, through the snow in the dead of night.

He gazed from sunken eyes at each of us in turn. "I heard what you just said. . . . We all know the position. I've thought it over, and you must leave us here!" To forestall any objection, he added quickly: "For the sake of the revolution!"

"Every man in the Red Army is a seed of revolution. We can't abandon you!" The political commissar was racked by coughing.

"I've thought this out. To preserve our revolutionary strength. . . ." He broke off to grit his teeth in agony as the sweat poured down his face. Roughly wiping it off, he panted: "I've thought it all out. We've been carried all the way through Szechuan, adding so much to our men's burden. How many have

lost their lives because of us? . . . I'm not going to see my comrades dying for me. You must live on . . . to finish the revolution!" His eyes slowly closed.

We called his name, but he was gone.

Big flakes of snow were still falling. The fire had nearly flickered out.

When the long dark night was over and we had buried our comrade-in-arms, we set off again. Though the commissar was desperately weak, by dint of a tremendous effort he continued to lead the way. Whenever we reached a steep and treacherous slope, he would wave to us to slow down. "Steady there, men! Carefully does it!" His directions were punctuated by violent coughing.

When we came to the foot of the cliff where our vanguard had camped the day before, we found frozen corpses in the snow. Among them was an arm with a clenched fist projecting from a drift. Prizing apart the stiff fingers, we discovered a Party membership card and a silver dollar. On the card was written: "Liu Chih-hai, member of the Chinese Communist Party, admitted in March 1933."

Taking the card and the silver dollar, I bowed my head and breathed: "Rest in peace, Comrade Chih-hai! I shall give your card and your last membership fee to the Party."

The commissar stood on the edge of the cliff, inspecting every stretcher that passed by. When our casualties saw him in such a dangerous position, his concern for them in spite of his own weakness moved some of them to tears. The stretcher-bearers said: "Don't worry, commissar! We guarantee to carry out our mission!"

Our troops moved forward in an endless file, while the commissar stood on the height braving the icy wind. Between fits of coughing he encouraged the men, though every word took a fearful toll of his strength.

"Go all out, comrades! Forward! Forward!"

His hoarse voice was silenced abruptly as he slumped down in the snow. His orderly cried wildly: "Commissar! Wake up!"

Slowly he opened his eyes and focussed them on the men round him, the troops inching forward. He struggled to his feet. "Go on!" He managed to smile. "I'm done for, comrades. . . . The people of all China are waiting. . . ." He turned and pressed his face to the orderly's cheek. Then, staggering to me, he wrung my hand. The next moment he had fallen lifeless. . . .

We dug a trench in the snow and with tears in our eyes we buried him. I wound up the watch he had left, and marched on into the teeth of the north wind in the footsteps of my comrades. Each man of us was determined to overcome all difficulties in our path, confident that victory lay just ahead.

CHIANG YAO-HUEI

A Pair of Cloth Shoes

We had come to the foot of the Snowy Mountain. The local people called this the Fairy Mountain, meaning that not even birds — only immortals — could fly over it. But Chairman Mao said the Fairy Mountain was nothing to be afraid of. Our Red Army should have the pluck to compete with immortals, and this mountain had to be crossed. That boosted our morale.

Before the climb started, the high command ruled that each man must have two pairs of shoes and take good care of his feet — this order must be strictly carried out.

Apart from the straw sandals I was wearing, I had a pair of cloth shoes tied to my belt. I took these off and weighed them in my hand. They reminded me of a song popular in the Soviet area in Kiangsi:

Seeing my love off to the front,
I give him the shoes I've made,
Embroidered with the words:
Long live the Red Army!

This song carried me back to the time when we left the Soviet area. We were all very sorry to be leaving the local people who were dearer to us than our own flesh and blood. And they felt the same way about us. When they heard that we were going, they came early in the morning to say goodbye, bringing all sorts of presents. One old man caught hold of me and thrust a pair of cloth shoes into my hand. They were sturdy shoes, and on them were stitched the words: "For Our Red Army Fighters. Kill the Japanese Invaders!" The old man's lips quivered for a minute before he could say: "Take these shoes, son. On the feet of a Red Army man, these shoes will be 'seven-league boots' to carry you as far or as high as you want to go."

I took to carrying these shoes at my belt, and never let them out of my sight. In time of difficulty, they gave me fresh courage to advance against the enemy.

In one battle, I remember, my foot was hit. We had no drugs in those days and no stretchers either. I just had to limp along on my bad foot. When I was near the end of my tether, I unfastened the shoes from my belt and put them on for the first time. The soft soles felt wonderful! And the thought of the trust placed in us by the people of the Soviet area made me forget my pain. Before long my wound healed, and since the soles of these shoes were wearing thin I didn't like to keep them on. I wrapped them up and tied them to my belt again.

In the storming of Tsunyi, our company led the attack. When the battle was at its height, I felt a sudden pain at my waist and found that a bullet had gone through these shoes and grazed my skin beneath. If not for the shoes, it would have been a nasty



Four Needles

wound. The other fellows congratulated me on owning a pair of "life-saving shoes." But though I was pleased not to have been wounded, I was sorry because there was a big hole in my shoes. After this, I kept them more carefully than ever.

Now we had to climb the Snowy Mountain. Well, we in the Red Army all had "seven-league boots." They had brought us all the way from Juikin in Kiangsi to the province of Szechuan. Today they'd carry us across this mountain which even birds couldn't fly over.

It was barely dawn when we started the ascent. Above, all we could see was mist—the mountain top was lost in the clouds. As we went higher the weather changed: a blizzard sprang up. Coming from Kiangsi, I had seldom seen such heavy snow and I was tickled by the scene around us. However, the going became rougher and rougher, and hailstones as big as eggs started crashing down. Our thin uniforms were no protection against the raging wind which cut like a knife, not to speak of the hailstones. I lost my interest in the snow as I panted along, so exhausted that each step cost a fearful effort. We dared not stop to rest, though. I saw three men stop and huddle together to warm themselves, but they never got up again. Tears stung my eyes to think of them swallowed up by the snow.

I was a gunner, and the forty-five-catty gun on my shoulder made climbing very hard. I strained forward step by step, treading in the footprints which seemed like a ladder in the snow. Numb with cold, I fell several times, but whenever I looked at the cloth shoes on my feet my heart warmed—the people of the Soviet area were helping me along.

When finally we had crossed the Snowy Mountain, I sat down under a tree at its foot and inspected my "seven-league boots." I hated to see what a mess they looked, coated with ice and slush. But luckily, apart from the bullet-hole, they were still intact. I whipped them off, scraped off the mud and tied them to my belt again. Then we went on.

When we encamped after several days of marching, we were faced with a difficult task. Within the next twenty days, before we crossed the grasslands, each of us was to make six pairs of sandals, three of straw and three of oxhide, three pairs of socks, one sheepskin jacket, a pair of sheepskin gloves and a fur cap with ear-flaps. We were also to sew the uniforms previously cut out and given to us. That stumped us, for we had no needles. We could not borrow any either, for the Tibetans in this region had all run away, deceived by the reactionaries' propaganda. By making a thorough search of all pockets and packs, our company succeeded in finding four needles altogether. At once these four needles became the most prized possessions of more than a hundred of us. Whether we could accomplish our mission or not in good time depended on our use and care of these needles.

Our three platoons were given one needle each, while the fourth was used by company headquarters and the cooks. At a



special meeting, our company commander and instructor impressed on us the need to take good care of these needles. Whenever one man started sewing, others would remind him: "Be careful now! Don't break it!"

Unfortunately, accidents always happen when you can least afford them. On the fifth day, the Fifth Platoon leader, Kao Wentsai, was sewing a sheepskin jacket. Because the skin was so thick, he pressed too hard — and the needle snapped. With his unfinished jacket in his hands and his face glistening with sweat, he stamped his foot and cried: "Now what's to be done?" The men were aghast to see the broken needle sticking out of the sheepskin. Their cheerfulness suddenly changed into gloom.

With one needle less, our sewing slowed down. Then the company commander sent us up the mountain to collect pine branches, and while the others were sleeping at night we sewed by the light of the pine branches with the three remaining needles till dawn.

We were extra careful now, especially if we were sewing thick sheepskins. At every stitch we were on tenterhooks. If we broke another needle, we'd be letting the whole company down.

By sewing day and night in this way, our company finally succeeded in finishing its preparations for crossing the grasslands on time.

LI MING

Poles

After days of forced marches, our regiment reached Mahopa on the border of the marshland. Because our men were tired out and we had to make preparations to cross the grassland, we encamped here for three days.

Before we set out again, division headquarters ordered everyone to provide himself with a long pole, which we did.

On the fourth day before dawn our regiment was ready to go. Rows of poles could be seen between our ranks like a newly planted forest not yet in leaf. The propaganda teams in each company were cheering and singing. Regiment Commander Chou Tao-cheng reviewed us, making a special inspection of our poles.

But despite the order from division headquarters and the regiment commander's explanation of the need for these poles, we didn't pay serious attention to them. For none of us knew the difficulties that lay ahead and the special features of the marshland. Indeed, all we had heard about this region sounded rather far-fetched and unreal. So during the first day's march, quite a few of the poles got broken. When we were climbing the Chiung-lai Mountains, some of the weaker men shortened them to use as walking-sticks or as shoulder poles; some even threw them away, unwilling to add to the weight of their rifles, equipment and rations.

Our first view of the marshland was unforgettable. As we climbed over the mountain top an endless expanse of green stretched out before us. Some men shouted: "We've reached the plain!" Some exclaimed: "What a big plain to find in the mountains! Amazing! There must be people living here. They may grow rice." Little did we know that this green plain, seemingly so vast and beautiful, was full of unexpected perils. No men lived here, no rice was grown here. There were not even many birds and beasts.

The day dawned fair, but at noon it started to pour with rain and the temperature dropped rapidly. Our clothes and packs were soon wet through, and we had to wade more than thirty times across a swift-rushing, winding stream. Though not wide, this little torrent was quite deep, and even in summer it was icy cold. Some of the weaker men fell ill after this. Some even died there.

After the downpour, the sun slowly emerged again. Before darkness fell, regiment headquarters issued the order to encamp. This was the first time we had pitched camp on the marshland.

The officers assigned places to different battalions, telling us to pick the high ground which was relatively dry and to rig up tents with our sheets and poles as a protection against rain or hail. This came as a shock to those who had thrown their poles away. What would they use to prop up their tents? There was not a single tree in the whole region. We had no experience either in making tents or in tying together sheets of different sizes. So that night many of us failed to erect any shelter and slept exposed to the storm, with the result that all our belongings were drenched.

The days went by. When our clothes were soaked by the rain we dried them with our own warmth, but soon we were wet through again. Our officers and the Party committee urged us to use all possible ingenuity to surmount our difficulties, to ensure us leaving the grassland safe and sound. Bitter experience taught us the value of our poles, which were put to an increasing number of uses.

We used them to prop up our tents. A few men in each squad pooled sheets of different sizes and poles of different lengths, so that when we came to camp we need lose no time in fixing up tents, digging trenches and collecting rushes to cover the ground. We evolved various types of tent. There were triangular tents made with three poles and a sheet, tents with a big sheet draped over a pole and propped up by four others, long tents made of a perpendicular pole supporting a horizontal pole to which was fastened one end of a sheet, the other being moored to the ground. To make adequate, big tents, our men contributed their largest and strongest sheets. Some even gave the striped sheets and gay coverlets captured from the enemy. So our camp was a cluster of tents of every shape and colour, which looked from a distance like wild flowers blooming in the green grassland.

The poles were used to make umbrellas too. On the marshland in summer clouds often appear without warning and the rain pelts down. A handful of our men had straw hats, but most of us had no protection against rain. So by fastening two branches crosswise on a pole and tying a piece of cloth over it, we improvised an umbrella.

The poles served as walking-sticks too. The marshland was dotted with pools covered by rushes. These looked narrow enough

to leap over, but in fact they were often very wide and deep, and anyone who fell in might easily drown. So we used our poles as sounding-rods to find the depth of these pools. They kept us out of danger and saved us considerable energy.

The marshland was scattered, also, with treacherous bogs. Unless we were careful, it was easy to fall into one of these and sink deeper and deeper, unable to get out. Those who tried to help would be sucked under too. The only means of rescue was for men standing on firmer ground to hold out a pole to the man in the bog and pull him back to safety. In this way, these poles saved many lives.

After the poles had proved themselves indispensable during the march, no one would throw them away. Those who had thrown theirs away at the start found new ones, and broken poles were replaced by longer ones. Some squads even put special men in charge of the poles used for making tents. Most men had their own "umbrellas" stuck in their packs to protect them against sun and rain. Walking-sticks were even more prized. I knew men who carried their poles all the way to North Shensi and refused to throw them away; for throughout the difficulties and dangers of the Long March they helped us in innumerable ways, till we were as attached to them as to our comrades-in-arms.



The Drumhead

One day during the Long March, our detachment was resting by the temple of a mountain god. Having found a shady spot by the wall to sit in, I noticed the skin of a broken drum near by. It was a piece of hide about the size of a straw hat, covered with dust as if no one wanted it. So I picked it up.

Our squad leader spotted this as we were leaving. "What do you want that for?" he asked.

I put it on my head and grinned. "It'll do as a hat."

All the fellows in our squad thought I was adding to the weight of my pack for nothing. That was natural enough. Even I couldn't foresee at the time how useful it was to prove.

As the days went by, marching became more and more difficult. We were crossing mountains all the time, and knew summer and winter in the same day. Down in the valley, a blazing sun scorched us and made us pant for breath, while at the mountain top the snow lay several feet deep, the wind was icy and hailstones as big as chestnuts would slash down at us. There was no shelter — we were lucky if we could protect our faces. Then my drumhead came in useful. At the foot of the mountain I used it as a sunshade, at the summit as a shield against the hailstones.

After we reached the grassland, we were squelching through mud and marshes the whole time. This tiresome stretch of the march seemed as if it would never end. Since we were wading in water all the time, our straw sandals swelled and chafed our feet till they were a mass of blisters. And in the brackish water these blisters festered. It was no joke marching in that state, so at every halt we liked to sit down properly — but there was mud everywhere. Then my drumhead came in useful again, for spread on the ground it was waterproof and felt as soft as an easy chair.

When our sandals wore out, rotted by the water, most of us had to march barefoot. Thorns and flints gashed our bleeding feet which at every step seemed pierced by a hundred needles.



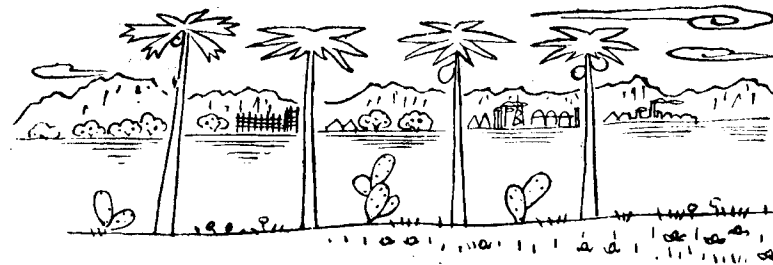
We gritted our teeth and bore it as best we could, but how much longer could we go on like this? One night when we encamped, our squad leader took the only quilt we had among us and tore it up to wrap round our feet; but since there was not enough for so many of us, none was left for me and a fellow from Hupeh. Then I thought of my drumhead. "Come on," I said to the other fellow. "Let's make some leather shoes." We cut up the drumhead, bored holes in it and tied strings through these till in a short time we had two pairs of "leather shoes." The man from Hupeh leaped with joy. "Look!" he cried. "These are better than ordinary leather shoes!"

As the days went by, there was less and less to eat. After our grain was finished, we ate the horses, and then we lived on wild vegetables. When even the wild vegetables were finished, we ate our leather belts. After that we had to march on empty stomachs.

One day, we camped at the foot of a steep cliff, so high that the summit was out of sight. We were in such bad shape that we couldn't climb this cliff without something to eat. But since it was no use worrying, I decided to sleep. Before lying down, I took off my "leather shoes" as usual to make a pillow. The sight of them gave me an idea. If we could eat leather belts, why not a drumhead? I was very unwilling to part with my shoes, but that cliff had to be climbed. I stood up and collected some dry twigs to make a fire and resolutely started roasting my "shoes." As soon as the leather began to sizzle in the flames, all the men in our squad gathered round. Our squad leader realized what I was up to. He smiled and seemed to say, "A good scheme!" Then the fellow from Hupeh stepped forward on bare feet and threw his "leather shoes" on the fire too. After we had baked the "shoes" for some time, we washed and scraped them clean, then boiled them in a basin. Boiling turned the leather yellow and soft, and its appetizing smell made us hungrier than ever. Normally, "food" of this kind would set a man retching, but now it seemed a feast for the gods. When the "shoes" were cooked, our squad leader cut them into small bits and distributed them among the men to eat before climbing the cliff the next day.

It was very late and all the others were asleep. But I tossed and turned and could not close my eyes. Imagine an unwanted drumhead proving so useful!

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Ku Ping-hsin*



Poems

HANAN-CHOU

I Have Seen Chairman Mao

Chairman Mao, father of us all,
A small bird from Mongpalanasi,* I carry with me
Two hundred and fifty thousand pairs of Tai eyes,
Each pair of eyes eager to see you.

Chairman Mao, father of us all,
A small bird from the Lantsang River, I carry with me
Two hundred and fifty thousand Tai hearts,
Each heart eager to serve you.

Chairman Mao, father of us all,
After seeing you with my own eyes,**

* A legendary name for the rich region of Hsishuangpanna.

** The poet came to Peking for a conference and saw Chairman Mao on July 16, 1958.

I am no longer dazzled
By gold or jewels.

Chairman Mao, father of us all,
After seeing you
I shall grow younger, braver,
And my songs will flow on
For ever, like the Lantsang River.

Fly, Peacock, to Peking!

Peacock with the brilliant plumage,
In Lantsang's sacred waters
Wash your bright feathers clean;
Then, bearing two hundred and fifty thousand Tai hearts,
Spread your wings
And fly to Peking.

Fly, peacock, fly,
Bearing our songs of rich harvests,
The fragrance of our Hsishuangpanna flowers,
News of the first heat of steel produced by our people,
The aromatic sap of our rubber trees,
And a coconut that has ripened against our blue sky. . . .
Fly, peacock, to Peking!

Fly, peacock, fly,
Over our motherland's tapestry of hills and streams,
Over paddy fields that stretch ten thousand *li*,
Over city after city ablaze with lights,
To Peking where beat six hundred million hearts.

Carry greetings from the Tai people
To the Party we honour and love;
Tell the loved and honoured father of us all
That over the broad land of Hsishuangpanna
Each clod of earth is gold;
Here crops are ripe in every season,
All the white clouds in the sky
Have flocked into our rolling cotton fields;
The rosy splendour of the far horizon
Is streaming down on our Tai villages.

Fly, peacock, fly!
Fly to Peking, the lodestar of Tai hearts,
To Tien An Men, the pole-star shining bright;
Tell all our countrymen,
Tell our loved Party
And the loved father of all:
Now in our Hsishuangpanna
Scattered bamboo dwellings make up one family;*
The hydro-electric station at Liushaho
Has driven dark night away from our villages;
A tractor plant, making iron buffaloes for us,
Has sprung up in our dense, primeval forests.

*Referring to the establishment of people's communes.

Loved, honoured Party,
Loved, honoured father of all,
How many rich crops have we reaped!
Our elephant drums have echoed through the forests,
Our songs have soared up through thick banks of clouds;
On how many starry nights
Have we lit bonfires by the Lantsang River
To pipe and fiddle
With songs as countless as the stars in heaven;
A thousand, ten thousand voices
Crying out to our well-loved Party,
To our well-loved father:
Your children far off at the border send you greetings!

Listen to our singing,
Dear Party,
Dear, honoured father!
Every drop of the Lantsang's water
Has turned into a song of thanks to you!

December 10, 1958
By the Lantsang River

Translated by Gladys Yang

An Actress of the Miao-Tuchia Autonomous Chou
by Li Hu →

Li Hu, born in Szechuan in 1919, is a professor of the Central Institute of Fine Arts, noted for his use of traditional methods in portrait painting. Another work of his, "Portrait," appeared in *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1958.



CHEN KUEI-PEI

Hanan-chou, a Tai Poet

At China's southwest border, in the forests of the Hsishuangpanna Tai Autonomous *Chou*, when the Tai people return from the fields at sunset to their raised bamboo dwellings, they often gather around a singer; for music is one of their chief pleasures in life.

Professional Tai singers, known as *changbarps*, are found in every village, and there are more than 1,300 in the region as a whole. They sing the villagers' daily life, their hopes and dreams. These *changbarps* are highly respected, and the best known of them all is great-hearted Hanan-chou.

Hanan-chou, originally named Ai-chou, was born in 1919 in the picturesque village of Bānsar. He spent his childhood bathed in his mother's tears. But in order that he should not become "unripe fruit," his parents, though poor, sold their buffalo to obtain a place for him in the Buddhist monastery. Every day the small boy worked with his hands in the monastery, and at night by the light of sacrificial candles known as *tienbam* he conned Tai Buddhist sutras, folk legends and poems. By the age of nine, he had a good command of language and would sit every day under the monastery's *bodhidruma* tree facing the morning sun, to inscribe sutras in the form of folk legends on palm leaves. Not till sunset would he lay down his style. For thirteen years he lived simply in this way, selling these inscribed leaves to Buddhists in the village who would dedicate them to Buddha. Thanks to his hard work, he won the reputation of the most learned among the

monks, and was elevated to the position of *Toparacar* or a secondary buddha. Every day he instructed the young monks in language and supervised their copying of sutras.

The year that he was appointed a *Toparacar*, his father died. Then his old mother, younger brother and sister fell victim to poverty and hunger. Learning of their plight, he could no longer live on peacefully in the quiet, sequestered monastery listening to the chimes of the bell; he chose to leave holy orders and become a layman. But since he had gained the position of a *Toparacar*, the villagers called him Hanan-chou, for the title *Hanan* meaning "a learned man" was given to a *Toparacar* who left the monastery.

After his return home, he drew on his own experience and knowledge of folk-lore to compose songs known as *kamharp*, which soon won wide popularity. And on any important occasion — a religious festival, the building of a new house or a wedding — Hanan-chou would reveal literary gifts of a high order by composing stirring songs. Villagers flocked to hear him as if he were a nightingale, and he became the *changharp* of Bansar. Tai villages elect their own *changharp*, and while anyone can go and sing in other villages, only duly elected *changharps* can accept fees. Six years later, during a singing contest organized by the overlord's steward, Hanan-chou outdid veteran *changharps* and won the proud title of King *Changharp* or Changharpman.

But during those dark days, Kuomintang bandits and feudal chiefs were preying upon the region "like cruel leopards and pythons," choking the life out of the villagers. In those bitter years, Hanan-chou sang of his people's sufferings and indignation. In 1949 the Chinese People's Republic was established, and sunlight warmed the whole region of Hsishuangpanna. Hanan-chou was lying ill at home, with no food in the house, when he was woken from his sleep by strangers, and an interpreter told him that these were Hans sent by Chairman Mao Tse-tung to bring him relief grain and medicine. Hanan-chou was moved to tears as he grasped their hands, and not for some moments could he bring out the words "*Indi* — thank you!" Later he was given tools and seeds and granted a loan by the government to start farming. By 1951 he had his own buffalo tethered under his bamboo house, and his family was living fairly well.

After liberation, Hanan-chou's songs about the new society received a warm welcome from all his compatriots, and the Party gave him the opportunity to study and to visit many other parts of the country. In recent years he has voiced the feelings of the Tai people — their heartfelt thanks to the Party and Chairman Mao and their joy in the new life today. In 1958, when Hanan-chou came to Peking to attend a conference of folk artists and writers from all over China and saw Chairman Mao, he wrote a poem which has since become very popular, called *I Have Seen Chairman Mao*. The new life forms such a marked contrast to the old that he is strongly aware of his happiness today, and uses the traditional Tai form of poetry to sing the present age. The tremendous progress his district is making has inspired him to write more poetry and found powerful expression in his songs.

In the past ten years he has published about ten thousand lines of verse in various magazines and newspapers. If we read his first collection, *See Peking from the Woods*, published in 1957, we cannot fail to be struck by the depth of feeling disclosed. Thus he writes:

We were living content,
When like wild boars Chiang Kai-shek's bandits
Pushed down our bamboo homesteads
And burned our sutras with fire.

In the hour of the people's need,
The Party and Chairman Mao drove the beasts away,
Our district is becoming prosperous.
Thank you, Chairman Mao!
This is thanks to your beneficence.

Look at us, Chairman Mao!
New buildings have sprung up by the Lantsang River,
All the sunflowers below our homesteads face Peking.
May your beneficence never depart from us!

Chairman Mao, your kindly presence
Make gold, silver, iron, copper and tin pour from our hills;
Flowers are sweet in all four seasons,
Songs are sung in our villages from dusk to dawn.

We raise our wine cups and gaze towards Peking from our forest,
To wish you, our protector,
Good health for ever and ever!

This poem voices the joy of the Tai people after centuries of bitterness. To them the Party and Chairman Mao are symbols of happiness. That is why Hanan-chou so often compares the Communist Party and Chairman Mao to the sun, a loving father, a saviour and benefactor.

Since liberation, great changes have taken place in Hsishuangpanna so far away from Peking. Buses have superseded elephants and horses as a means of transport, large hospitals have been built and power stations have sprinkled the forests with lights. The Tai people, in their new-found joy, long to see Peking where Chairman Mao lives. At village fairs or religious festivals, thousands of women, old folk and children gather round Hanan-chou and beg him to sing about the capital. In fact, even before he went to Peking, he made the following song:

Birds of the air fly towards trees,
Swift golden deer love meadows,
And our Tai folk turn to Peking.
Say, stranger, from across the Lantsang,
Have you come from Peking?

Listen, Tai brothers and sisters!
Every flower in Peking
Leaves fragrance in our hearts;
Every brook in Peking
Waters and refreshes our hearts.
Even in winter the swallows there
Are loath to fly to the south.

Peking, our capital,
To hear your ceaseless singing
We Tai folk wait, wide-eyed, watching the frontier
Day and night with our bows and arrows in the forest!

This not only expresses the Tai people's longing to see the capital where Chairman Mao lives, but also their love for the motherland.

In 1958, when the clarion call for a big leap in socialist production echoed through the forests of the border, the Tai people smashed their age-old chains of feudal superstition and plunged into the main stream of endeavour, bringing poets and singers fresher and richer inspiration. Hanan-chou shouldered his pack and hoe to go with other *changharps* to the irrigation sites, where his stirring songs cheered the volunteer workers.

Begone! Begone!
Ghosts of deep waters,
Gods of high mountains!
In the past, when our people crawled,
And you swallowed up our villages,
All we could do was turn away with tears.
Now Chairman Mao is our champion,
We Tai folk have stood up!

In these tumultuous days, the poet has not only seen his own district forging ahead but—this is more important—he has seen how the Tai people who slumbered for centuries have stood up under the leadership of the Party and Chairman Mao to triumph over nature.

Heartfelt praise of the Communist Party, Chairman Mao and socialism forms the main theme of Hanan-chou's poetry. He uses the traditional style of the *changharps* and their special modes of expression. For instance, in *The People's Commune* he describes the night when the commune's plan of work is passed:

Night stars are blinking their eyes,
Coconut palms are straining their ears,
The fires under the *bodhidrumas* are like lotus blossoms,
The folk sit quietly around the flames
Like thousands of flowers shimmering in a green ocean—
The people's commune is passing its plan tonight.

This Tai singer makes free use of the traditional style to describe the Tai people's new life with its special local features. Both in form and content, his songs have a distinctive flavour. When Hanan-chou uses such similes as "birds of the air fly towards trees, swift golden deer love meadows" to convey the Tai people's love for Peking, or "pythons and leopards" to describe Chiang

Kai-shek's bandits with their stranglehold on the people, these images are taken from actual life. Hanan-chou loves the Lantsang River and devotes a wealth of description to it, because this is the largest river to water the fertile soil of Hsishuangpanna. The Tai people settled on its banks in ancient times and have lived here for centuries like children by their mother's side.

Hanan-chou's political poems make a powerful impact, while his love poems are tender and moving. These are the special characteristics of the two main aspects of his work. He has strong political convictions and the ability to give concentrated expression to his feelings. Here is an example in his description of how the people hit back at the local despots in *Angry Tide of the Lantsang*:

The turbulent, rushing Lantsang
Charges its banks,
The Tai people who have stood up
Tear mountains apart;
Today we have the Party to lead us,
The people's government to back us,
The earth must obey our will.
All man-eating tigers and leopards,
All insect pests
Shall be driven out of our forest!

His evocative, lilting love songs, however, are very different.

Ah, lass,
Deftest weaving maid in all our village!
The flowers you embroider
Draw bees to swarm near by;
The cloth you spin
Is soft as plantain leaves;
All day I dream of you,
And long for wings to fly;
All night I dream of you
And long for the night to end;
Grant me one glimpse of you,
And peacock feathers will be nothing to me!

The homely images in these love songs, based on local customs, make them exceedingly familiar and dear to the Tai people.

Cartoon Films

Mural on a Commune Yard Wall

(a cartoon film scenario)

On the back wall of a row of houses at one end of the village are many pictures and poems. A group of people look at them as they walk by, then leave the village through the "Big Leap" arch.

Several peasants, carrying hoes, return through the arch from the fields.

Beneath the overhanging eaves of the row of houses, men and women, young and old, are adding more poems and pictures to the wall.

People stop to admire and discuss their efforts.

At the near end a girl is bending over, painstakingly sketching a flowery border. She straightens up and inspects her work. Not bad. A young peasant with a hoe on his shoulder approaches, an appreciative expression on his face. The girl smiles at him and tosses him the brush. He thinks a moment, then starts to paint.

Close-up of the wall. We pan along at the pictures.

Voice:

The General Line shines gloriously,
Sparking ideas and letting them soar free.
With liberated minds there's nothing we can't do,
We're good at agriculture and drawing pictures too.

These pictures on the wall
Make us keener for work than ever.
We've done this film about them,
'Cause we think they're pretty clever.

For information about new Chinese cartoon films see Hua Chun-wu's article on p. 71.

The camera halts at the final picture: People digging holes in a mountainside and inserting explosives.

A poem has been written in the lower left corner of the picture, which also contains a sun shining on the poem and a dark cloud resting on a nearby mountain peak.

The sun begins to move, rocking his fiery head in cadence as it reads the poem aloud:

Heaven has no Jade Emperor,
Earth no Dragon King.
I am the Jade Emperor,
I am the Dragon King.
Pay heed, you mountains,
Hear what I say:
I'm coming through now,
— Get out of the way!

The dark cloud moves up behind the sun and listens.

"A fine poem! Excellent," says the sun. "Got real spirit!"

The dark cloud sneers, "Bah! Just bragging!"

Clash! Crash! Two strokes on a big cymbal ring out.

At this signal, a mountain in the distance starts to tremble.

Boom! A huge explosion on the side of the mountain flings up a smoky shower of earth and rocks, splitting the mountain asunder. The dark cloud is blown high into the sky.

A big watery dragon comes gushing out of the mountain, a young peasant in a red sleeveless tunic astride its back.

The dark cloud pats the dust from its body, wipes its face and spits out some sand.

Riding the watery dragon, the young peasant sails down the river bed and turns a bend. Big waves rise in the river, tossing whitecaps.

Ridden by the young peasant, the watery dragon enters a canal, then spreads out and flows down to irrigate the terraced fields.

Seeing this, the sun in the sky smiles and moves closer to the dark cloud.

"Look at that," says the sun. "They've conquered the dragon king. Still think they're bragging?"

The dark cloud looks down.

All the irrigation ditches are filled.

Receiving this moisture, the grain sprouts begin to grow.

"Humph! What's so wonderful about that?" scoffs the dark cloud. "The dragon king's old. Got no fight left in him."

And the dark cloud says: "They can never conquer me!"

The sun laughs. "Who's bragging now?"

"Me? Bragging?" says the dark cloud. "I'll show you!" He claps his hands twice. Clouds in other pictures immediately leave their place and fly along the wall.

Several little clouds line up and fly in formation.

All the clouds congregate in the picture containing the dark cloud.

The dark cloud looks them over imperiously, then raises his fist and shouts: "Yoho!"

"Yoho! Yoho!" the little clouds chorus back.

The dark cloud takes his place at their head, the little clouds fall in behind and they set off, circling like a long dragon, becoming larger and heavier, till they fill the whole sky, blocking out the sun.

Wrinkling his nose, the dark cloud opens his mouth and sneezes.

Thunder booms. Lightning flashes between the clouds.

As thunder rumbles overhead and lightning streaks past the working peasants, the rain starts to fall.

The dark cloud bares his teeth and rain gushes from the spaces between them.

Rain comes pouring down.

"It's raining! It's raining!" the peasants shout.

Peasants on a drum cylinder pump halt their labour and gaze up at the sky.

An old man and woman on a treadle-board pump stop and do the same.

As the rain falls on the fields, the grain grows higher.

The old man and his wife look upwards happily. "It's raining. We can stop fighting the drought."

"It's rain you want, eh?" says the dark cloud. "All right, I'll give you plenty! Ha! Ha!"

The dark cloud opens his mouth wide and a rainstorm surges out.

The rain fills the fields, submerging all but the very tops of the grain. The fields are like a river. Peasants carrying hoes run along the embankment surrounding the field.

Says a commune brigade leader: *"When we work it's like a race!"*

"There's not a problem we can't outface!" a woman adds in rhyme. They swing their hoes.

As the hoes strike down, the embankment is cut open and the water begins to drain out.

Three little children dance naked in the rain. *"Just like a lovely shower bath!"* one of them cries.

The old man and his wife dig at the embankment. *"We'll make the black cloud die of wrath!"* he quips in rhyme to the child's words.

"They dare to defy me!" rages the black cloud. He gathers himself and blows with all his might. The rainfall becomes much heavier.

Muddy streams come tumbling down the mountain ravines and charge into the river.

Waves pound against a little dam, making it shake.

The black cloud laughs boisterously. *"How do you like that? Hard to take, eh!"*

Standing on the bank, the brigade leader waves a small flag.

Two young men turn a wheel. A sluice gate opens in the little dam and the pent-up waters rush out.

From the gates of a big dam athwart the mountains, flood waters are also released at regular intervals.

In the hydro-electric station machines are set in motion.

The turbines hum loudly.

Instruments line the wall of the hydro-electric station. A young man pushes a lever.

A row of lights glow atop the big dam. Two searchlights, one at each end of the dam, send powerful beams into the sky.

They glare in the black cloud's face. He yells in terror, not daring to open his eyes against the dazzling light.

More beams are thrown into the sky. The black cloud turns and flees. The lights stick right with him.

In the fields, the peasants look up and laugh.

The sun also laughs.

A yellow dust storm, swirling on a mountain top, laughs too. As the black cloud rolls in his direction he ducks behind the mountain.

Panting for breath, the black cloud sits down heavily on the peak. *"Worn out!"* he wheezes. *"Rest a while!"* He picks a leaf from a little tree and fans himself.

The yellow wind pokes his head out from behind the mountain and puffs lightly. The leaf is blown from the black cloud's hand.

The startled black cloud is also blown into the air.

"Ha, ha!" laughs the yellow wind. *"What makes you so tired, old brother?"* He comes twisting up to the black cloud.

The black cloud is embarrassed. *"It's nothing at all, big brother wind,"* he mumbles. *"Just taking a little rest. . . ."*

"Can't fool me," the yellow wind chuckles. *"I saw everything!"*

As he talks, his breath blows the black cloud off the ground.

The black cloud maintains an awkward silence.

"You're simply useless," says the yellow wind. *"Step aside! I'll show you how to crush them!"*

He whistles, and the black cloud is blown to a mountain top.

The yellow wind twirls, moans, charges forward, fills his cheeks with air and blows down mightily. Sand and gravel are swept up from the land.

Growing rice bends in the gale, like a sea of rolling waves.

Corn stalks swing and wave, rustling loudly.

A young man is holding up some corn stalks. The wind blows his hat away. *"Big wind coming!"* he shouts.

A little child is blown up into the air, then two more. They reach out and grab hands.

They fall on a big head of cabbage. Quickly, they burrow deep inside for shelter.

The old man and woman hide beneath a big turnip leaf.

The yellow storm guffaws wildly and says to the dark cloud, *"See! What do you think of that?"*

Viewing the scene from the mountain top, the dark cloud chuckles gleefully. *"You're all right! Nice work!"*

The brigade leader, with a group hoeing in the fields, starts a jingle: *"Even bigger winds than this. . . ."*

"Can't frighten us!" chorus the hoers.

Women spreading fertilizer give the third line: *"When they howl and hiss. . . ."*

Men preparing a windmill conclude the verse: *"We make 'em work for us!"*

The whole commune — men, women and children — turn out with spades.

They dig on the mountain tops, they dig along the edges of the fields. Feet push iron spades into the earth, digging a series of holes.

Into each hole, a little sapling jumps.

The old woman approaches from the distance, leading a row of saplings. One after another, they rhythmically jump into the holes. Immediately, a series of young trees appears along the edge of the field. Leading another row of little saplings, the old woman marches them down to a more distant part of the field's edge.

Two skipping children water the young trees.

On the mountain top, an old man starts leading a line of trees down the slope. They march in cadence, leaping into the holes that have been dug. That row finished, another old man leads down another line of trees, which also immediately plant themselves.

The children water them.

The trees grow.

The yellow wind puffs up his cheeks and blows for all he's worth.

Sweeping across the fields, the savage wind hits against the young trees.

The young trees pummel the wind with their fists.

Moaning, the wind flees to the mountain top.

But the trees on the mountain top catapult the wind back down again.

Startled, the yellow wind becomes furious. Blowing with might and main, he hurtles forward.

But the trees are growing large and strong. The wind cannot get past them, nor can he blow them down. He rushes off in another direction.

But the fields are criss-crossed with trees. There is no place for the wind to go. He plunges about blindly.

The crops are growing peacefully in the fields.

The yellow wind flees along the river way.

Breathing hard, he dashes across the surface of the water, whipping up frothy waves.

Small craft, heavily laden, are being rowed in this direction.

"Here comes the wind!" cries a sailor. On one of the craft, a white sail is raised.

Two more boats raise their sails.

The wind blows madly. The sails fill. Many more craft raise their sails.

Boats of every description make use of the wind. They cut through the water swiftly.

On a boat filled to the brim with fish, an old man calmly holds the tiller. The boat is towing a huge carp, with a little boy astride its back. As the carp rides the waves, the child laughs for joy.

A dump cart with an improvised sail carries earth along home-made rails. A girl sits on the cart, peacefully embroidering. She doesn't have to push now. The cart speeds along the rails up a slope.

Closing his eyes with the effort, the yellow wind continues to blow.

The black cloud cranes his neck and looks down. He frowns.

Innumerable boats are sailing on the river. Carts hurry along the rails.

The yellow wind is still blowing blindly. A hand lightly slaps him on the brow — once, twice.

"Big brother . . ." says the voice of the black cloud.

The yellow wind pauses and opens his eyes.

The black cloud points downwards.

The wind storm stares.

A mill in a shed is grinding flour which a woman is catching in buckets as it flows off the mill trough. Outside, the big sails of the windmill are steadily turning. A sail-equipped cart filled with bricks is flying up the mountain on rails. A girl is seated on the cart. Simple blast furnaces made of brick can be seen on the mountain top. On the river are fully laden craft. Rice and corn are growing in the fields.

The yellow wind gazes in stupefaction.

"You haven't done any better than me," says the black cloud. "The people have just used you! Now, my idea is —" The yellow wind, gnashing his teeth, interrupts:

"My idea is — fight to the death!"

He rushes down insanely. The black cloud is whirled right out of the wall picture into another.

Buffeted by the gale, the rice swings left and right. The corn rustles loudly, the stalks weave and bend.

The wind blows the trees so that they lean to one side. Then he blows from the opposite direction so that they lean to the other side.

Just as the yellow wind is taking a deep breath — “Ping!” A big tree springs back and shoots him into the air.

Stumbling and staggering, the gale is snapped by trees from one mountain top to another.

He lands rolling among the simple blast furnaces. They surround him tightly like a wall.

Several men are working a piston bellows. As it sucks in air, it pulls the yellow storm half-way in, feet first. He yells and struggles.

The men pull hard on the piston and the storm is sucked in further. Now only his head remains outside. “Black cloud! Help me, quick!” he howls. His voice grows fainter and fainter as, with a whoosh, he vanishes.

Above the furnace, the black cloud watches in a panic.

The men drive home the piston and the yellow wind is shot into the furnace.

A great flame springs from the furnace and sings the back side of black cloud, who leaps with pain.

The sun laughs heartily.

So do the men making iron in the furnaces.

So do the peasants in the fields.

Trembling with fear, the black cloud shrinks and shrinks until it squeezes out a few drops of rain and disappears completely.

The sun chuckles. “Man’s will can conquer nature! I was sure that the black cloud and yellow wind were going to lose!”

He spreads his rays on the earth below.

Ears of corn appear and put out tassels.

Paddy fields glisten in the sunlight. People bend and cut the heavy-headed rice.

In the vast fields of cotton, the plants are ripe with bolls. The bolls break open, and fluffy white cotton mushrooms out.

A locomotive puffs white smoke. On the first flat-car is a huge ear of rice on which a man wearing a big red flower is perched. The second car carries a tremendous ear of corn. Beside this also is a man with a red flower. On the succeeding cars are a sweet potato, a turnip, a squash, a sun flower. . . .

The train rolls along in the picture on the wall. On both sides of the railway, grain is heaped mountain high and factories stand like forests.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro



Cartoon Films

The following plates are taken
from the films described below—→

A Big Red Flower

The little animals in the wood want to build a bridge but have no timber. "Whoever finds a log will be given a big red flower," says the golden oriole. Two small pandas go out and find a log at the same time. Each wants it, and they begin to pull and tug till they both roll into the water. Luckily the elephant is there to rescue them. Now they understand the need for co-operation and develop a team spirit.

Fisherboy (a scissor-cut film)

After the Opium War the imperialists' invasion of China aroused the indignation of our people. The Boxer Uprising was a mass movement of the Chinese peasantry against the imperialists. *Fisherboy* is based on a Boxer folk tale published in *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1960.

An old fisherman gets a beautiful bowl from the river. A fisherboy carved in this bowl comes out at night to make bubbles which turn into gold beans. When an imperialist agent knows this, in league with a corrupt magistrate he tries to steal the bowl from the old man. They are punished by the fisherboy in the end.

Pigsy and the Water-melon (a scissor-cut film)

The Tang dynasty monk Tripitaka and his three disciples are on their way west to fetch Buddhist sutras. On a lonely stretch of road they stop to rest, and Pigsy and Monkey go off in search of food. Pigsy finds a water-melon which he starts eating by himself. Monkey brings back food for all, and when he discovers Pigsy selfishly eating alone, he cleverly teaches him a lesson.

Uncle Wind and Black Cloud — from *Mural on a Commune Yard Wall*





Two Little Pandas Find a Log — from *A Big Red Flower*



Fisherboy Turns Bubbles into Gold Beans — from *Fisherboy*



Pigsy and Monkey — from *Pigsy and the Water-melon*

HUA CHUN-WU

The New Cartoon Films

It was twelve years ago, towards the end of the War of Liberation, that China's first new cartoon film made under Party leadership was produced in a studio in Northeast China. It was made by a handful of film workers whose technical equipment was rudimentary. This film, *Catching the Turtle in the Pot*, was a cartoon satirizing the folly of the reactionaries who were opposed to the people. China's first puppet film was made at the same time. Today, twelve years later, cartoon and puppet films have become an important part of our new film industry and a source of delight to millions of our children. If we look back at the development of the last twelve years, it is clear that ever since their birth our cartoon films, including puppet and scissor-cut films, have aimed very definitely at educating our children with socialist and communist ideas. Each film sets out not only to make young audiences laugh and find pleasure, but to teach them a lesson. That is why educationalists as well as writers and artists who cater for children have always paid great attention to these cartoons.

I would like to say a word about the national flavour of Chinese cartoons. All those who have seen them realize that these cartoons, puppet films and scissor-cut films are distinctively Chinese in style. The cartoon film came to China from the West. Before liberation, American cartoons were shown in all big Chinese cities, so that for decades our children's minds were filled

Hua Chun-wu, well-known cartoonist, is the secretary-general of the Chinese Artists' Union.

with Mickey Mouse and the Big Bad Wolf. Though Wan Laiming and his brother struggled for years to create Chinese cartoons, they could do nothing at that time. But now that the working class are in power; our cartoons have grown apace from small beginnings.

When we speak of the national style of our cartoons, we are concerned primarily with content. Many of these children's films are based on folk tales and legends with an educational value. The early puppet film *The Magic Brush* described how a folk artist, Ma Liang, was aided by heaven so that all he painted came to life, and he used his brush to help the working people combat the forces of evil. This is a very popular folk tale. Another puppet film, *Master Tungkuo*, drawn from an ancient fable, tells how an unworldly scholar who wants to protect a hungry wolf from a hunter is nearly eaten by the ungrateful wolf. This film teaches children to differentiate between good and evil. *The Proud General* is a cartoon based on a revised folk tale, and describes a general who grows so proud after a victory that finally he is captured by the enemy. The puppet film *Flaming Mountain* takes as its theme an episode from the well-known classical novel *Pilgrimage to the West* in which Monkey fights with a monster. The cartoon *A Piece of Chuang Brocade* is based on a national minority folk legend. It presents a mother and son of the Chuang nationality who are hard-working and brave. The mother weaves a beautiful tapestry, which is blown away by a great gust of wind; but after many perils the son recovers it from fairyland and the scenery on the tapestry becomes real. A recent scissor-cut film, *Fisberboy*, is drawn from a folk legend about the Boxer Uprising and shows how the Chinese people opposed the imperialists who were robbing China. These romantic tales are widely popular with all age groups. And themes such as these help to make our cartoon films distinctively Chinese in style.

Some people have the notion that a national flavour can only be produced by using some national or folk legend and portraying characters in ancient costumes. Of course, this over-simplified view is wrong. Our cartoon not only inherit what is essentially Chinese in those legends and develop it further, but also produce films with a national flavour on new themes. During the Big Leap of 1959, our cartoonists carried out certain experiments along

these lines. *Mural on a Commune Yard Wall* is a cartoon about our people's fight against nature and their revolutionary enthusiasm. This film shows men and women in real life against a legendary background. The peasants' wall painting represents their fighting spirit and overwhelming confidence through simple but exaggerated images. Cartoons with new contents like this reflect our present-day life and are also unmistakably Chinese. This is one of the encouraging features in our recent film production.

A cartoon is a film and at the same time a work of art. We can therefore also find something uniquely Chinese in the sets and people presented. Many of our cartoons, which employ the techniques of traditional Chinese painting, have colours reminiscent of Chinese landscape painting. Even the flowers and birds in these cartoons owe much to our traditional art. This is evident from *A Piece of Chuang Brocade* with its enchanting background of green, tranquil hills which blend with changeful clouds, thunder and lightning into one harmonious whole appropriate to the development of the story. In the scissor-cut film *Piggy and the Water-melon*, Piggy with his big belly and flowing coat is familiar to all from the novel *Pilgrimage to the West*. The boy in *Fisberboy* is based on the "twin gods of harmony" in the traditional New-Year pictures, and his movements are based on the stylized gestures of Chinese opera. In the cartoon *A Small Carp Jumps over the Dragon Gate*, Grandmother Carp wears spectacles and carries a stick like that of the old artist Chi Pai-shih. All these characters, as well as many of the small animals, are essentially Chinese. Their movements and gestures are based on prototypes familiar and dear to our people.

Scissor-cuts, shadow-plays and paper window-decorations are forms of Chinese folk art. Our shadow-plays, evolved in the eleventh century, absorbed certain decorative features of classical and folk art and reached a very high artistic level. The scissor-cuts, which have much in common with the shadow-plays, are even more widely popular in the Chinese countryside. And today these different elements of folk art have been used to make new cartoons and a new genre of cartoon — the scissor-cut film. Since folk art comes from the people, these new scissor-cut films have a strong national flavour. They adapt the artistic exaggeration of

shadow-plays and scissor-cuts to present characters, fully exploit the two-dimensional nature of this art, and use strong colour contrasts instead of limiting themselves to natural colours in order to convey a world of legend and fantasy. This type of film became widely popular as soon as it appeared. This unique, new Chinese film form, the scissor-cut film is an important contribution to the socialist film world. Indeed, thanks to the guidance of the Party, Mao Tse-tung's thought in literature and art, and their own hard work and skill, our film artists have produced a new flower for the pleasure of film-goers in every land.

At the beginning of this year, a cartoon film exhibition was held in Peking and other cities, and many new cartoon films were publicly shown. This has aroused considerable attention among writers of children's literature, artists and educationalists. While affirming the not inconsiderable achievement, we are also concerned with certain problems. We want to make the colours used in cartoons more harmonious, more richly and typically Chinese. We must improve the scenarios to suit the form of the film, cartoon or puppet, and use genuine Chinese music as an accompaniment. We need to absorb the best features of traditional puppetry for the figures and movements of puppet films. We should also make the dialogue in these films more readily intelligible to young audiences and do away with certain old modes of expression. These are some of the problems waiting to be solved in future cartoon films.

Han Dynasty Ballads

By the Roadside Mulberry

(2nd century A.D.)

The morning sunlight
Shines on the Chin mansion
Whose pride is the lady,
The lady Lofu.
For the silkworms she tendeth
She strippeth the mulberries
Which grow to the south;
From the cassia her basket
Hangs by a silk ribbon;
She has hair neatly braided,
Pearl ear-rings like moon-beams,
Silk petticoat yellow
And apron of purple.
When a wayfarer sees her
He sets down his burden
Awhile, strokes his beard.
A youth when he sees her
Doffs cap and salutes.
The ploughman leaves ploughing,
The hoer his hoeing,
And back in their houses
Find fault with their wives,
Having gazed on Lofu.

From the south comes a lordling
In carriage and five;
Surprised, halts and sends one
To make an inquiry,
"Who is that beauty,
And who are her kin?"
"She is one of the Chins,
And her name is Lofu."
"And what may her age be?"
"Her summers not twenty,
Yet more than fifteen."
Then he, condescending,
Says, "Lofu, will't please you
To enter my carriage?"
She faces him boldly,
And thus makes reply:

"What nonsense you talk, sirl
You have your own wife,
And I my own husband.
From the east ride a thousand
With him at their head.
And how shall you know him?
By the white horse he rides,
By the black colt that follows,
Their silk-braided tails
And their gold-braided halters;
By the sword at his side,
With its hilt of jade fashioned,

For which he paid millions.
At the age of fifteen
He kept prefecture minutes,
A scribe in his twenties,
At thirty a minister;
Now, being forty,
He governs a district.
His skin is so fair
And he wears a long beard.
He moves in the *yamen*
With step slow and stately;
He sits among thousands
Who own him their best."

Song of the Orphan

(2nd century A.D.)

The orphan's lot
From his hapless birth
Is sorrow unending.
My parents living,
I rode in style,
Four horses to draw me.
My parents dead,

My own brother bid me —
And so did his wife —
Fare forth as a pedlar.
To Chiuchiang southward,
To Chi and Lu eastward. . .
In the twelfth moon returned
But my woes dared not voice.
Lice in my hair,
My skin grimed with dust.
My brother said: Cook for us!
His wife: Tend the beasts!
In and out of the hall
I fetched and I carried. . .
No wonder, poor orphan,
My tears flowed like rain.
At dawn fetching water,
Not finished till dark;
Hands chapped and bleeding,
Feet all unshod
On the cruel hoarfrost.
Thorns by the thousand
I plucked out: the smart
Remained in my flesh. . .
All anguish was I,
And salt tears welled forth,
Pearl after pearl.
Winter, no warm coat,
Summer, no shirt.
A joyless life!

Better follow the dead
To the underworld!
The spring awakened
And all grew green.
The third moon brought silkworms,
The sixth, came the gourds.
With a cartload of melons
I was homeward bound,
When over it went.
How few came to help me,
But how many ate!
They might leave the stalks
For my tyrants to see!
Now I hasten back,
Thinking hard what to do. . .
In conclusion: What turmoil
Around, and for what?
I'd fain send a letter:
Dear, dead parents, oh!
I can bear it no longer,
I'll join you below!

*Translated by Eric Edney
and Yu Pao-chu*

YANG MO

The Song of Youth (*cont'd*)

THE STORY SO FAR

In the last three issues of this journal, we published instalments from Part I of *The Song of Youth*. Lin Tao-ching, a lonely girl with high ideals, becomes the wife of Yu Yung-tse, a student of Peking University. They grow estranged, however, when she discovers that he is an egoist with no feeling for the fate of the country and the people. She comes to know a Communist, Lu Chia-chuan, and under the Communist Party's influence takes part in the patriotic student movement. Finally, she leaves her worthless lover.

Part II of the novel from which the present instalment is taken shows how Tao-ching develops from a petty-bourgeois patriot into a resolute proletarian revolutionary. To escape persecution, she goes to teach in a village in Tingsien, where she helps Chiang Hua, formerly a student leader in Peking University, to organize harvest revolts among the peasants. But they are betrayed by the renegade Tai Yu, and Tao-ching returns to Peiping. The seven chapters in this instalment begin with her arrest soon after her return.

The five chapters which follow this final instalment in *Chinese Literature* deal with the nation-wide patriotic student movement which broke out on December 9, 1935, in Peking.

A black car pulled up at the kerb and four gendarmes pushed Tao-ching towards it.

She looked back at the pavement, where Hsiao-yen was standing stupefied under a street lamp, its dim light accentuating the pallor of her face.

"What's there to stare at, damn you! Get in!" A gendarme pushed Tao-ching into the car and slammed the door.

"Tao-ching! Tao-ching!" cried Hsiao-yen tearfully, running after them as they drove off.

Tao-ching, however, was as calm and fearless as if she had long expected this to happen.

It was early evening. Clouds were sailing high in the pale, blue sky above the Winter Palace, above the crenellated walls of the Forbidden City. The dark grey water of the moat glistened like fish scales. Beside the low, grey parapet skirting the moat, they had exchanged confidences and shed warm, precious tears. . . .

The events of but a little while ago now seemed remote and dreamlike. A few moments only had passed since she and Hsiao-yen were talking about the bright future and discussing how to study politics and forge ahead. But now she had entered a different world. She was in a dungeon, cold, pitch-black and musty. Cut off from the world of men, which seemed hazy to her now, she shuddered as her dreams of the future vanished. She collected her wits to contend with grim reality, for the Kuomintang butchers would no doubt put her to the test very soon. Torture, death—yes, once more the idea of death rose unbidden to her mind.

As she crouched alone on the damp floor of the dark cell, she recalled Chiu Chin* and the verse she had written before going bravely to her death: "The autumn wind and the autumn rain sadden my heart!" She thought of Lu Chia-chuan with his ardent,

* A woman revolutionary (1875-1907) at the end of the Ching dynasty. Born in Shaohsing, Chekiang, she joined an anti-Manchu revolutionary organization in Japan in 1904. When Chinese students in Japan were persecuted, she returned to China to advocate the rights of women, founding the *Chinese Women's Paper*. She was for some time women's dean at the Shaohsing Normal School. At the age of thirty-two, when her plans for armed revolt failed, she was arrested and killed.

radiant smile, of Chiang Hua and Hsu Hui too. The recollection of Lu Chia-chuan made her close her eyes and smile. "Comrade, I think your fate will soon be mine!" For she was almost certain that he had already laid down his life for the cause.

Death! She had dreamed since girlhood of dying a heroic death. Now the longed-for day was approaching.

She lost herself in a medley of sweet reminiscences. Since death might come at any hour, she would spend her last moments brooding over the memorable joys and sorrows of her life. She had not the same feeling of terror and isolation as at her first arrest. She could reflect more calmly on the splendour of the struggle she might have to leave.

"Come on out!" The door swung open, a flash-light shone in, and a large hand seized her to drag her out of the cell.

In a room of no great size, a pale, middle-aged man in Western clothes was sitting behind a desk. Two armed guards were stationed in one corner, and a clerk ready to take notes was bending over a small table.

Tao-ching stood directly in front of the desk with her face slightly averted.

"Are you Lin Tao-ching? How old are you?" The man in the Western clothes spoke slowly and huskily, as if only half awake.

There was a long pause. Tao-ching stood there mute and motionless, her head turned away.

"Why don't you speak? We are asking you some questions. Don't you know you are a criminal?" The sleepy voice grew sharp as the speaker lost patience.

"I'm no criminal!" retorted Tao-ching without moving. "It's you who are the criminals!"

Thump! The man in the Western suit pounded the desk and glared at Tao-ching as he thundered: "None of your impudence, you communist bandit! I know you're a Communist! Out with it! When did you join the Communist Party? Who is your leader? To which Party branch do you belong? If you tell the truth and repent, I'll give you a light sentence."

Tao-ching turned slowly, chin up, and looked straight at the man's thin, contorted lips. His pallid, lantern-jawed face, the wolfish gleam in his eyes and his dry, bloodless lips reminded her in a strange way of Hu Meng-an. Just as all Communists ap-

parently shared certain fine qualities, all secret-service men and fascists had the same repulsive characteristics.

"I only wish I were a Communist! Unfortunately I'm not up to standard." Tao-ching's voice was low, yet each word was clear and distinct.

"What's the use of quibbling? We arrested you on evidence. You are not only a Communist, but have done important work. Out with the truth!"

Her inquisitor pounded the desk again as if to make up for the lack of impressiveness in his drink-sodden and dissolute appearance.

"I've just told you." Tao-ching once more turned away to rest her eyes on her shadow on the grey wall. "I'm eager to join the Communist Party, but so far I've not qualified."

This provoked more pounding on the table. The exasperated "judge" tore his hair and jumped to his feet.

"You bitch! Never have I seen such obstinate slyness! If you don't tell the truth, you'll be shot! Do you know that?"

"Yes, I know. And I am ready." Her voice fell still lower. She felt utterly exhausted.

"Aha. . . ." Before the rake with thin lips could say more, in came another man in a Western suit. He waved his hand to Tao-ching by way of greeting, then narrowed his eyes and said with a cold laugh:

"Well, Miss Lin, remember me?"

"You!" Taken aback by the sight of Hu Meng-an, Tao-ching recoiled a couple of steps. Her weariness suddenly left her, as her heart beat fast with loathing and fear. A shudder passed through her.

"You didn't think we'd meet again, eh?" Hu Meng-an devoured Tao-ching with predatory eyes, baring his teeth in an insolent smile. She caught the smell of brandy in his breath.

"As the saying goes, the Monkey can't jump out of Buddha's hand. What have you been up to now, little Communist devil? Isn't it time for you to accept our Three Principles of the People?"*

* The principles advocated by Sun Yat-sen but never put into practice by the Kuomintang: the Principle of Nationalism, the Principle of the People's Rights and the Principle of the People's Livelihood.

"Get away from me!" Tao-ching pushed the gaunt drunkard away. "You reek of blood. Don't come near me!"

The lean man behind the desk banged it so hard that the teacup on it crashed to the floor. In the presence of the guards and his colleague from the Municipal Kuomintang Headquarters, Hu Meng-an thought it unbecoming to flare up. Instead, with his chest thrown out and his head held high, he eyed Tao-ching in silence for several seconds before saying with a leer:

"Miss Lin Tao-ching! Tell me, how many heads have you got to lose? What good has the Communist Party done you that you remain loyal to it and refuse to repent? I want to save you — I have always wanted to save you — but since this is the second time you have fallen into my hands, unless. . . ." He hissed the threat from between clenched teeth: "Unless — you — repent — and — confess — your — crimes, you — will — be — sorry! Not even the spirit of Karl Marx will be able to save you!"

The thin man behind the desk seized this chance to chime in:

"A full record of your activities, in Tingsien and elsewhere, is in our hands. Hurry up and own up which Party branch you were in. If you'll tell us the name of one other Communist, we'll set you free at once."

This sent another shudder through Tao-ching. "Tingsien? How have they found out what I did at Tingsien?" She was suddenly enraged. Without any warning she slapped Hu Meng-an's lean cheek, shouting: "Go ahead and shoot me. I'm ready!"

Smack! Smack! Smack! Hu's clumsy hand slapped her pale face. Rubbing his own cheek, he stormed: "How dare you! An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth — that's what you people are always saying. I'll give you good measure! There, take her away!" He turned his fierce eyes to the guards at the door and added with a sweep of his arm: "Torture her — don't spare her!"

As if in a bad dream, Tao-ching was dragged by the guards into a large bleak room, on the walls and floor of which were instruments of torture, the like of which she had never seen before. A couple of tall, brawny fellows in black kept eagle eyes upon her as if afraid she might break loose. She stood there, exhausted, limp in every limb, dimly aware that it was very late. Ah, this was the hour of the night when mothers sleep sweetly with their babes in their arms, and young lovers murmur softly to

each other. But what of her? . . . She wondered whether Hsiao-yen were asleep yet. Where were Lu Chia-chuan, Chiang Hua, Hsu Ning, Lo Ta-fang, Hsu Hui and all those other fine revolutionaries? And her dear pupils? . . . None of them knew what had befallen her. . . .

She stood there, silent, with closed eyes. Mistaking her passivity for fear, the torturers clanked their instruments and jeered:

"It takes a real hero to stand our levers or a dose of pepper."

"But that's not the worst! With our red-hot irons we can make her flesh sizzle and ooze white beads of fat! If pork can be roasted brown, so can human flesh. . . ."

"Yes, that's what I say. If this girl knows what's good for her, she'll confess to escape these pains. 'A true hero doesn't look for trouble.'"

Tao-ching remained standing with closed eyes. She was silent and seemed asleep. What was there for her to say? Biting her lips, she was thinking:

"Steady, now! Grit your teeth and bear it! That's what Communists do."

"What! You want to show fight?" Losing patience, the bullies began to put her to the torture. . . .

She stood the cruelest tortures with fortitude. Levers were forced down on her abdomen, one kettleful after another of liquid pepper was poured down her throat. . . . She bit her lips till they bled. She fainted and came round, only to faint again. But not a word passed her lips. It was only when a red-hot iron was applied to her thigh that with a shriek she lost consciousness completely.

Day was breaking. The faint, pale light of early dawn filtered through the high window of the chilly torture chamber. The two fleshy torturers mopped their perspiring faces as they looked at Tao-ching, prostrate and senseless on the ground, her face livid, her body clotted with blood.

"This girl has guts!" said one of them with a sigh. "What is it about the Communist Party that makes ordinary men and women behave like maniacs? For communism they're ready to give up their lives. And what's more precious than life, I'd like to know?"

The other gave a loud sneeze. After wiping the blood-stained bench and drying his soiled hands, he suddenly slapped his neck and cried out gruffly:

"There's nothing else we can do! We have to obey Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's orders: Kill a thousand innocent people sooner than let one Communist escape. Yes, kill, kill, kill them all! Root them all out — the red bastards!"

At the mention of the generalissimo he sprang to attention, aimed a vicious kick at Tao-ching, and burst into wild, uncontrollable laughter.

CHAPTER 19

Three days passed.

Tao-ching regained consciousness in fearful pain. Opening her eyes with a groan, she felt utter bewilderment.

"Where am I? . . ." But at once she fainted away again.

The next time she came to, she knew what had happened. One look round sufficed to remind her that she had been arrested and tortured and was now in a prison cell.

Just then a warm, affectionate voice reached her ears.

"At last you've come to! I've been so worried!"

Tao-ching slowly turned her face toward the speaker. By the dim light filtering in through the iron bars of the dark, musty cell, she saw a pale, slender woman lying on a bed of boards near by.

Mustering up all the strength left to her, she asked in a barely audible voice:

"Am I still alive? You. . . ."

But instead of answering her, the other woman turned toward the window and called:

"Wardress, wardress! Come here! The casualty in our cell has come to!" Then she turned back to Tao-ching and whispered encouragingly: "I want them to come and see to your injuries. We must do our best to keep alive."

Tao-ching's eyes were riveted upon that pallid face so expressive of warm feeling. She now saw that her companion was a beautiful woman in her late twenties. Her face was pale and yet

as lustrous as marble, and her large, black eyes sparkled like jewels in that murky cell.

"Why, she's like a Greek goddess! . . ." This incongruous notion flashed across Tao-ching's mind. Too weak and in too much pain to move, with a supreme effort she whispered: "Thank you! But don't call a doctor. I'm done for. . . ."

Just then the wardress unlocked the door and came in, followed by a doctor with uncut hair who looked like a prisoner himself. As he removed Tao-ching's torn and blood-stained clothes, excruciating pain made her faint once more.

When she recovered consciousness, her fellow-prisoner was still watching her anxiously and tenderly from her cot, while the prison doctor was standing before her with a small case of medicine in his hand. He examined Tao-ching and said to the other woman:

"She shouldn't faint again. Don't worry. She's fairly strong. . . ." Then he smiled at Tao-ching: "They asked me to dress your injuries, so I'll do what I can. There are no bones broken. You should be better soon."

Some hours later, when Tao-ching had taken a little rice gruel, life revived in her. However she was racked by a sharp, burning pain. She did not cry out, but bore it with fortitude. Her eyes kept straying to the other prisoner's white, fine-cut features, and she could not help wondering: "Who is she? A Communist?"

"Well, the worst is over now! A little more food will set you right, I'm sure." The young woman, whose name was Cheng Chin, smiled at her. "When you feel better, you must tell me how you were arrested and what's going on outside. It's very dull here, not knowing what's happening. But I won't ask you to talk now. That would be too inconsiderate. We'll wait for two or three days until you're better."

Yu Shu-hsiu, a schoolgirl in the same cell, had also been tortured. Cheng Chin did her best to comfort her and Tao-ching. She seemed to be ill, for she lay on her cold wooden cot unable to move, yet showing concern for them with words and looks. Her low, determined voice could often be heard in the passage outside the cell:

"Please come here, wardress! They want some water to drink."

"Come here, wardress, please! Come here!"

"Wardress!" she would say as soon as Wardress Liu entered. "Won't you bring this girl something to eat after the terrible tortures she's been through?" If the food brought was nothing but mouldy corn-bread and rancid soup with yellow vegetable leaves floating on the surface, she would say with a frown: "How can she swallow that? Bring her something better — we shan't forget you in future!"

Strange to say, the thin wardress seemed ready to do as she was asked and rendered them many a service willingly, even at the risk of being discovered by the other gaolers and guards.

The schoolgirl, who was fifteen or sixteen, had a pretty, oval face and seemed intelligent. Not too seriously injured, she was able to leave her bed and walk about. But she used to lie crying for sheer terror all day. And at night Tao-ching often heard her cry out in her sleep: "Mummy, mummy! I'm so afraid! I'm so afraid! . . ."

At night her cries rang through the impenetrable darkness. Shu-hsiu had never been parted from her mother before.

Cheng Chin, still awake, reached out now to take the girl's hand in hers and murmured softly:

"Are you in any pain? . . . Nothing serious? . . . Then why cry? I suppose you're homesick, is that it? Well, don't cry any more, dear. It's no use crying!" She paused to take a deep breath and, seeing that Shu-hsiu had stopped crying, went on: "When I was fifteen, I was arrested in Shanghai. I was terrified and cried day and night. But the more I cried, the more cruelly the reactionaries beat and bullied me. So I decided not to cry any more. I followed the example of the older women in my cell, who stood up to the reactionaries and argued with them. Those bullies only shake their fists at the weak. And what do you think? As soon as I showed I wasn't afraid of them, they stopped beating me. . . ." She broke into soft laughter, in which Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu joined.

"But Cheng Chin, dear," protested the schoolgirl in a voice that faltered. "I cry because of the unfairness of it."

Cheng Chin did her best to comfort her, though she was short of breath and very weak.

"Shu-hsiu!" she said tenderly. "Do you think you're the only one unfairly treated? Oh, no! There's no place for honest peo-

ple under the rule of tyrants. In this society the wicked thrive, while decent people are brought to trial by them and made to suffer. That's normal today — nothing new!"

Comforted by this explanation, the girl calmed down.

Tao-ching was favourably impressed by all that Cheng Chin said.

It was only natural that the older woman should know the ropes here, since she had arrived earlier than either of them. Tao-ching was puzzled, however, by Wardress Liu's eagerness to oblige her. This made her wonder who Cheng Chin could be.

"What do you do? And why were you arrested?" asked Cheng Chin softly the following night after the guards had made their round of inspection.

"I don't know why I was arrested," replied Tao-ching in a feeble voice. "I'm a student who had to give up studying. I believe in communism and the Communist Party. . . . Maybe that's why they took me. I'm not a Party member, but I want to give my life to the Party and work for the finest cause of humanity. I believe that day is coming, and all I can think of is how to prepare myself for the last moment."

Cheng Chin listened attentively, and her face grew grave. Some time passed before she raised her head to look Tao-ching straight in the eyes.

"You mustn't think that being arrested is the end of everything, or that death is sure to follow. It's not. Wherever a Communist finds himself, even in prison, he can go on working for the revolution. We must work till the last moment, till our last breath. We want to see with our own eyes a communist China, to welcome the coming of that day. . . ." She glanced from Tao-ching to Shu-hsiu and her black eyes flashed with joy as she went on to describe the brilliant prospects of communism and China's bright future when she had become a free, independent, classless and prosperous country.

While listening intently, Tao-ching gazed fixedly at Cheng Chin, whose great, beautiful eyes shone with intelligence and held her spellbound. Tao-ching was certain that she was a revolutionary, and was impressed by the sincere encouragement, or criticism, given her. Warmth flooded her heart and she felt light enough to fly. "How lucky I am," she thought, "to have such an ardent, steadfast comrade here with me!" The revolutionary

comrade for whom she had always longed in vain had, by chance, been provided her by the enemy.

Three days later, after the evening meal when the first nightly inspection had been made by the guards, Cheng Chin began chatting with Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu again. She liked to talk and went on as if she would never stop till she had told them all she knew.

"Let me tell you something about prison life, sisters. This happened four years ago, in a prison at Soochow. . . . I went through a three-year course on Marxism-Leninism there, which taught me a great deal."

"How could you take a course like that in prison?" asked Shu-hsiu in astonishment.

"It was something of a miracle," replied Cheng Chin with an effort. Her eyes were closed and she looked very tired. "Every morning when the steam-whistle of a nearby factory blew, about two thousand political prisoners — women as well as men, not to mention some serving other sentences — used to get up. And after exercising by marking time on the spot, we would sit on our beds to study. Some of us were sentenced to death, others to life imprisonment, others to fifteen, ten or eight years in prison. But no one was willing to waste time, we all flung ourselves conscientiously into our work. Some learned English, others Russian, Japanese or German. Naturally, political theory was a course everyone took. I learned German and later even taught it."

"How odd! What was the use of learning a foreign language after being sentenced to death?" asked Shu-hsiu, half incredulously. The better she came to know Cheng Chin and Tao-ching, the better was her morale.

Cheng Chin raised her head. In the dim lamplight, her face showed clear and beautiful despite its pallor. Tao-ching was reminded of a marble statue and thought: "If only I could sculpt beauty like that!"

She was about to speak when Cheng Chin motioned her to be silent, for from the passage outside sounded the tread of the guard's heavy boots.

"So you think them odd, Shu-hsiu? she resumed when the tramping had died away. "They weren't odd at all. They weren't ordinary people, you see, but Communists or believers in

communism. Anyone who believes in communism and is willing to fight for the right and for the people, doesn't hesitate to give his life to the cause. And then his individual life becomes as great as the lives of hundreds put together, or even as the whole of humanity. Don't you understand, sisters, that is true immortality? I've seen many a Communist in prison just before execution still spending his last few minutes cheerfully and working to the last — because there are people who never die!"

As Tao-ching listened avidly, she felt the blood course through her veins till she tingled with excitement. She had never thought to meet a staunch veteran Bolshevik in such a place as this, a Bolshevik who reminded her of Lu Chia-chuan, Chiang Hua and other heroic revolutionaries of whom she had dreamed. Ill and suffering as Cheng Chin was after inhuman tortures, she yet remained so cheerful and confident, eager to devote the little strength left to her to helping Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu.

"It's wrong to think of death before you've taken part in the struggle!" Lu Chia-chuan's words came back to her. She had never really given up her naive longing for martyrdom, but now she realized that this was a symptom of unhealthy weakness — she had not the courage to fight to the last, but dreamed of dying a heroine. This was far from heroic. . . . She gazed at Cheng Chin, inexpressibly ashamed.

By now Shu-hsiu had nearly overcome her homesickness and tearfulness, and was growing quiet and composed. From time to time, having peeped through the door to make sure there was no guard about outside, she would steal over to sit on the edge of Tao-ching's cot and listen, wide-eyed, to Cheng Chin's well-nigh legendary stories of prison life.

On the fourth night Cheng Chin went on with her narrative.

"In prison we even started a few papers and magazines!" She smiled, her eyes were closed. "During my time, we put out two or three publications besides a small news-sheet to exchange information. Some of us wrote articles, others did the editing and others the copying. I was one of the copyists. I couldn't work during the day-time, but at night the others in my cell would take it in turn to stand watch while a couple of quilts were spread over me. Under this 'canopy,' by the light of a small bean-oil

lamp or a flashlight, I would copy out the manuscripts in ink, lying flat on the floor. . . .”

“There’s too much talking in this cell!” warned Wardress Liu through the keyhole. “You’d better keep quiet. If the guards catch you, you’ll be in plenty of trouble!”

“You’re a good sort. Do let us talk a little!” coaxed Cheng Chin. “You know what a hard time we have of it. We’re all so homesick.”

When the wardress said nothing, Cheng Chin told Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu with a smile: “She comes from a worker’s family and can sympathize with us. . . . But I can’t go on with my story in any case. I’m played out after those tortures and my heart’s behaving badly tonight. . . .” She stopped, panting for breath, and presently seemed to doze off. Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu kept quiet so as not to disturb her. But after a short rest, Cheng Chin reached out to take Shu-hsiu’s hand again and said gently: “I want to live just as much as you do, sisters! I’ve a father and mother, a brother and a sister, and many good friends and comrades. . . . I love them all. I wish I could fly out of this dingy prison to the open air to have a good time with them in the bright sunshine!”

“Are you married?” asked Shu-hsiu naively. “Your husband must be a very handsome man.”

“My husband?” Cheng Chin’s face lit up. “Yes, you’re right. He’s tall and handsome, musical, a man of genuine taste and a writer of no mean ability. He was always overflowing with energy. We studied together in the Soviet Union. We were very much in love.”

“Where is he now?” broke in Tao-ching. “If ever there’s a chance, I’d love to meet him.”

“Where is he now? Oh, far, far away. It’s four years since I last saw him. But let’s not talk about him now. I want to tell you about another man whom I met in prison. Would you like that? I can’t sleep just now anyway. And the guards are slack in their rounds at this time of night. So I shall be glad to tell you, if you aren’t too sleepy.” With this flood of words, she launched into her story. She put all her vitality into it and talked late into the night, only stopping occasionally to pant for breath or to rest for a moment.

“Li Wei was a brilliant and extremely able young man, willing to stand hardship and tireless in his studies. He joined the Communist Party before the Great Revolution. The Party sent him to the Soviet Union to study, and it was there that he met the girl who became his wife. They were comrades before they married. In 1928, the year after the failure of the Great Revolution, they went back together to China. He took up underground Party work in Shanghai while she became a mill-hand in a Shanghai cotton mill. The Party headquarters where Li Wei lived passed as a rich man’s residence. It was rather amusing when his wife wanted to see him. She always wore a tunic and trousers in the mill, you see, but she had to put on a fashionable gown before she could enter that house. As she often had no time to go elsewhere to change, she used to carry the gown in a small parcel under her arm and change in a lane near the headquarters before going in.”

“Aiya! How embarrassed she must have been if someone happened to come by just then—especially if it was a man!” Shu-hsiu’s concern was comically touching.

“Oh, Shu-hsiu, don’t interrupt! I’m sure she loved her husband so much she was glad to use any means to see him.” Tao-ching urged Cheng Chin: “Do tell us what happened to them!”

Cheng Chin smiled.

“Don’t be impatient, sisters! Let me see Yes, this is what happened.

“In 1930 they were arrested one after the other and sent to the Soochow prison. The Kuomintang gloated over their capture of Li Wei, for they knew that he was a prominent Party member who must have many connections. They tried by threats and bribes to wrest his secrets from him. But despite all their cunning, despite all the inhuman tortures they inflicted on him, Li Wei stood firm. He knew that his wife was in the same prison, but in order not to implicate her he controlled his feelings and pretended not to know her. He not only put up a stubborn fight himself, but directed his comrades’ struggle. When the enemy knew this they were mad with rage. They hit on a wicked plan and took him to Shanghai. There, dressed in a smart Western suit, seated in a car, he was forced to go with them to arrest more Party members. When they reached their destination, they

tried to pull him out of the car, but he remained lying there and refused to budge. They beat him savagely, but he didn't move. Instead, he shouted to the curious crowd that had gathered: 'I'm a prisoner! They've dressed me in foreign clothes and seated me in a fine car, but my body is covered with painful wounds and I won't get down however hard they beat me. These Kuomintang agents are like wolves!'

"The frustrated Kuomintang secret-service men had to take him back to Soochow. On his return to the prison he told his comrades: 'The enemy won't let me live much longer. I shall soon have to leave you for good.' The others were bitterly distressed, but he studied, worked and did his morning exercises as cheerfully as ever. He was a stickler for personal cleanliness, and whenever he could get a little water he rubbed himself down. He was tall and handsome, with big eyes and jetblack hair. Even some of the gaolers came under his spell. He had a persuasive tongue, and wherever he went he did propaganda work. Sometimes he sang in a fine, clear tenor voice. His splendid character made those gaolers who still had some conscience left treat the prisoners less cruelly.

"At last the day came when he was to be put to death. When the guards came for him, he brushed the dust off his clothes and said to the men in his cells as calmly as usual: 'Comrades, I must leave you now! Carry on the struggle — never give in! We know that communism will triumph in the end!' Then he shook hands with them one by one at the door of the cell, crying warmly: 'I wish you all victory!' After that, with head held high, he strode to the execution grounds . . . His friends gazed sadly after him from behind the bars, each feeling as if a knife were piercing his heart. They heard him sing the *Internationale* clear and loud. Then he shouted at the top of his voice: 'Long live the Chinese Communist Party!' His voice was drowned by a volley of shots from the firing squad. But at once all the political prisoners, as well as some ordinary prisoners — and, of course, his wife — burst out with the *Internationale* together. Many of them could no longer hold back their tears . . ."

Cheng Chin's voice was husky. She was speaking through tears herself.



"Oh, don't go on, sister! I understand!" Tao-ching wept as she stroked Cheng Chin's face in the dark and wiped away the tears streaming down her cheeks.

But Shu-hsiu's curiosity was aroused.

"Sister Cheng!" she cried. "What became of Li Wei's wife? Wasn't she broken-hearted when he died?"

"Please, Shu-hsiu, don't say any more! Don't you understand?" Tao-ching reproached her gently, afraid to upset Cheng Chin further.

"What do you mean?" persisted Shu-hsiu. "I don't understand!"

After a short silence, Cheng Chin answered in a barely audible voice:

"You still don't understand, little sister? After all, Tao-ching is more experienced than you Li Wei was my husband! We parted four years ago."

The cell was plunged into a deep, deep silence. There was not a sound. The three prisoners seemed to have fallen asleep. But the stillness was suddenly broken by a storm of weeping. It was Shu-hsiu sobbing violently again. Only this time she was not crying for her mother. She faltered between her sobs:

"Dear Sister Cheng! I'm so grateful to you! You've taught me to know what life really is, what the truth means!"

A guard came running up with a rifle on his shoulder. This was one of the most savage of their captors. He pounded the iron door with the butt of his gun, pouring out a stream of abuse:

"You bitches! Do you want to start a revolt? What do you mean by such a racket at this hour of the night? Do you want to die?"

As his harsh bellow died away, Tao-ching took Shu-hsiu's hand and said:

"Do you know what, Shu-hsiu? We're not locked up in a prison. We're taking a course in a Marxist-Leninist University!"

CHAPTER 20

That night Tao-ching could not sleep for pain. The burns on her legs had become inflamed and festering, every bone in her body felt crushed. She lay pondering over the story Cheng Chin

had told them and her words of encouragement. Li Wei, a true Bolshevik, had fought stubbornly to the end. Though the enemy had not questioned her again, she ought to be prepared to fight them in court. She no longer thought of death now. "We must struggle to live on, to live on until communism is realized in China." Cheng Chin's story was a powerful inspiration, one which both gladdened and grieved her.

"Aren't you asleep yet, Tao-ching?" It was well past midnight and moonlight was streaming through the window. Cheng Chin could tell from Tao-ching's irregular breathing that she was still awake.

"I've been wondering what to say if the reactionaries question me again, Sister Cheng. Will you give me some advice? I've so little experience."

"Is there any evidence against you in their hands? Have you any special connection with Party members? If you trust me, tell me the truth."

Tao-ching, with full confidence in this veteran revolutionary, answered frankly:

"No, I've no connections with Party members, and they've no evidence against me."

"That's good, Tao-ching. So long as I live I'll do all I can for you. They don't seem to be paying much attention to you and Shu-hsiu, so you may be released soon. For that reason, you must insist that you're not a Party member but an ordinary girl without a job. If they torture you, just grit your teeth and hold out. . . . But I don't think that's very likely, considering how badly you were hurt last time. The thing is never to give in to the enemy — we must fight to the bitter end. You can be quite sure that the final victory will be ours. You're anxious to join the Party, aren't you? If you do as I say, you'll become a good Communist and a front-rank fighter for the peace and happiness of mankind." Cheng Chin had said all this without a pause, but now a fit of coughing convulsed her so that she could not speak for a long time.

"Comrade Cheng!" said Tao-ching in a tremulous voice, taking that soft, thin hand in hers. "I shall never forget this night and your encouragement. I'm going to follow your example, I'm going

to learn to be a Communist and fight to my last breath. Yes, I'm going to work with all my might for that glorious day when I shall become a Party member, and even if I die I want the Party to accept me posthumously. . . ."

"Dear comrade, I'm so glad!" Cheng Chin clasped her hands tightly in the dark. Tao-ching moved by her disinterested friendship, felt tears run down her cheeks.

"Tao-ching, I ought to tell you. . . ." Cheng Chin paused before going on as mildly as ever: "Ever since my last interrogation, I've known that they won't be letting me live much longer. . . . They believe I was sent here by the Central Committee. So I'm prepared. . . ."

Tao-ching's heart missed a beat. She gripped Cheng Chin's hand tightly and demanded: "Sister Cheng! What do you mean? . . ."

Shu-hsiu had woken up and evidently heard Cheng Chin's last words too, for she cried out in astonishment:

"Sister Cheng! What was that you were saying?"

"Why, nothing," answered Cheng Chin guardedly. "Tao-ching and I were chatting because we couldn't sleep — that's all. By the way, Tao-ching, why do you have such a strange name? It's like a nun's."

"My father was a Buddhist. He meant at one time to become a monk, but couldn't tear himself away from his concubine. . . ." Tao-ching stealthily wiped her tears. "That's why he gave me such a hateful name."

Shu-hsiu chuckled and said:

"Oh, do let me tell you! I dreamed about my mother again." She murmured contentedly as if still in a dream: "I saw my small brothers too. When I got home from prison they crowded around me so happily. . . ."

Cheng Chin turned to Tao-ching on her left to wipe away her tears, and then tucked in the quilt of Shu-hsiu on her right. This done, she said quietly:

"It's late now. Let's all try and get some sleep. I'm afraid there'll be trouble if the guard hears us talking."

The next morning guards came to take Cheng Chin out for trial. Still lying in bed, she said: "Just a moment! Let me comb my hair first!"

When she had dressed her long soft hair carefully, they carried her away.

In a few minutes she was brought back again. She lay motionless for some time, too exhausted to speak. When she had recovered a little, the two younger prisoners asked with deep concern:

"Sister Cheng, what did they say? How is your case going?"

"Well, nothing much happened. They simply asked if I was better. If not, they said they might send me somewhere else."

This answer, which satisfied Shu-hsiu, only intensified Tao-ching's anxiety. But she found it hard to put her fears into words.

Cheng Chin spent the whole morning teaching them a song which prisoners in Shanghai, Hangchow and Soochow had sung since 1930.

Prisoners, prisoners of the times,
We have done no wrong!
We were snatched from the line of battle,
From the front of the class struggle,
We are not prisoners but captives.
Despite inhuman tortures,
Hot blood still seethes in our veins.
Iron bars, chains, high prison walls
Can rob us of our freedom,
But our revolutionary spirit remains!

Prisoners, prisoners of the times!
Many have laid down their lives for the cause,
But the living fight on.
Rotten prison fare, prison vermin
May waste our flesh
But cannot wear out our courage!

Prisoners, prisoners of the times!
Failure is the mother of success,
The final victory will be ours!
We steel and temper ourselves
To fight bravely on!
The day will come
When red flags follow the sun
To all parts of the earth!

The song was a long one and Cheng Chin, weak and tired as she was, could teach them only the first and last stanzas. So the three of them spent a happy morning together.

That afternoon they slept from sheer exhaustion. Tao-ching, wakened by a gentle hand, heard Cheng Chin whisper:

"Comrade Lin Tao-ching, there is something I must tell you. I may not live till tomorrow. . . . Some day if you have the chance, please pass on this message for me to the Party. My real name is Lin Hung. I was transferred here from Shanghai last October. Unfortunately, a renegade informed against me and I was arrested soon after I started my work. My conscience is clear, though. I haven't disgraced the Party, but have fought every inch of the way. . . . I hope the Party will enlarge our Red Army a hundred-fold and strengthen her leadership of the resistance to Japan. I know the final victory will be ours. As for you, dear comrade, I want you to fight to the bitter end and strive to become a steadfast Bolshevik. . . ." Lin Hung's beautiful eyes were shining in the dim cell. She did not look like one talking of her own death but of some certainty of happiness — of an inspiring, exhilarating future. Pausing for breath, she closed her eyes for a moment, but opened them again to ask: "Tao-ching, will you promise to pass on my message to the Party?"

Unable to speak for tears, Tao-ching nodded vigorously and reached out to grasp Lin Hung's white fingers. She gazed hard and long at that lovely face so like a marble statue. . . . Her heart seemed to have stopped beating. She wondered how anyone so vital could die.

Before going to sleep that night, Lin Hung took off a rose-coloured cardigan and gave it to Tao-ching.

"You're not very strong, Tao-ching. Please put this on." From beside her pillow she took an attractive plastic comb she had brought from Shanghai, and said to Shu-hsiu with a smile: "Little sister, do you like this comb? I want you to have it as a keepsake."

By this time Shu-hsiu, too, sensed that something was wrong and she and Tao-ching wept together. The night was dark and oppressive, as if a storm were brewing. The hours dragged painfully.

Towards midnight the iron door opened. Lin Hung was laid on one leaf of a door to be carried away. As she was leaving the

cell, she held out both hands to her friends and, though unable to reach them, cried encouragingly: "Goodbye, sisters! Take good care of yourselves!"

Lin Hung had no sooner been carried out of the cell than the prison resounded with shouts which reached to the roof.

"Down with the Kuomintang reactionaries!"

"Long live the Chinese Communist Party!"

"Communism is invincible!"

"Comrades, avenge us!"

It was Lin Hung who started shouting these slogans. She was joined by others, more and more of them, till finally hundreds of prisoners were shouting. Their loud, impassioned cries re-echoed to the sky.

Lying in bed, pressing the rose cardigan to her breast, Tao-ching joined in the slogans with all the strength left to her, though her feeble voice was barely audible.

Shu-hsiu did not join in the shouting. Like a child whose mother has been snatched away, she jumped from her bed to rush after Lin Hung.

"Sister Cheng! Sister Cheng! Don't leave us! . . . You mustn't die!"

A ruthless hand slammed her head against the wall, and a brutal kick knocked her senseless. Her face was bathed with tears.

There was no sound of any shot that night. Ever since Chiang Kai-shek sent his police dog Chiang Hsiao-hsien, Commander of the Third Regiment of Gendarmes, to Peiping, Communists and young patriots had daily been arrested and shot, then reported as "missing." But many others were put to death secretly. That night, together with ten other dauntless fighters, Lin Hung was buried alive.

Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu were alone now in the bleak cell. Groping in the dark, they clasped hands and locked their wasted fingers together, nestling close to each other like two motherless children.

"Tao-ching, there are only the two of us now. I've only you now, dear Tao-ching."

Hugging Tao-ching, Shu-hsiu broke down completely. She was weeping for Lin Hung and for the fact that she had not understood life until now. Though only sixteen, she felt ashamed of her past ignorance.

"Shu-hsiu, dear, don't give way like that!" With tears in her own eyes, Tao-ching gently stroked the younger girl's hair as they lay in the dark. "Remember tonight! Don't ever forget tonight! Don't ever forget Sister Cheng's murder!"

After Lin Hung's death, the task of caring for Shu-hsiu fell naturally to Tao-ching, who taught her and watched over her with a motherly and comradely concern.

But Tao-ching's own health was failing.

All day long she lay, semi-conscious, on a damp, dirty cot. After Lin Hung died, pernicious anaemia, a poor diet and the festering of her burns nearly carried her off. Fortunately the wardress was compassionate enough to bring her some noodles or egg soup from time to time and fetch the prison doctor to attend her. With Shu-hsiu's warm, tender care they finally succeeded in pulling her through.

On the fifth day after Lin Hung's death, another sick prisoner was brought to their cell. She was a plump, round-faced woman of about thirty, with a sallow complexion, flabby muscles and strident voice. She had no sooner lain down than she said warmly to Shu-hsiu, who was watching her curiously:

"You can't be out of your teens yet, little sister. Imagine imprisoning a child like you! . . ."

Opening her eyes a fraction, Tao-ching saw Shu-hsiu respond eagerly:

"I'm sixteen. Why are you here, big sister?"

"Revolutionary work. And you? Are you a Communist?" She turned to Tao-ching and addressed the same question to her in the same friendly tone.

Tao-ching felt rather dubious, for this woman did not look like a revolutionary. Yet an ordinary criminal would not have been sent here. She shook her head languidly without a word. But Shu-hsiu was quick to reply for her:

"Lin Tao-ching here was cruelly tortured. A few days ago we had a very fine person — Cheng Chin — in our cell. When they

put her to death, Sister Lin was so upset that she's grown even weaker. . . ."

Shu-hsiu was ready to prattle innocently on, when Tao-ching coughed and said softly: "Shu-hsiu, will you give me some water, please?"

The girl jumped down from her bed to pour out some water from a chipped enamel mug. As Tao-ching bent over the cup, she squeezed Shu-hsiu's fingers and gave her a warning glance. Shu-hsiu blushed and nodded understandingly.

The newcomer continued to question Shu-hsiu, because she was young and artless.

"This room isn't bad, little sister. It's so quiet!" She cocked her head to light a cigarette and watched the smoke curling up to the low, dark ceiling. Then she smiled at Shu-hsiu, saying: "I've come from the women's ward at the east end of this compound. I couldn't stand the hunger any more. You know they've been on a hunger-strike for the last three days?"

Tao-ching started at this news and could not help asking: "A hunger-strike? Where? . . . Oh, of course. We heard about it! How can they be such fools?"

"You're right. They're absolute fools." Pleased with Tao-ching's answer, the woman turned to look at her. "Even the non-Communists are following the Communists' example. They're protesting against the Kuomintang's secret arrests, secret executions, failure to resist Japan, betrayal of the country and all the rest of it. . . . Our room here is much quieter. Well, let them stir up trouble if they want to." She turned back to Shu-hsiu to ask: "Little sister, did anyone send you a message here? I understand that three or four hundred prisoners started this hunger-strike simultaneously, after exchanging secret messages."

Tao-ching's suspicions were now thoroughly aroused. But before she could find a suitable answer, Shu-hsiu said:

"That's just it! I was wondering who proposed this strike. We haven't had any messages. Why didn't they send us one? It's too bad!"

"You silly child! The Communists didn't notify you because they don't trust you! So we may as well eat our fill for a couple of days. They made me fast because I was in the same cell, but

I couldn't stand it." Hunger had driven this spy posing as a prisoner to disclose her true character.

Shu-hsiu suddenly changed colour. Fixing angry eyes on the woman's bloated face, she spat at her.

"For shame! I call that disgusting! But coming here won't stop you being hungry, for we're going to join the strike too!"

The spy was dumbfounded.

As Tao-ching looked at Shu-hsiu's sensitive, indignant face, she smiled imperceptibly. After a slight pause she said to the spy:

"Thank you for telling us about the strike. If not for you, we'd have let the others down!" She turned to Shu-hsiu to say decisively: "We mustn't wait any longer, Shu-hsiu. From now on we'll refuse all food!"

Shu-hsiu nodded, tears welled up in her eyes, and she answered softly: "I'll do whatever you say, Tao-ching. Now that Sister Cheng is dead, I'll follow your lead. . . . All right?"

The spy stared at them incredulously, straining her ears to catch all they said and watching every movement they made. Soon her cigarette burned her soft fingers and she threw it away with a cry of pain. Then she gave a scornful laugh and with her eyes on the ceiling said bitterly:

"I shouldn't have come here if the wardress hadn't told me that you were sensible people who refused to join in the hunger-strike. Now I find you're both Reds too! And I'd meant to ask my superiors to set you free! . . . Confound that lying wardress!"

The fact was that Wardress Liu, who had come under the influence of Lin Hung, was afraid that if Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu joined in the general hunger-strike their enfeebled constitutions could not stand it. So she had deliberately withheld the news from them, at the same time reporting to the prison authorities that they were against the strike. She went on bringing them food, and good food too when she could get it. And since Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu were confined to their beds, they knew nothing of what was going on outside.

Neither Tao-ching nor Shu-hsiu said any more. But presently, when lunch was brought in, they lay still and ate nothing. The spy made another attempt to induce them to eat. She had taken them for weaklings, easily influenced, which was why from the start she had revealed her true colours. The food the wardress

brought in was quite appetizing, with sausages, steaming rice and a savoury stew. But Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu did not look at it. The spy, however, ate greedily and smiled coaxingly at Shu-hsiu:

"You're only sixteen, little sister. Why be so foolish? If your mother knew you were starving, how bad she'd feel! Look at this! Come and eat something, and when you've finished I'll send you home."

Shu-hsiu glanced at Tao-ching, who met her eyes steadily. Both of them remained silent. Finding her wiles useless, the woman, who had made a hearty meal, pulled the quilt over her head and went to sleep. When supper was brought in, Wardress Liu urged Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu to eat, but they politely refused. The spy had another substantial meal after which she went to sleep again, so disturbing Tao-ching by her snoring that the girl could not get any rest. At about midnight she started coughing, and at once Shu-hsiu raised her head in the dark to ask:

"Are you still awake, Tao-ching? Do you feel hungry?"

"No, Shu-hsiu!" replied Tao-ching in a voice that trembled. "But it's not easy to go without food, dear. Do you think you can stick it out?"

A long while passed before Shu-hsiu's answer:

"I think I can. Whenever I meet with any difficulty now, I can see Sister Cheng standing before me. Don't worry about me, Tao-ching. I'm not nearly as badly hurt as you. It's your condition that worries me."

"I'm all right. I'm still young and I'm well on the way to recovery." Tao-ching's blood was racing and she was flushed with excitement. "You know, Shu-hsiu, we're sure to win this strike. It's not just the two of us — hundreds of prisoners have gone on strike. It's really a great struggle! Cruel as Chiang Hsiao-hsien is, he dare not starve us all to death."

"I'll follow your example, Tao-ching, and do whatever you do. I shan't mind even if I starve to death." Shu-hsiu choked back her sobs, not wanting Tao-ching to know that she was crying.

"What a foolish girl! Why should anyone so young choose to starve to death?" They both started to hear this loud comment from the spy, who had only been pretending to be asleep. Now she set to work on Shu-hsiu. "They say 'A wise man listens to advice.' You're only a girl — why die for the Communists? Think

of your father and mother! Have you a boy friend? Imagine the young lovers in the parks now, laughing and chatting happily together. Don't you envy them?"

Silence followed. Both Tao-ching and Shu-hsiu scorned to answer. The small, dark cell was dank and musty. Shu-hsiu stopped crying and gritted her teeth as she held her hands to her stomach, tormented by hunger.

The following afternoon, when she saw that she could not prevail on them to eat, the spy got up, patted the dust from her clothes and waddled off with a vicious parting glance at the two girls who were now too weak to move. A few minutes later, Shu-hsiu was dragged out for questioning. She was carried back covered with blood, her face badly bruised, her hair loose about her neck, too exhausted even to weep. She was thrown on to the hard, wooden bed as if she were a corpse.

When she regained consciousness under Tao-ching's anxious eyes, she blurted out:

"I didn't tell them anything, Tao-ching! I'm only an ordinary schoolgirl, knowing nothing about politics. How can I tell who started it all? . . . I didn't give in. I'm going to keep on fasting with all the others." She said this without a single tear, then lost consciousness again.

Tears rolled down Tao-ching's cheeks — dear Shu-hsiu! China could be proud of daughters like her.

One day dragged past, then a second and a third. Tortured by hunger and their painful injuries, they lay most of the time in a stupor. Wardress Liu had been transferred for not telling the truth, and the cell for women casualties was as gloomy, musty and quiet as a grave. But each time they came to and opened their eyes, they exchanged warm, loving glances. Once Shu-hsiu stretched a thin, trembling hand towards Tao-ching and her pale lips quivered as she murmured:

"Mother! You're like a mother to me! . . ." She admired Tao-ching as much as Cheng Chin or her own mother. Tao-ching's gentle, loving eyes, her fearlessness, which equalled that of Cheng Chin's, brought home to Shu-hsiu the strength of the revolution, a strength that filled men's hearts with warmth and inspired them to noble deeds.

On the fourth day—the seventh day of the general hunger-strike—Tao-ching was aroused from her stupor by something striking lightly against her face. She gave a start and put her hand to her cheek. A tiny ball of paper rolled down her pillow. Unfolding it, she read this message scribbled in pencil:

All of your fellow-prisoners are very glad to know that you joined in the struggle by taking part in the hunger-strike. Today we are ending the strike. The authorities have granted some of our demands. We hope you will eat as usual and take good care of your health. Don't eat too much to begin with. We'll keep in touch with you.

Tao-ching roused Shu-hsiu and handed her the note. As the girl ran her eyes over it, her thin hands trembled.

"Is it really true, Tao-ching? Let's start with a little congee, shall we?"

Tao-ching laughed. She had been reduced to a shadow of her former self.

"But we must make sure that this isn't a trick. The enemy will stoop to anything. We'd better wait and see. . . ."

About two hours later it was time for supper. In the passage outside they heard the clank of food-pails, and the swearing of the orderlies and guards.

"Devil take them! If they meant to starve, why not make a proper job of it? Why start eating again—and demanding congee too! They don't know what death means, the scum!"

When the new wardress asked roughly if they wanted any supper, Tao-ching replied directly:

"We want the same as all the others. Please bring us some congee, quickly!"

In unity there is unlimited strength. When Tao-ching knew that she and Shu-hsiu were not alone or helpless, she felt a part of a great collective. Though they were separated from the others, their hearts were closely bound. True, lying in that dark, isolated cell, they could not see all the resolute individuals who made up that collective; but it seemed to them that countless warm arms had been thrown round them and countless ardent cheeks pressed against their own. They were one with the other dauntless, death-defying prisoners. The note thrown into their cell acted upon them

like some miraculous potion, restoring the strength they had lost through sickness and torture. After a meal of congee, their spirits soared. That night Shu-hsiu stole over to Tao-ching's bed, and lay down beside her to whisper:

"Tao-ching, do you know what? I've just realized the full meaning of our struggle. Before today, I never dreamed that so many people here were as brave as Sister Cheng!"

Tao-ching smiled. Her face was calm and happy. Unconsciously imitating one of Cheng Chin's gestures, she stroked Shu-hsiu's hair and answered eagerly:

"I'm so happy today, Shu-hsiu! I feel I've taken another step forward in my understanding. The enemy can never isolate us again—we shall always be a part of the revolutionary family."

CHAPTER 24

With the signing of the Ho-Umezu Agreement* in 1935, the Kuomintang government surrendered its sovereign rights in North China to the Japanese imperialists. Following the withdrawal of Kuomintang troops from Hopei and the evacuation of the Kuomintang office from Peiping, Hu Meng-an left for the south. As a result, Lin Tao-ching and Yu Shu-hsiu after more than a year's imprisonment were released in July 1935, for lack of evidence against them.

Shu-hsiu went home, while Tao-ching went to stay with her friend Wang Hsiao-yen, who had come to the prison to fetch her.

Standing by the window in the Wang's house two days later, Tao-ching stared abstractedly at a pot of jasmine on the sill. Shortly before she was freed, Chang Hua-ying, a comrade who had kept in touch with her in prison, had told her that someone would call on her directly she was out. But two days had passed and

* Ho-Umezu Agreement was signed in June 1935 by Ho Ying-chin the Kuomintang government representative in North China, and Yoshiji Umezu, commander of Japanese armed forces in North China. In this agreement the Kuomintang government accepted the demand presented by Japan in May, thereby substantially surrendering China's sovereign rights in the provinces of Hopei and Chahar.

nobody had come. What would this new Party contact be like? . . . Hsiao-yen had gone to a lecture, while Tao-ching stayed in expectantly, in order not to miss a possible visitor.

Around ten o'clock Chiang Hua* made his appearance. Surprised and overjoyed, she hurried to meet him and gripped his hand with a smile.

"Why, Brother Chiang! It's almost two years since last we met."

"Yes, more than a year. You're just out, I understand."

Chiang Hua looked like a government employee in his blue silk gown and black leather shoes. His hair was a little tousled, but his kind eyes were as steady and confident as ever.

"So much has happened since we parted at Tingsien. . . ." Looking at him with dancing eyes, Tao-ching did not know what to say. Chiang Hua was smiling too, but noting how pale and thin she had grown he remarked:

"Tao-ching, you look taller."

She burst into laughter. "What nonsense! Still growing at my age? Perhaps losing weight has something to do with it. . . . Sit down, Brother Chiang. Let's have a good talk."

"I'm afraid I'm in a hurry. I've only a few minutes to spare. By the way, can you write an account of yourself today?"

Tao-ching looked astonished.

"What for?"

"Didn't Chang Hua-ying speak to you about it? Your dream's going to come true, Tao-ching, because you proved yourself in prison. The leadership has decided to admit you to the Party." Chiang Hua's broad, ruddy face was radiant.

Tao-ching stood rooted to the ground, overwhelmed with happiness. She flushed and stared, round-eyed, unable to speak.

"Is it true?" she murmured at last. "Is my dream of years going to come true? Am I really to have the greatest happiness on this earth? . . ." Her eyes were moist as she smiled shyly at him. Her lips quivered as if to speak, but she said no more.

"In writing your history, stick to facts," added Chiang Hua in a low voice. "Never hold back anything from the Party."

*Chiang Hua, or Li Meng-yu, had led the students who went to Nanking to demonstrate against the government. Earlier in the story, in Tingsien, he guided Tao-ching when she did underground work for the Party among the peasants.

"Of course. I am sure I can be absolutely true to the Party." Tao-ching spoke softly and unhurriedly, trying to control her exultation. She smiled at him. "So it was you whom Chang Hua-ying meant when she told me somebody would come to see me! Brother Chiang, is it necessary to have her introduce you to me?"

"Yes, that's the regular procedure." His tone was rather cool and business-like. Chiang Hua was naturally reserved. He was pleurably excited to have met Tao-ching again, and even felt stirring of some deeper emotion, yet he appeared quite calm and even offhand. After a few minutes more he shook hands and hurried off. Only when he looked back at her as she stood at the gate, having seen him out, did she sense the warmth and friendship he had kept hidden.

"Just a minute!" she called. He stopped and she hurried over to him. "Do you know what sort of person Tai Yu is?"

"Tai Yu? What's your opinion of him?"

"I can't help finding him different from the rest of you." When Chiang Hua remained silent, she continued: "Do you know that he and Hsiao-yen are in love?"

"I didn't know that. In that case. . . ." He paused before going on: "We must be careful. Don't stay with Hsiao-yen any longer than you can help. . . . All right, let's meet at the Winter Palace tomorrow to talk things over. But don't take Hsiao-yen into your confidence any more."

Tao-ching, though startled, nodded and said nothing.

The great day came at last.

It was a summer afternoon. A dense pall of dust hung over the sweltering Peiping streets. The whole city — streets, buildings, traffic and endless stream of passers-by — was enveloped in thick, stifling, motionless dust. Peiping looked infinitely old and weary. Overhead you might catch sight of green branches thrusting up against the blue sky, imparting a hint of youthful vigour to the scene. But all else brought home to you the chaos and decrepitude into which the hoary city had lapsed.

Tao-ching was walking swiftly and lightly along, her heart swelling with joy greater than she had ever known, yet tinged with

solemnity and agitation. Preoccupied with her thoughts, she smiled absent-mindedly at a young man passing by. The next moment she realized, blushing, that in her exultation and confusion she had smiled at an utter stranger.

At last she reached a quiet lane, where she found the old, shabby house to which she had been directed. Acting on Chiang Hua's instructions, she examined the door and was relieved to discover two uneven crosses chalked in one corner at the top. She smiled although her heart was beating fast. Knocking lightly, she asked softly:

"Is Mrs. Wang at home?"

The door was opened almost immediately by a slim girl in a print gown, who took Tao-ching's hand and whispered:

"So you've come! Welcome!"

Tao-ching recognized her with amazement. This was clever, capable Hsu Hui. But Hsu Hui's sudden appearance here only added to her bewilderment.

"Come in, please, Tao-ching. Big Sister Liu is expecting you." With a wary glance right and left to see if there was anyone about, Hsu Hui closed the gate and the two girls went inside.

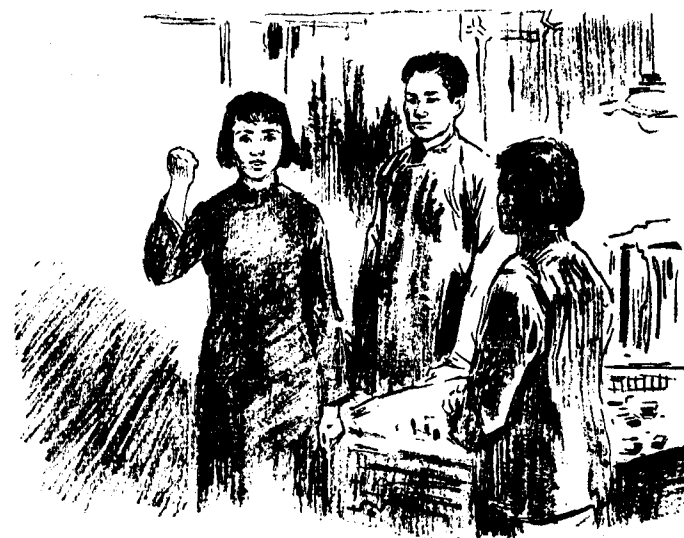
It was an old-style house with junk heaped in the corners of the small courtyard. Hsu Hui showed Tao-ching into a room facing north, where Chiang Hua and thin, quiet Liu Yi-feng were sitting waiting for her. Tao-ching went straight up to the latter and took her hand, crying excitedly:

"Big Sister Liu! . . . We've met before. . . . You were Mrs. Li then, weren't you?"

"Comrade Lin, the leadership has read your personal history and checked it carefully. Today you are being formally admitted to the Party." She spoke in a solemn but eager voice, and smiled as she took Tao-ching's hand.

Tao-ching's heart was beating furiously. She fixed her eyes on Liu Yi-feng's kindly, smiling face but could not speak for excitement. Since neither of the others spoke, silence descended upon the small, shadowy room.

"Aunty! Since we have guests, why not have dumplings for supper?" called Hsu Hui from outside, made uneasy by their stillness. She put her head through the door, pursing her lips. Taking the hint, Chiang Hua broke the silence by clattering the



dominoes on the table. Tao-ching looked up to find him staring at her. For the first time, in his calm, honest eyes, she saw something of the affection he had for her. Deeply stirred, she looked at a landscape on the dark wall, and her face grew grave, her breathing more rapid. In a flash, the painting faded to be replaced by a great red flag bearing the emblem of the hammer and sickle.

"From today forward I will dedicate my life unconditionally to the Party, to the most sublime, most noble cause in the world." Her voice was little more than a whisper. And she had to break off as tears rolled down her cheeks. . . . There are surely no more precious tears shed than these! For no joy can match that of a Communist when he joins the Party and becomes aware that he is no longer an isolated individual but one of the standard-bearers of communism, fighting in the vanguard to liberate his country, when he realizes that he has thrown in his lot with that of thousands upon thousands of his fellow creatures, to devote his life to winning freedom and happiness for millions.

Dusk was falling, and the room was dim and quiet.

By degrees, Tao-ching grew calmer. When she saw tears of joy in the others' eyes, she could not check a smile. Before she could speak, Liu Yi-feng took her hand and said quietly:

"Congratulations! I believe our Party has found another good comrade in you, Tao-ching. Our Party is indestructible, because when one fighter falls another rises to take his place."

Chiang Hua, who had remained silent, stepped up to Tao-ching and shook her hand, saying: "Comrade Lin, my heartiest congratulations! Ours is a great cause, and we have a long way to go. As the one who recommended you for Party membership, I want you always to live up to the glorious name of a Communist." He gripped her hand tightly before relinquishing it. At that moment Hsu Hui came in. She had been keeping watch while preparing supper in the courtyard, and her fingers were covered with flour. She shook Tao-ching's hand and congratulated her with a smile. Her penetrating eyes were warm and kind.

Tao-ching exchanged firm handshakes with each in turn. Her face was still flushed, her heart still throbbing, but she bore herself with a new steadiness and serenity.

Presently Liu Yi-feng and Hsu Hui left, while Chiang Hua had a talk with Tao-ching.

"Are you clear about the present situation?" he asked her point-blank. "I don't suppose you got much news in prison."

"No, I'm quite out of touch, Brother Chiang. Will you tell me what I ought to know? I take a more serious interest in politics than I used to." Remembering how he had quizzed her on current events in Tingsien, she stole a mischievous look at him.

Chiang Hua thought for a few seconds before telling her:

"The Kuomintang has enforced a rigid censorship. For information on the Soviet areas, instructions from the Central Committee of the Party or news about the Comintern, we have to rely on Soviet or other foreign sources. The *Chiu Kuo Shih Pao*, published in Paris, is quite good and informative. Do you ever see it?"

"Yes, though not very often. Brother Chiang, tell me about recent developments, will you?"

Chiang Hua began to outline the political situation.

"As you know, Japan's armed aggression and the traitorous policy of the Kuomintang have plunged the country into grave danger. The Japanese demand that China should educate the people to be slaves has made Chiang Kai-shek start burning books and burying scholars alive like the First Emperor of Chin. Batch after batch of patriots, including students, scholars, professors and

journalists, have been arrested or killed. To crown all, the Ho-Umezu Agreement stipulated that Kuomintang offices be disbanded and so those in Peiping and Hopei were moved to the south. Even that notorious butcher, Chiang Hsiao-hsien, who showed such courage in killing Communists, fled in terror from this bigger enemy. The Kuomintang policy of 'non-resistance' has made various traitors rant about 'Sino-Japanese Friendship,' 'Sino-Japanese Co-operation,' 'Sino-Japanese Economic Assistance' and 'Pan-Asianism.' Now, after the loss of Northeast China, North China is in danger of being occupied. The Chinese people are not going to stand for this much longer. Throughout the length and breadth of the country you can hear the call: 'Drive out the enemy! Save the country!'

"In fact, the Chinese Red Army is on its way north now to resist the invaders. It is already several months since it set out on this Long March under the command of Comrade Mao Tse-tung. It has reached Szechuan by way of Kiangsi, Hunan, Kweichow and Kwangsi. A million Kuomintang troops have tried to wipe out our revolutionary forces by means of encirclement or pursuit, but they've failed completely. The Red Army captured Tsunyi in Kweichow. It routed the Kuomintang troops at Sungkan in Szechuan, terrifying the wealthy citizens of Chungking into remitting their money to Shanghai for safety. The revolution is advancing by leaps and bounds."

"Do you think our Red Army will soon fight its way to North China, Brother Chiang?" asked Tao-ching, who had listened with excited interest. "I'm sure it won't be long before the Soviet and the White areas merge and the hammer and sickle are seen all over the country. Don't you agree?"

Chiang Hua smiled. But his kindly eyes were grave and stern. Gazing at Tao-ching's flushed, childlike face, he answered solemnly:

"Things are moving fast. There can be no question of the final victory. What matters is the timing, the conditions under which we work and the correct leadership of the Party. Stalin once said this about the Chinese revolution: 'The enemies of the Chinese revolution — both internal and external — are too numerous and too strong.' So to think that victory will be easy and quick is rather a romantic notion, Tao-ching."

Tao-ching grew very red. In their conversations at Tingsien, she recalled, Chiang Hua had pulled her up abruptly just like this.

"You're quite right," she said. "I know our cause is a great one but the road to victory is neither smooth nor straight. Besides the class enemy at home, there's enemy from outside—the Japanese imperialists. Besieged from within and without, our country faces countless difficulties. But I assure you that I'm psychologically prepared for all these difficulties. . . . All the same, sometimes I can't help dreaming. I do long so much for the day when I shall see the victory!" A thought suddenly struck her and tears filled her eyes. "I haven't told you about Comrade Lin Hung whom I met in prison. . . ." She earnestly repeated to him Lin Hung's message to the Party.

Chiang Hua was stirred by her warm-heartedness, her high ideals and her account of Lin Hung. He stared reflectively out of the window for a while.

"Tao-ching, there's something admirable about you," he said turning quietly to her. "Anyone who knows you is bound to be impressed by your enthusiasm. . . . I can see quite clearly how much Lin Hung helped you. I'm ashamed to have done so much less for you than she did."

"How can you say that?" protested Tao-ching. "I've always looked up to you as a good teacher or as my elder brother. I've always been grateful for your guidance. . . . You are so eminently practical—in that respect Lu Chia-chuan can't compare with you. . . ." Puzzled by the way Lu Chia-chuan had come to her mind, she could not keep from blushing.

Chiang Hua paid no attention to such fine points of psychology, however. Setting this subject aside, he explained to her what a new Party member needed to know. After that, he told her:

"Tao-ching, you're to work in a Party organization. What do you think of that?"

Taken by surprise, Tao-ching hastened to ask:

"What will I be expected to do?"

"You're going to help Big Sister Liu with the distribution of literature and liaison work."

"Good! When do I begin?"

"Tomorrow. But, mind, the work may seem trivial drudgery. You must be mentally prepared." At this point he recollected

something and added: "Tao-ching, from now on you must use a different name, because yours is in the files of the Peiping Prison. And don't tell Wang Hsiao-yen what you'll be doing. You must pretend to be backward too. You understand why, don't you?"

Tao-ching nodded, realizing that Tai Yu was involved. But since Chiang Hua did not enlighten her further, she refrained from asking any questions.

Chiang Hua went on to ask her about Tai Yu's visit to her at Tingsien. When she had told him the whole story, he asked her to prepare a detailed account of her dealings with Tai Yu and hand it to him two days later. Thereupon the two of them left the house together.

Tao-ching went back to Hsiao-yen's home. As her friend had not yet returned, she sorted out her things and then sat down to read the papers and some magazines. She was completely absorbed in this when she heard her name called:

"Tao-ching! Why are you looking so happy?" Hsiao-yen had come quietly in, carrying her books. She had seen Tao-ching raise her head with a smile, quite oblivious to her presence, till she went up to her and patted her shoulder.

"Oh, you're back, Hsiao-yen!" Tao-ching rose and pushed her papers away. Looking over her shoulder with a mischievous smile, she asked: "Is Tai Yu coming this evening? I don't want to be in the way."

"Don't be silly, Tao-ching! Yes, he'll be coming soon. Of course you're not in the way. I was just wishing that you knew him better." Hsiao-yen took Tao-ching's hand with an appealing look. "I want you to help me to find out everything about him. But I believe in him—I'm sure he's a good man."

At this moment, Tai Yu came in. He shook hands with Tao-ching and said hoarsely:

"So you've been released, Tao-ching. Let me congratulate you. In future you'll be able to help Hsiao-yen. . . ." A forced smile on his sallow face, he glanced at Hsiao-yen.

They sat down in the small, neat room, which looked brighter still when Hsiao-yen turned on another light.

"Don't make fun of me, Tai Yu! I'm in no position to help Hsiao-yen. I've fallen a long way behind. More than a year of prison life has made me quite muddle-headed and useless." Lean-

ing against the wall and screwing up her eyes, Tao-ching looked at them with an arch smile, the picture of empty-headed frivolity.

But she was given away by her unsophisticated friend, who smiled at Tai Yu and said:

"Don't you think Tao-ching has changed enormously since she came out of prison? I do! She used to be so warm-hearted, but rather childish, superficial and quixotic. Now she's entirely different. In the past, she was always talking about her ideals, her hopes and her difficulties. But for the last few days she's talked about nothing but working for other people. She's not said a single word about herself, except in answer to my questions. . . ." She winked and smiled mysteriously at Tao-ching. "She never talks about herself now. She's grown deep, don't you see? Of course, she's as warm-hearted as ever, but that warmth of hers is lying hidden within a new strength. It's like the energy of a generator, which mustn't be wasted or released for nothing!"

"Oh, do be quiet, Hsiao-yen!" interrupted Tao-ching laughingly. "You're making all that up! Everything seems futile to me now. When I see you take an active interest in politics, I try to do the same, just to please you, my dear." Tao-ching tossed her head. "But I'm quite happy just to fritter away my time. I don't want to think about serious questions any more."

Hsiao-yen stared at her in amazement. What did Tao-ching mean by backsliding in this way? Nonplussed, she decided not to press the point at present.

Meanwhile Tai Yu sat there moodily, smoking one cigarette after another, nodding or forcing a smile from time to time. Tao-ching noticed his coldness, but could hardly comment on it. Hsiao-yen, however, turned to him and said reproachfully:

"What's wrong, Tai Yu? . . ." She looked at him for a few seconds and smiled. "I wonder why you're such a creature of moods? Sometimes there's no stopping your talking, and sometimes you're quiet and glum as if something were on your mind." She said no more, for fear of hurting his feelings.

"Oh, there's nothing the matter. You girls are too hypersensitive." Tai Yu turned his bulging eyes toward Tao-ching, as if to seek her approval. Then he told Hsiao-yen:

"Hsiao-yen, if you're really concerned about your friend, give her some material help. Look at her clothes!"

"Why, if you hadn't mentioned it, I'd have forgotten. A few days ago, I thought of asking mother for some money, but I didn't like to — they have so little to spare. Today, though, I've got hold of fifteen dollars. It's not much, but it's better than nothing. Do take it, Tao-ching, and buy something you need." She took the money from her pocket and put it on the table.

"Thank you, Hsiao-yen." Tao-ching smiled. "To tell the truth, I am really short of money. This gown is worn out and I need a new one."

Hsiao-yen turned to Tai Yu triumphantly.

"See? Isn't that a proof that she's changed? In the old days she would never — or very rarely — accept money. She was always saying she refused to stoop for five *tau* of rice. . . . But now, for the sake of our common cause, she's ready to stoop for one *tau* if necessary."

"Yes, you're right. She's grown more determined. . . ." Tai Yu chuckled.

Tao-ching, sensing that his response was insincere, flushed with anger and exclaimed:

"Don't talk like an idiot, Tai Yu! Don't forget that I've only just regained my freedom. If what you said was true, I'd soon be back in prison."

Tai Yu and Hsiao-yen stared at her in amazement.

CHAPTER 25

"Mother" — whenever I call her mother, I feel the same warmth and strength as when I think of Lin Hung, whom I shall never forget. Yet she's only thirty-three, not much older than I am.

She is thin, pale and delicate, and already she has a pronounced stoop, due to long imprisonment and cruel tortures. She's had more than her share of tragedy: her husband gave his life for the revolution, her son is missing, and she is utterly alone. Yet when you look at her, you can't help being struck by her calm, gentle eyes. She seldom talks about herself, and usually works in silence. Ostensibly we are mother and daughter earning a living as washerwomen,

but in reality she's a member of the District Party Committee and I'm a liaison worker. When she hands me an important and urgent document, she fixes me with her kind, steady eyes and gives me quiet, motherly instructions:

"Hsiu-lan, take this shirt to Mr. Wang. Be careful with it!" Whenever she gives me an assignment like this, I feel a surge of indescribable energy, and her kind, steady gaze seems to set my heart on fire. She watches me as I walk out of our old ramshackle gate, while I inwardly assure her: "Dear mother, I promise to carry out this task!"

The foregoing was an extract from the diary Tao-ching kept while working for the Party. For Liu Yi-feng inspired her with the same happiness and content she had known in the company of Lin Hung.

Our work is hard and exacting. There is so much to do, but only the two of us to do it. My share consists of copying, delivering messages, washing and mending clothes — we need this money because our funds are limited. Sometimes I have to work right round the clock. Eating nothing but a little corn-bread during the day, I often feel dizzy by midnight. But mother invariably sits by my side. And her calm, kindly eyes, the fine lines on her face — she has aged before her time — make me forget hunger and tiredness. Whenever I work through the night, she sits beside me to keep me company. I copy while she reads. After midnight, she stands up with a smile and pours me a cup of boiled water, or produces two buns. She breaks off less than half a bun for herself, and insists on my eating the rest.

Yes, she often goes hungry herself, but makes sure that I have enough. Last time I took the water and, looking at her thin, tired face, gave her the buns.

"I'm not hungry, mother," I said. "You've had practically no food today. Do eat these!"

"No, you're still young, and must take care of your health. I'm responsible to the Party for your welfare."

This dear mother of mine is such a fine character!

Mother not only watches over my physical welfare, but guides my thinking too. Her teaching is profound as well as concrete. When I started work here, I wasn't alto-

gether happy about the job, though I'd told Chiang Hua that I would do my best. I've always been a dreamer, and I often dreamed of life in the Red Army or in the midst of fierce battles — a romantic life of storm and stress. I can't settle down easily to ordinary work. I haven't completely overcome this failing even after several years. So when I came here and was asked to do this routine job of copying, delivering messages, washing and mending, I felt a secret resentment. Though I said nothing, mother soon realized this. That's why one night — a night never to be forgotten! — she taught me a lesson. And he, the friend whom I shall never forget as long as I live, educated me too with the example of his fearless struggle and heroic death. It's only now that I realize how deeply I have loved him all these years. If he were still alive, if he hadn't been murdered by the Kuomintang butchers, how happy I should be! . . . But now my hopes have been shattered. Like mother, I have lost the man I love. . . . Writing this, I can't keep back my tears. If I knew which grave at Rain Blossom Mount were his, I'd go to Nanking and take an oath there to avenge him. . . .

One autumn night, a chill wind rustled the torn paper of their windows. The moon had risen high in the sky and its cold, silver beams were shining on to the flushed faces of Liu Yi-feng and Tao-ching. It was a beautiful yet lonely night, and they had gone to bed but could not sleep. After a whispered discussion of their work they touched on more personal matters. Turning her head towards Tao-ching, Liu Yi-feng asked:

"Hsiu-lan, there's one thing you've never told me about yourself — is there anyone you care for specially?" Tao-ching had taken the name Chang Hsiu-lan since embarking on this work with Liu Yi-feng.

The girl, usually so outspoken and straightforward, replied after a short pause:

"There is and there isn't. . . . I'd rather not think about it, mother."

"What do you mean? Who is he?"

Tao-ching sat up, threw a jacket over her shoulders and got out of bed. Liu Yi-feng watched her in silence. In the pale moonlight, Tao-ching's young, pretty face seemed veiled in grief. Sitting

lightly on the edge of the elder woman's bed and taking her slender hands, she said in a trembling voice:

"Mother, you'll be surprised to hear it's Lu . . . Lu Chia-chuan. I've been waiting for him. . . ."

Strange to say, Liu Yi-feng did not appear astonished.

"So it's Lu," she responded quietly. "He's a very fine comrade. When did you two fall in love?"

"We never fell in love. At least, not outwardly, though I feel in my heart that he loves me. That's why I've been waiting for him all these years." In the moon-lit room Tao-ching's eyes glittered with tears. She bowed her head and gripped Liu Yi-feng's hands hard. "Please tell me, mother, if he's still alive," she pleaded. "Have you heard anything? . . ."

Liu Yi-feng shook her head. She was wondering whether or not to break the news. She did not want to destroy Tao-ching's dream of happiness and plunge her honest heart into despair. Before she could reach a decision, Tao-ching went on softly:

"Mother, I've seldom spoken to anyone about my innermost feelings. The fact is, I've never met anyone more worthy of love and respect. The first time I saw him, I felt as if we were old friends. . . ." Her face was flushed, her voice quivering with emotion. Liu Yi-feng stroked her hands and listened in silence. "I was so unhappy then with Yu Yung-tse," Tao-ching continued. "What a pity it was that I met him first! The moment he told me that Lu Chia-chuan was arrested, I knew how deeply I was in love with him. . . ."

Tao-ching leaned against the side of the bed and said no more. She had no wish to give rein now to feelings repressed for almost three years.

Liu Yi-feng was silent too. A chilly draught was coming from the window. She drew Tao-ching in beside her under her quilt and sitting up she said:

"My child, I mustn't conceal the truth from you any longer. He died for the cause. . . ."

"Died for the cause?"

Tao-ching repeated the words mechanically. Then, covering her head with the quilt, she remained silent. Liu Yi-feng turned on the light and fetched a thread-bound copy of *An Anthology of Chinese Classics* from an old wicker basket. Opening the soiled,

discoloured book, she slit open two or three of its double leaves and drew out several small sheets of coarse, yellowish paper. She went over to Tao-ching, pulled back the quilt and whispered:

"Don't take it so badly, Hsiu-lan! Here's a letter he wrote to you. . . . Forgive me for not giving it to you earlier."

Tao-ching started up and stared incredulously.

"He wrote me a letter?"

"Yes. Last September I received this through a friend. He told me to give it to you at my discretion. You were still in prison then. It was probably just at that time that Lu was killed. I didn't hand it over to you immediately after your release because I didn't know what he meant to you and I didn't want you to grieve. So I've kept it all this time." Holding the pencilled pages reverently, she put them carefully in Tao-ching's hands.

Tao-ching received her letter with fingers that trembled. Indeed she was shivering uncontrollably. Before she could read it, her tears fell on to the paper. But finally she pulled herself together.

If you ever read these lines, you will already have become my good comrade. These past years, though I have been in this wretched prison, I have kept hoping that you would become a fighter for the most advanced class of mankind, become my comrade, one of those who will carry on our revolutionary work. For every day Communists are shedding their blood and laying down their lives to hasten the hour of victory. . . . Dear comrade, dear Tao-ching, it may be my turn to die soon — only chance saved me from death in Peiping. But now I have lived and fought a few months longer, which is a great joy to me. I am waiting now with an easy mind for the last hour. The most glorious day of my life will be that on which I give it up for the cause of communism, for the peace and happiness of my country and of mankind. It is possible that by the time you read this letter, I shall have been put to death on Rain Blossom Mount. But when I think that our comrades are legion, that they will carry on the fight when those before them have fallen, that you will be one of them, and that the final victory will be ours — I feel a great pride and joy.

I have had some news of you, and I have received your letter. I am sorry that we shall not be able to work together again. At this last hour I should like to bare my heart to

you. But no, I had better not. . . . How I hate the butchers who have robbed us—and so many others—of our happiness! Dear Tao-ching, press ahead as hard as you can! Go all out to steel yourself! Be bold to avenge us! Never give up fighting for the cause of communism! With all his heart your sincere friend wishes you happiness. . . .

After reading this, her first and last letter from Lu Chia-chuan, Tao-ching shed no more tears. Suddenly possessed by a strange serenity, she stood there like a lovely white marble statue. Although he was no more among the living, it was not for nothing that she had waited for him and shed so many tears when she thought of him. He had proved worthy of the glorious title of Communist. His love had not needed to be put into words and to the last he had not forgotten her. In her grief and despair, she felt a deep warmth and comfort which would last as long as his immortal memory.

The next evening, before sleeping, she sat on the edge of her bed with lowered head. She could not stem the tears coursing down her cheeks. She had never known true love. She could not bear to recall her futile, nightmarish affair with Yu Yung-tse. It was her tragedy that when she was a little older and had come to understand the meaning of life, when she had met a man worthy of her love and was ready to lavish on him that sincere affection of which only a mature woman disappointed in love is capable, Lu Chia-chuan should have been arrested! Before she had time to open her heart to him, he was snatched away by the reactionaries. After his arrest, whenever she was at leisure, whenever difficulties or emergencies arose, the thought of him filled her with infinite strength and courage. The time wore on. One year passed, then a second and a third. . . . And the answer she finally received was simply: "He died for the cause." "I shall have been put to death on Rain Blossom Mount." Her heart burned with bitter grief and indignation. She must avenge the death of Lu Chia-chuan, the loss of thousands upon thousands of revolutionaries and her own lost happiness. . . . She stood up abruptly, seized Liu Yi-feng's hand and, gazing at her with red, swollen eyes, requested:

"Mother, let me go to the Soviet area! I want to take up arms. . . . I can't bear to go on living peacefully here!"

Liu Yi-feng, sitting on her bed, remained silent for a while. Her pale, composed face was touched with some deep sorrow. "Hsiu-lan, here's another letter. You had better read this too. I once went through what you are suffering now." From an inner pocket she took another sheet of faded paper.

"Another letter?" Tao-ching took the sheet of stained, creased stationery. After a swift glance at Liu Yi-feng, she began to read silently:

March 27, 1928

My Dear,

The expected sentence has now been pronounced, so this is my last letter to you. Don't grieve too much. Remember your time is near. You have heavy responsibilities before you. Take good care of the child and of yourself too, so that you can avenge me!

My fate was not determined today. I've been reckoning on this all along. This is my final home-coming—a glorious death. Believe me, I am not distressed but indescribably proud and happy to have fought to the last for the cause of proletarian revolution. My dear, you are a staunch comrade who can stand up to tests. Let us take our leave of each other cheerfully.

Only one thing worries me: your headstrong temper and your recklessness. The victory can't be won overnight, you know. Go among the masses and work hard. On no account do anything rash because of my death!

If the child is too much for you, let someone adopt it. Don't let the child hold you back. For remembrance's sake, will you call our only child Nien-lin?*

My last word to you is: Fight to the end! Steel yourself to become a really strong Bolshevik fighter! Have the courage to take over my unfinished task!

Wen-lin

The two women, whose fates were so alike, talked in low voices that night about their grief. Wiping away the tears which had run down her cheeks, Liu Yi-feng said:

* This means "Remember Lin."

"My husband's last letter has never ceased to inspire me. Since his death, Hsiu-lan, since first I read that letter, I have changed a great deal. In the past, although I came from a working-class family, I was impractical, careless and reckless. I was often swayed by selfish considerations. But from that time on I gradually became more steady and practical, and made a more thorough job of my work. I've kept this letter through the most dangerous times, because I want it to serve as a clarion call in our advance, a watchword for myself." She stood up and turned off the light. Moonlight was shining through the cracks of the windows as she took Tao-ching's hand and her eyes flashed with rare fire. Yet her voice sounded soft and slow: "Hsiu-lan, I've had many, many bitter experiences — I found them very hard to bear. . . . My husband died. Many times I heard that a dear comrade whom I had seen at a meeting or talked to only a few days previously had been murdered shortly after we parted. My child — our only son, whom my husband asked me to name Nien-lin — was put in the care of a communist worker's family. But after the organization was dispersed by the enemy, the worker moved away, and I couldn't find my child. To look for him, I disguised myself as a vegetable vendor and paced up and down the lane where they had lived. But my only child, Nien-lin, had gone without a trace. . . ."

Tao-ching expected her to break down at this point. But Liu Yi-feng was as calm as if she were speaking of someone else's troubles, not her own. Only her lips trembled slightly and her eyes were bright with tears. It seemed there was more that she wanted to say but could not. With a forced smile she fell silent.

Tao-ching had been clinging to Liu Yi-feng all this time, for since the news of Lu Chia-chuan's death the previous night she had been unable to stop shivering. Glancing at her friend's haggard face, she asked with an effort:

"How have you managed to live through these years, mother? It's seven years now since your husband died."

The elder woman had recovered her composure. She said slowly:

"After his death, I was arrested. I gave birth to our child in prison. During my three years' imprisonment I was tortured and had several ribs broken. By the time they released me, my health was undermined. You probably think I'm in my fifties, don't

you, Hsiu-lan? As a matter of fact, I'm only thirty-three." Suddenly she gave an enigmatic smile. "I'm not old, but I've lost all chance of family happiness. But I wish you happiness, Hsiu-lan. . . ." Looking solemnly into Tao-ching's eyes, she continued: "I want to give you the advice my husband gave me. Work steadily and conscientiously. Go where the Party needs you most. You don't need a gun to fight the enemy. You can fight with your pen, with your ideas — even with your wash-board."

"Don't worry, mother!" Tao-ching, too, had grown grave and calm. "Your husband's letter has helped me to understand my weaknesses. . . . I promise to learn from you. I shall never stop learning from you veterans!"

CHAPTER 39

Dawn had just broken. A snow-storm had swept down from the icy north and a cold wind was whirling snow-flakes through the silent sky and down the deserted streets. Tao-ching had been drafted to Peking University to do underground work there under the direction of Chiang Hua. The previous evening he had come to discuss with her how to build up a resistance movement among the students. They were still wide awake as the east grew light, when they heard an urgent knocking at the door and they exchanged anxious glances.

"Have you any important documents? Let me get rid of them," whispered Tao-ching, groping under the pillow.

"Keep calm!" advised Chiang Hua. Throwing on his coat, he went to the window and peered through a crack.

A girl's voice sounded outside.

"Tao-ching! Open the door! It's me, Hsiao-yen!"

"Hsiao-yen? . . ."

Chiang Hua had left the window when Tao-ching opened the door. Hsiao-yen hurried in, in a state of great agitation, dishevelled and without her glasses. She was taken aback to find a man in the room, but not stopping to greet them she threw her arms round Tao-ching and burst into tears. She was quite unlike her normal placid self. She wept and sobbed, unable to speak a word, as if her heart were broken.

"Steady on, Hsiao-yen! What's happened?" Tao-ching's voice was warm and affectionate, as if nothing had ever come between them.

Hsiao-yen's tears were wetting Tao-ching's shoulder, yet still she said nothing.

Tao-ching kept silent too, holding her friend close.

"I'm so ashamed, Tao-ching! I had to tell you. . . ." Hsiao-yen broke down again. It was some minutes before she could say chokingly: "Tai . . . Tai Yu is a renegade. I've just found out — he's sold out to the enemy!"

Faltering and incoherently, she told them all she had discovered.

Tai Yu had passed himself off to her as secretary of the Peiping Committee of the Communist Party. She had loved and admired him. During the three months of her estrangement with Tao-ching, she had swallowed his lies and believed that Tao-ching had altered completely. Gradually, however, her impression of him changed, for as time went on he acted more and more strangely. He had a hangdog, defeated look most of the time, yet now and then he would flare up to hold forth in a lordly manner, though often he stammered and contradicted himself. She detected a whiff of liquor in his breath and the scent of powder on his clothing. She suspected that he was unfaithful to her, and suspicion of his personal behaviour made her doubt his political integrity. Was he really the secretary of the Peiping Committee of the Party? Had he really been admitted to the Party, as he claimed? Could there be anything good about men like Wang Chung of Peking University, who attacked and injured honest fellow-students? And what was wrong with Tao-ching anyway? She began to keep a secret watch on Tai Yu.

She tried various methods to find out the truth about him. But she did not know where he lived or what friends or relatives he had, and to ask a man like Wang Chung was out of the question. This increased her uneasiness. Yet love, her first love, and the ardent dreams of youth made her powerless to break with him. She longed to discover that her suspicions were false, arising from her own narrow-mindedness, and that he was an honest man, who was devoting himself heart and soul to the Party. But she was doomed to bitter disillusionment, for the high

hopes on which she had staked her happiness were cruelly shattered. One day she shadowed him when he left her house. She followed him to a lane outside Hsuan Wu Gate. There he knocked at a small red-lacquered door which was opened by a smart, middle-aged woman in a fur coat. Tai Yu tried to take her hand, but she brushed him aside and pinched his cheek playfully, saying: "Go in, and wait for me." Then she walked away, while he slunk inside like a beggar.

Hsiao-yen was furiously angry. This woman must surely be his wife or mistress. Yet he had vowed repeatedly that he loved and respected her alone. Surely, she had detected sincere devotion in his eyes.

After this discovery, Hsiao-yen treated Tai Yu so coldly for several days that he showed great distress. When she asked who the other woman was, he explained that she was another Party member who had to dress smartly in order to lull suspicion. They were colleagues in work — no more. Believing him against her better judgement, Hsiao-yen miserably accepted his "instructions," and went on deceiving the more gullible of her fellow-students. But after Wu Yu-ping exposed Wang Chung by making public his receipt of Kuomintang money, she realized that something was seriously wrong. She felt she could never hold up her head again. That evening — this had happened the previous day — Tai Yu came to her room in a state of intoxication. After reeling about and mumbling incoherently, he sank on to her bed in a drunken stupor. Hsiao-yen promptly searched his pockets. She found a letter, a strange identification card bearing nothing but a number, and a list of names of students from various schools. When she read the letter, she was aghast.

It was from Hu Meng-an to "Brother Yu." It told him to work patiently in Peiping and obey all instructions from above. If he did this, Hu Meng-an promised, he would have his reward. His request to go to Nanchang could not be granted because Hu had no authority to transfer him. By now everything was clear to Hsiao-yen. The list was a black-list of those to be arrested, Communists and other progressives among the students. The card was probably Tai Yu's identification as a special service agent of the Kuomintang. This scoundrel who denounced others as renegades and spies was a renegade and spy himself! Trembling

with fury, she slapped him as hard as she could, but failed to rouse him. Taking the papers with her, she stumbled out into the courtyard and leaned against a lilac tree, remaining there in the biting wind till well past midnight.

Between two and three in the morning Tai Yu sobered up and rushed out after her. He seized her, nearly frozen as she was, and carried her back to her room. Then he dropped to his knees and wept. He admitted that he had been false to her and the Party. He cursed his own shameless weakness and repented of his crimes. But Hsiao-yen, who had collapsed stupefied on to the bed, did not even listen to his lies. Her heart seemed to have turned to stone. She could not speak. Tai Yu would not leave her, however. He wept crocodile tears and swore that he loved her truly, that because of this love and the purity of her love for him there was still something human, some glimmer of light in his soul—the reflection of Hsiao-yen's good and noble nature.

These protestations left Hsiao-yen unmoved. She paced the room woodenly, avoiding Tai Yu. He tagged after her, wailing and ranting drunkenly, as if he were out of his mind. Cowardice had been his undoing, he explained, making him betray the Party's trust in him. And the enemy, taking advantage of his weakness, had forced him to sink so low that he could not look back or extricate himself. True, he had betrayed some of his comrades, but only under pressure. The woman Hsiao-yen had seen was a spy who made him do her bidding and satisfy her lust. He had to obey her or forfeit his own life. He pleaded that when he fell in love with Hsiao-yen he had wanted to escape from this den of crime, to live with Hsiao-yen in peace, free from all worries and dangers. That was why he had asked Hu Meng-an for a transfer. He promised to marry Hsiao-yen as soon as he could free himself from the other woman's clutches. He would love her, be a good husband to her, never leave her. . . . All this had no effect on Hsiao-yen, however. She was thinking hard and coming to a decision. She would have nothing more to do with him. Tai Yu had more to say, but Hsiao-yen paid no attention, pretending to have fallen asleep at the table. Then at last he staggered drunkenly away. She had immediately come to see Tao-ching.

Her story ended, Hsiao-yen broke down again.



"Tao-ching! Tao-ching! I'm ruined! Can you save me?"

"You're not ruined, Hsiao-yen. You can make a fresh start." Tao-ching's voice was low and soothing. Wiping Hsiao-yen's tears, she asked: "How did you know I live here?"

Hsiao-yen gripped her hand and said with a rueful smile: "I once followed you, too. But I never told Tai Yu. Tell me what to do, Tao-ching. How can I go on? And how shall I deal with him?" She looked from Tao-ching to Chiang Hua, wiping her swollen eyes.

"Tell me, Hsiao-yen, where are the things you took from Tai Yu?" Chiang Hua inquired.

"He snatched them back again."

"I see." After some thought, Chiang Hua continued: "I must remind you, Hsiao-yen, that you're not the only one involved in this. And just being sorry won't save the situation. Do you understand?"

"What do you mean?" Hsiao-yen stared at him through her tears. "I just came to tell Tao-ching and ask her forgiveness for misjudging her."

"Don't say that!" Tao-ching took Hsiao-yen's hand in hers. "You must be tired out. Lie down for a while."

She and Chiang Hua helped the trembling girl to the bed.

"This is quite likely what may happen," observed Chiang Hua slowly. "When Tai Yu becomes sober again he will realize that he has given himself away to you, Hsiao-yen. This is going to prey on his mind. What's more, you've seen some of his secret papers. It's only reasonable to conclude that if you refuse to go on being his tool, he will be afraid of you, and that will make him hate you and treat you as his enemy. Has this occurred to you?"

"No!" Hsiao-yen closed her eyes and turned pale. "Surely not! How could he? He loves me."

Tao-ching could not help breaking in:

"Hsiao-yen, how can you still look at him like that? How can you hope that he is still capable of loving you and taking pity on you? This way of thinking is dangerous."

Hsiao-yen kept her eyes closed and was silent, weeping.

After a few moments, Chiang Hua walked up to the bed and said solicitously:

"It's always best to be on the safe side, Hsiao-yen. Not only you but all the progressives in all the schools will have to be on their guard. It's likely that since this spy has made a black-list, he will stoop to even dirtier tricks to get at us. You and Tao-ching had better go away for a few days. Tell your people to go away too. By the way, Hsiao-yen, do you remember the names on the black-list?"

"Not very well. . . . I only remember Hou Jui and Li Huai-ying of Peking University, and her," pointing to Tao-ching.

Tao-ching went closer to her and said: "You see, Hsiao-yen, even Li Huai-ying is on his black-list. That shows what Tai Yu is capable of! Are you convinced? Let's take Chiang Hua's advice and lie low for a while." Wiping her tears for her, she went on: "Hsiao-yen, you don't know how miserable I was when we were estranged. I'm so happy now that we've made it up again. Well, let's not talk about that any more. Let's plan what to do next. I suggest that you let me take you away for a few days. What do you say?"

"I'd like to have a last talk with him," pleaded Hsiao-yen. "Believe me, I shan't trust him any more. I shall come back."

"We can't let you do that," declared Tao-ching firmly, helping her up. "Let's leave at once, Hsiao-yen. If he knows I live here, and he can't find you anywhere, he'll probably come here. Chiang Hua, you go first, Hsiao-yen and I will leave presently. We shall stay with a friend for a few days."

With an affectionate glance at Tao-ching, Chiang Hua whispered a few words to her. Then shaking Hsiao-yen by the hand he left the room.

Hsiao-yen looked distractedly after Chiang Hua. "Let's go, Tao-ching. I've made up my mind not to see him again."

CHAPTER 40

Returning from the Wangs' house to his lodgings, Tai Yu slept for a whole morning. Finally sober again, he was horrified to recall his quarrel with Hsiao-yen. Things were going from bad to worse for him. During the last few days, the students had

gone into action, setting up a number of self-government associations and leagues to resist Japan and save the country. And many of these new student associations had joined the Students' Federation. The small following he had formerly had in the schools had been repudiated by the vast majority of students, now awake to their responsibilities. For this reason he had received a warning and reprimand from his Kuomintang masters and had tried to drown his sorrows in drink. As if that was not enough, Hsiao-yen had penetrated his disguise. That was the worst thing that could have happened. For she had been his faithful, reliable lieutenant and had also brought a spark of joy into his empty life. What was to be done? Could he save the situation? He thought hard, lying in his gloomy, heavily curtained room, lighting one cigarette after another till the air was thick with smoke.

At two in the afternoon he got up, drew back the curtains and opened the window. At once the room was flooded with light, and a gust of cold air buffeted his pale, haggard face. He ran his fingers through his frowzy hair and sneezed several times, then hastily closed the window.

Without stopping to eat he made ready to go out. After a bath, he combed his hair, slipped into an immaculate white shirt and sprayed himself with *Eau-de-Cologne*. Then he put on a brown tweed suit and a dark blue woollen overcoat, adjusting an English trilby hat over his sleek black hair. It may seem strange that the care-worn Tai Yu should have dressed more smartly today than for any previous visit to Hsiao-yen. Outwardly, he was quite at his ease. Like a dandy without a care in the world, he made his way to the Wangs' house.

He estimated Hsiao-yen's reaction in this fashion: the discovery of his secret papers must naturally have shocked and distressed her, but she was in love with him and had been travelling the same road herself. The rice was cooked — it was too late to back out now. He'd have to give her a plausible explanation. Then if he watered the flowers of love with more tears, his good-hearted, simple Hsiao-yen would surely make it up with him.

But Hsiao-yen was not at home. She had gone out first thing in the morning and not come back. He hurried to the university, but she was neither in her dormitory nor any of the classrooms. When he failed to find her with any of her friends, he began to

be really puzzled. He went back to her home, sure that she would soon return, for they must have a good talk.

Hsiao-yen's parents kept him company while he waited. Mrs. Wang offered him tea, while Professor Wang launched into a flood of talk.

"Do you know how things have changed at the university, Tai Yu?" The professor was speaking as eagerly as any boy. "Not only have all the young fellows become active, but everybody is talking of saving the country. Even old fogeys like myself, we old professors, are beginning to feel our blood boil and holding meetings to discuss the problem. This is what is meant by 'the hearts of men are not dead.' Don't you agree?" He pounded the table with one substantial fist and stood up with a laugh, making Tai Yu start. The spy turned pale, and could not keep from trembling. The next moment, however, he pulled himself together to say cordially:

"At your age, sir, it's wonderful to be so concerned about our national welfare. You'll inspire those of us who are young to even greater efforts."

Professor Wang waved a protesting hand.

"Not a bit of it! What does one individual count? According to Marx, the masses are the true heroes and creators of history. An individual is quite insignificant. I assure you, Tai Yu, in the field of letters the old professors may be your teachers; but when it comes to patriotism and revolution, you young folk must give us a lead. I see many of my students go without food and sleep to work. The enthusiasm with which they're arousing the people to resist the enemy and save our country moves me, old as I am, to tears!" Professor Wang removed his spectacles, and sheepishly wiped his eyes.

"Now, don't excite yourself, my dear!" In some embarrassment Mrs. Wang changed the subject. "Will you stay for supper, Tai Yu? Hsiao-yen hasn't been back since she went out this morning. Did you have a quarrel last night?"

Tai Yu shook his head and answered laughingly:

"No, just a difference of opinion about the work. The situation is getting tense; the Japanese are pressing us harder every day. Hsiao-yen, temperamentally, is steady and slow. When

I urged her to be more active she was upset, so I've come today to apologize."

"That's a small matter," Professor Wang cried. "What's made Hsiao-yen so petty-minded? But never mind, Tai Yu. I'll talk to her. . . ."

"What have you got to say?" interposed Mrs. Wang with a smile. "Why should we interfere in their affairs? Just let them alone. Well, while you two have a talk, I'll go and get supper. It's time Hsiao-yen was coming home."

After his wife left the room, the professor took up the subject of national affairs again. Tai Yu seized this chance to say:

"You mentioned a moment ago, sir, that the professors are holding meetings. Who are they? Perhaps I know some of them."

"Oh, there are a good many," was the vague reply. It had been agreed at the meeting not to divulge the names of those present. Though Tai Yu was Professor Wang's future son-in-law, this seemingly absent-minded but alert old scholar was as good as his word. Chuckling and pretending to have forgotten the question, he said: "Tell me, Tai Yu, how you have been getting on lately? Is your work going well?"

"Oh, just so-so. I'm still not too good at it. . . ." mumbled Tai Yu, his eyes bulging. "The old fox! Damn the old red devil!" he swore to himself. "He should be on the black-list too."

Still Hsiao-yen did not return. Her parents, beginning to be worried, telephoned to the university and to her friends. The reply was always the same: She hadn't been there. Tai Yu was even more worried than the old couple, for this meant the failure of his scheme. Something must have happened to Hsiao-yen. Had she committed suicide or gone over to the Communists? Neither possibility pleased him, but the second was the more dreadful of the two. She had found out his secrets and seen the list of Communists and other progressives among the students.

At ten o'clock, he left. These new developments meant that he must take emergency measures. Walking down a pitch-dark lane, he hugged his shoulders for warmth in the cold wind as he did some quick thinking.

"Got to kill her — it's her or me. . . ." Suddenly Hsiao-yen's gentle, innocent eyes seemed to flash lightning at him. He stumbled and almost fell. Pulling himself together, he decided:

"I must get her father arrested and make him reveal the names of the professors who attended those meetings. That will count to my credit and atone for some of my mistakes. Slipping his hand into his pocket, he fingered the black-list ready to be handed in, and a sardonic smile twisted his mouth.

A cold wind was whistling along the deserted lanes as, rounding two corners, he reached the end of a long narrow alley. In a flash, powerful hands had seized him by the throat, stifling his cry of terror.

He was dragged to a black car. Deadly fear assailed him. "This is the end," he told himself, closing his eyes. "I'm finished. Chiang Hua and his bunch will kill me now. . . ." But in his heart he was hoping against hope: "Maybe they'll let me off. . . . I'll never do such a thing again. . . ."

"Tai Yu, you useless fool!"

At the sound of this voice, Tai Yu opened his eyes and smiled. It was not Chiang Hua the Communist but Wang Feng-chuan, his mistress and superior. This must be a joke she was playing on him to punish him for neglecting her. He groped in the dark for her hands. But the stout rope looped round his neck was being pulled tighter and tighter. Unable to utter a sound, he heard Wang Feng-chuan say:

"You fool! You couldn't even handle Wang Hsiao-yen! You couldn't even lead Wang Chung! You've messed up the Peiping schools nicely for us. . . ." Abruptly she raised her voice. "Take him away! And mind he's found all in one piece."

The car drove to the outskirts of the city. Tai Yu was tossed out as it sped through a dark stretch of waste land. The lonely stars overhead blinked mockingly at the stiff corpse of the informer and renegade.

Professor Wang, his hands folded behind him, was pacing up and down a friend's small room, thoroughly exasperated.

Hsiao-yen was sitting in silence beside a table. Her head was bent and she looked thin and drawn, as if ten years had been added to her age.

When this silence grated on the professor's nerves, he halted to question his daughter. Despite his agitation his voice was gentle.

"Hsiao-yen, you shouldn't keep your father in suspense like this. Just tell me frankly why you're so upset, child! Why did the police make that raid on our house? It's lucky that neither of us was at home. But now we're fugitives. There must be a reason for all this. . . ."

"Daddy, promise you won't tell mother!" Hsiao-yen looked up beseechingly at her father's anxious face. Tears choked her. Covering her face with her hands, she sobbed incoherently: "Daddy, I've let you down. I've not lived up to the hopes you — and mother — had of me."

Professor Wang changed colour. His ruddy face turned white. He had still no idea what had caused his daughter's despair. Leaning anxiously over her, he stroked her dishevelled hair and said urgently:

"Don't cry, child! Is it Tai Yu? . . . Has something come between you? I know you've been quarrelling a good deal lately."

"Daddy!" Hsiao-yen stood up, her unhappy eyes blazing with determination. "He's a devil! A spy! A traitor! He's ruined me — spoiled my whole life!" She threw herself on the bed in a storm of weeping.

At this shock, her father started fumbling with his glasses, taking them off and putting them on again. Standing distractedly by his daughter's side, he raised her head and said compassionately:

"Poor child! Dear Hsiao-yen! What does this mean? Is he such a blackguard as to want to have us arrested? Tell your old father everything. No, you don't have to tell me — I can understand. . . ." He threw back his head with a scornful gesture and spat as if Tai Yu were standing before him. "I see it all. He's a spy, a renegade, a hypocrite and a shameless stooge. Am I right, Hsiao-yen? If that's the case, why should we feel bad? He can go on being a stooge while we go on with our work. What can he do to us? Wait and see who comes out on top in the end."

"No, no!" cried Hsiao-yen through clenched teeth. "He's dead — he's been killed."

The horrified professor's eyes nearly started from his head. "I can hardly believe it! It sounds like something out of a novel! Are you telling me the truth, Hsiao-yen?"

Hsiao-yen, prostrate on the bed, neither cried nor spoke. The pallor of her face and the way she was biting her lips testified to a fierce mental struggle. She wanted to banish Tai Yu from her memory for ever. Why should she break her heart over a contemptible informer? If only she could wake up and find it was all a bad dream!

"You mustn't give way, Hsiao-yen." The professor sat down and began to regain his composure. "The situation is developing rapidly. You young people must redouble your efforts. Forget the past and begin all over again. Incidentally, do the Communists suspect you? Will they believe in you any more?" He put this question solemnly, with knitted brows.

"Tao-ching and I have made it up, daddy. We're friends again." A wan smile shone through Hsiao-yen's distress. "The coolness between us was Tai Yu's fault entirely. Will the Communists ever believe in me again? Yes, they do believe in me, completely. If not for the Party's coming forward to save me, I should have been utterly lost."

While Hsiao-yen tried to check another fit of weeping, her mother hurried in to take her in her arms. After receiving Hsiao-yen's note of warning the morning after Tai Yu left them, Mrs. Wang had gone into hiding with her husband. From outside the window she had overheard the conversation between father and daughter. Her heart ached for Hsiao-yen and she felt partly responsible for her distress. With tears in her eyes, she said:

"Child, mother's to blame. You're so young. . . . It was all the fault of that scoundrel. . . ."

Hsiao-yen, calmer now, tried to console her.

"Don't be distressed, mother. See, I'm over it already. And fear of public opinion will stop the Kuomintang from harming us. I think you and father might go home now. Tao-ching is waiting for me. We've so much to do! The Peiping Students' Federation is going to organize a huge demonstration. Had you heard about it, daddy?"

The old people — Professor Wang in particular — were pleasantly surprised by the confident determination in their daughter's face. Hsiao-yen, after briefly washing away the tear-stains on her cheeks, left the room without so much as a backward glance, as if all disgrace, darkness and distress were things of the past. The professor heaved a sigh of relief and said half to himself, half to his wife:

"Another storm is blowing up. But these eaglets know no fear!"

Illustrations by Hou Yi-min



Book Review

HUANG CHAO-YEN

On "The Song of Youth"

The Song of Youth is one of the notable novels published in China in 1958. It has proved a best seller, especially among students and young intellectuals: By March this year more than 1,700,000 copies had been printed. The film based on this book, which was released in October 1959, has also been exceedingly popular. The author, Yang Mo, is a new writer and this is her first novel. She worked hard and spent a long time writing it, and this is probably one of the reasons for the book's immediate success.

I am one of many readers who like *The Song of Youth*. I have read this novel more than once. Of course, I have my personal reasons too; for this is a story about the patriotic student movement in the thirties of this century, when I was a student myself and knew at first hand the struggles and conditions described in the book. Each time I open this novel, it starts a train of memories and carries me back to my young days. A number of the characters in *The Song of Youth* are strongly reminiscent of people I knew, so that I seem to see their faces and hear their voices again, to witness again their stirring, heroic fights. The patriotic movements of young Chinese intellectuals in the early thirties wrote a significant page in the history of the Chinese revolution, and this novel faithfully reflects the life of students at that period and their revolutionary struggle.

The story covers the time from the September 18 Incident of 1931, when the Japanese imperialists invaded our three North-

eastern Provinces, down to the December 9 Student Movement of 1935. During these years, while the Japanese imperialists were encroaching further and further upon China, the Kuomintang reactionaries were selling out to the enemy and giving in to their demands; but as the nation faced the threat of destruction the popular resistance movement developed apace. And in the forefront of the struggle to resist Japanese imperialism stood the young intellectuals. To oppose the Kuomintang government's treacherous policy of surrender, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party they launched their courageous patriotic student movements.

The Song of Youth brings vividly and powerfully before us the spirit of young Chinese intellectuals between 1931 and 1935. We see how bravely they fought the reactionaries even in gaol in order to save the nation, how tirelessly they worked in the villages to arouse the peasants, how fearlessly they carried on underground revolutionary activities in the cities. The novel presents various types of intellectuals of that period, showing us how they got organized and how some of them broke away, showing their unity and struggles, their joys and dissatisfaction, their progress and backsliding, their wavering and doubts, their search and retreat, their study, work and love. These characters include the resolute revolutionaries Lu Chia-chuan, Chiang Hua, Lin Hung and Lin Tao-ching; the renegade Tai Yu; Pai Li-ping who at the outset wants revolution but becomes decadent; Wang Hsiao-yen who first cares only for study, ignoring politics, but later joins the revolution; and the selfish philistine Yu Yung-tse. . . .

The central figure is the heroine Lin Tao-ching, a typical character who reveals to us how the petty-bourgeois intellectuals of the thirties in China gradually turned towards revolution. Tao-ching's mother, the daughter of a farmhand, was raped by the landlord and then made his concubine; so though Tao-ching is brought up in the landlord's home she is ill-treated and despised. As she grows up she enjoys no happiness, and her step-mother tries to use her to win connections with powerful Kuomintang officials. From her own experience, she hates the feudal society she has known as a girl and longs for democracy; and since this is a period of national crisis, she has patriotic feelings too. The novel shows how, under these historic conditions, she first op-

poses the feudal family system which denies her freedom of marriage, and seeks her own way out. Gradually she learns from life that individual revolts cannot solve any problem; and finally under the influence of the Communist Party she sees that personal interests must be subordinated to the interests of the people as a whole. Then she dedicates herself without reserve to the revolution.

Thus Tao-ching grows from a democrat into a Communist, from an individualist into a member of a collective whole. Though there are certain personal reasons and specific circumstances connected with her development, she is typical of many petty-bourgeois intellectuals in her day; hence her path towards revolution has a general significance.

The road she travels is a tortuous one. Indeed it is not till she comes into contact with the Communist Party that she discovers the correct direction and the solution to her problem. For petty-bourgeois intellectuals in such a period can find a genuine way out only by accepting Party leadership and dedicating themselves to the revolutionary struggle in an organized, purposeful manner with a clear goal in sight, linking their individual fate with that of the masses and advancing from a personal, anarchistic revolt to the collective struggle. Herein lies the typical significance of Tao-ching.

The Communists in this novel—Lu Chia-chuan, Chiang Hua and Lin Hung—are well drawn too. Qualities they have in common are a readiness to sacrifice themselves for the interests of the whole people, nobility of spirit in struggling to realize the high ideals of communism, and infinite courage and shrewdness in their fight against the reactionary rulers, their class enemies and the enemies of the nation. Though Lin Hung appears in a few pages of the book only, she leaves us with a clear picture of a woman Communist. In prison she inspires two other girls by her experience and example; and before her execution she cheerfully gives them as souvenirs her cardigan and comb. Details such as these make a deep and lasting impression.

Though *The Song of Youth* cannot claim to be an epic of great scope or universal significance, it nevertheless possesses the power to stir its readers. This is largely because the strength of the author's feeling about this chapter of life compelled her to write

on this theme. Thus in her postscript we read: "Round about 1933, during the cruel White Terror in Kuomintang-occupied territory, I witnessed the most moving acts of heroism, and met or heard of young revolutionaries and Communists who did not know the meaning of fear, who inspired others to be like them and struggle for a worthy cause. These people have lived on ever since in my heart, and for many years I have felt the urge to write about them. Many of the characters and incidents in this novel are based on fact. For example, Lin Hung, to whom I devoted a few pages only, was a beautiful girl who died a heroic death at the hands of the Shantung warlord Han Fu-chu. It was men and women of this calibre who inspired me and gave me the strength to write. The thought of them brought energy to my indolent fingers and increased my courage."

To my mind, the most important quality in a revolutionary writer is this revolutionary passion. Of course, aptitude and keen powers of observation are important too. But more essential is the proletarian world outlook, a strong sense of responsibility to the revolution, a firm revolutionary stand and deep class consciousness. A work permeated by such feelings, even if technically imperfect, can make a strong appeal. This is the case with *The Song of Youth*. It may be rather loosely written, but each character is alive and pulls at your heart-strings. For we cannot fail to be moved by Lu Chia-chuan and Lin Hung's heroic martyr's death, to sympathize with Lin Tao-ching's groping for the truth and her fate, to feel concern over Wang Hsiao-yen who has taken the wrong path and worked against the revolution. . . . With genuine feeling the author praises all that is progressive, the revolutionaries and labouring people, the awakening of intellectuals and their search for truth; at the same time she pitilessly lashes out at all that is backward, the counter-revolutionaries and exploiters, the intellectuals who are decadent. Sentiments like these, expressed through art, become a mighty force to stir readers.

As we have noted, *The Song of Youth* is the author's first novel. Like many other works by new Chinese writers today, though technically it may have many flaws, it is full of turbulent life and strength and covers an important historical period. This is an indication that novel writing in China is entering upon an age of great vitality.

For Sixty-one Class Brothers — Stage and Screen Versions

Recently Peking's theatres and cinemas have been drawing huge crowds with stage and screen versions of *For Sixty-one Class Brothers*. This is based on true happenings. Recently, members of a people's commune in the mountainous district of Pinglu County, Shansi, were poisoned by local counter-revolutionaries. Sixty-one lives were endangered. When news of this reached the county committee, the Party secretary stopped an important conference and hurried to the spot with the best doctors in the county. When the news reached neighbouring communes, their members took nourishing food and fresh vegetables to the patients. When the news reached a ford on the Yellow River, an old boatman broke the time-honoured rule not to cross at night, and risked his life to ferry across the man sent to buy medicine for the victims suffering from food-poisoning. When the news reached Peking, the heads of the Ministry of Health and of the Air Force, as well as pharmaceutical workers and electricians, set to work at high speed. In no time the required drugs were found and packed, with battery-run lights fitted to the packing-cases to make the consignment visible at night when dropped. A plane took off by starlight, spotted the ground signals among the hills where thousands of people were anxiously watching and waiting, and delivered the medicine safely, so the lives of these sixty-one workers were saved. This is the Pinglu Incident which has become a household word throughout China. Though the men and women concerned did not know each other, though they lived many hundreds of miles apart, they rushed to the rescue of these sixty-one ordinary commune members, united by true proletarian friendship. The *Renmin Ribao* lost no time in reporting this moving story to readers throughout China; writers and artists in Peking set to work at once on the theme; and in order to introduce these selfless feats and encourage our people to work with even greater enthusiasm for socialist construction, film studios wrote the scenario within 22 hours, so that in a few days this stirring story was successfully brought to the screen. A play was also immediately written of it and put on the stage. Musicians and artists have also made this the theme of songs and paintings.

Ancient Site Discovered in Shanghai

In December 1959, the Shanghai Committee for the Preservation of Cultural Relics discovered an ancient site on the north bank of the Yutang River in Machiao Commune. Here they have excavated large quantities of stone and bone implements, pottery, animal bones and bronze vessels, seeds, stoves and graves, supplying us with valuable material for the study of ancient Shanghai history. This discovery proves that this coastal area, like other parts of China, has been inhabited since ancient times and had a distinctive culture of its own. The Machiao site provides excellent material for the study of the ancient culture of coastal districts in Southeast China. Judging by the relics unearthed, a definite connection is evident between this and other old sites in Kiangsu, Chekiang and Fukien. At present, Chinese archaeologists are carrying out researches into the age and social systems of these old centres of civilization, while further excavation is going on.

Stop U.S. Theft of Chinese Art Treasures!

On February 12 this year, the U.S. Government issued a statement announcing that the Chiang Kai-shek clique had "agreed" to ship to the United States under the pretext of "exhibition" more than five thousand cases of Chinese art treasures taken from the mainland to Taiwan on the eve of the liberation. These priceless antiques include paintings by ancient masters, calligraphy, bronzes, porcelain, jade and pottery. The Ministry of Culture of the Chinese People's Republic immediately addressed a stern warning to the U.S. pillagers and issued a statement declaring all "contracts signed by the U.S. Government with the Chiang Kai-shek clique in connection with the plunder of China's cultural treasures to be null and void. The whole Chinese people, including the people of Taiwan, firmly oppose this shameless looting by the U.S. Government." In the decades before liberation, the U.S. imperialists looted and destroyed China's cultural relics time and again. For instance, between 1933 and 1934, two Northern Wei stone reliefs in Lungmen, "The emperor paying homage to Buddha" and "The empress paying homage to Buddha" were broken into pieces by U.S. agents, then patched up and shipped to the United States. Between 1923 and 1924, the U.S. imperialists stole 36 squares of frescos dating from the Tang dynasty from Tunhuang and a sculpture of bodhisattva of the same

period. The Tang dynasty stone reliefs of the six horses of Emperor Tai Tsung were stolen by the agent of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia, who succeeded in taking two of these horses away, and had broken up the four others for shipment when the removal was stopped by our people. Virtually all the sculptures of the Northern Chi and Tang dynasties in the Tienlung Mountains were pillaged by the American agents who also stole the earliest writing and painting on silk of the Warring States period. U.S. museums display many masterpieces by Tang and Sung dynasty painters, many bronzes of the Shang and Chou dynasties, as well as exquisite porcelain, lacquerware, jade, and rare editions of old books, all taken away by stealth or trickery. The news that the U.S. imperialists are once more attempting to steal Chinese art treasures aroused the indignation of all cultural circles in China and many meetings were held to protest against this new theft of the U.S. imperialists.

G. D. R. Art Exhibition in Peking

An art exhibition commemorating the tenth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic was held in Shanghai in October last year, and after visiting several other Chinese cities came to Peking in March this year. It bears eloquent witness to the achievements of German artists in the graphic and plastic arts.

The exhibits, which include prints, oil paintings and sculpture, powerfully convey the boundless optimism and technical perfection of German art and the German people's zeal in socialist construction. Rudolf Bergander's lithographic print *Holiday* and his etching *The Woman Worker* give us an idea of the life of the German workers. Karl-Erich Müller's woodcut series *The Algerians* portrays the revolt against colonialism and is as moving and powerful as anything done by Kathe Kollwitz. Werner Schinko's coloured woodcut series *Folk in My District* and *Scenes from My Home*, and Horst Jockusch's woodcut series *Dresden*, deal with the new life and construction in Germany, are buoyant in mood and broad in scope. Gabriele Meyer-Dennewitz's woodcut *The Ten Commandments of Socialist Morality* also reaches a high level in its artistic conception and technique.

Professor Bernhard Kretschmar's oil painting *Brüblsche Terasse* mirrors the flourishing condition of socialist construction. Since both Professor Bert Heller and Professor Heinz Lohmar have visited China, Chinese art-lovers have a special interest in their work.

Bert Heller's oil painting *Taiwan* shows the Taiwan people's longing for liberation, while Heinz Lohmar's oil painting *Friendship* expresses the bond between the Chinese and the German people. Lea Grundig's water colours *Flowers* and *Autumn* and her ink-painting *Harvest* also made a favourable impression on Chinese artists and other visitors.

Brazilian Musicians' Recitals

The Brazilian pianist Arnaldo Estrela and his wife, the violinist Mariuccia Iacovino, gave recitals in Peking this March and won unanimous praise. With great virtuosity they interpreted with great mastery such composers as Chopin and Schubert, while their performances of modern Brazilian music aroused even greater interest. This was the first recital of modern Brazilian music by Brazilian musicians in Peking. They played the *Dance of the White Indian* and *Song of the Black Swan* by the noted contemporary Brazilian composer Villa Lobos, bringing out superbly the strength and passion of his music. Through these recitals, Peking audiences gained a deeper understanding of Villa Lobos' music, as well as of Brazil and the Brazilian people. These performances further strengthened the friendship between the Brazilian and the Chinese peoples.

In play-writing, establish a central theme,
cut out digressions, disregard old conven-
tions and lay stress on clarity.

Li Yu (1611-1676), playwright

*

Polishing words is less important than
polishing phrases, polishing phrases is less
important than polishing ideas, polishing
ideas is less important than polishing style.
Rhythm is the orifices, imagery the bones,
and ideas are the marrow of the bones.

**An anonymous Tang dynasty critic
of poetry**

*

Dashing off verses takes little time;
It is easy to write a poem, hard to improve it;
Jade must be cut and polished to be of use;
Lines should be rich in meaning, words should be apt.

Tai Fu-ku of the late twelfth century

STORIES OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S VOLUNTEERS

Here are 11 stories about the Chinese People's Volunteers during the Korean War. We read how Squad Leader Lei and his men destroy 11 American tanks without incurring a single casualty themselves; how Liu Kuang-tse captures 63 enemy soldiers single-handed; how Chang Chi-hui shoots down U.S. "ace" pilot G. A. Davis in an air battle. There are accounts too, of the courage and brilliant tactics of battalion and company commanders, and of the heroism of scouts who make surprise attacks on enemy positions.

Based on the stuff of life, these narratives depict men who defeat an enemy far superior to them in equipment. These Volunteers revealed to the world that U.S. imperialism is a paper tiger which can be smashed by those fighting for the independence of their land.

21 cm. × 14.5 cm.

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GUOZI SHUDIAN
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"I KNEW ALL ALONG" AND OTHER STORIES

A rich crop of short stories appeared in China in 1958. A new feature was the large number of terse and lively anecdotes written by non-professional writers, including workers and peasants. These anecdotes, in the tradition of Chinese folk tales, reflect the tremendous energy and advanced outlook of the labouring people inspired by the General Line for building socialism.

Four of the stories in this book deal with rural life and the new character of the peasants; four others reflect the fighting spirit of New China's workers; three describe the fine qualities and heroism displayed in other fields of production; and two tell of changes in the life of the national minorities.

Most of these stories are taken from *Selected Short Stories of 1958* published by the Writers' Publishing House.

21 cm. × 13 cm.

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