

# THE SEEDS

and Other Stories

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS PEKING

**T**HE fourteen stories included in this book were all written during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. They reflect in different ways the changes the Chinese people have undergone in their mental world and the achievements they have made in the socialist revolution and construction. Most of the authors are young people who took part in the incidents they describe. Although they write only in their spare time, they form nevertheless an impressive force in contemporary Chinese literature.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
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## *Red Cliff Revisited*

*Chen Hung-shan*

“HELLO comrade, where are you going?” a gruff voice called behind me unexpectedly.

I was on my way to Red Cliff on important business. I had started the journey at dawn. The road had been wet with drizzle the night before, the first spring rain, so to speak. That cheered us very much. But it had brought in its wake a gentle fall of fine snow which, frozen by a night wind, landed on the road in the form of shiny thin ice. I was gingerly pedalling my bicycle when I heard the voice. As I turned around, the handle-bar jerked to one side and I was nearly thrown off.

The fellow who called me was also riding a bicycle. He saw what an awkward position I was in. But instead of sympathizing with me he burst out laughing.

"To the Red Cliff!" I answered irritably.

"What a coincidence! I'm going the same way." Trying to encourage me, he continued in a serious voice, "Be bold. The more afraid you are of slipping, the more you are likely to tumble — flat on your face. Be steady and use your force evenly. Watch me."

With a push of his feet on the pedals, he shifted his weight to the front part of the bicycle and the wheels ran forward obediently.

I followed close behind him. Now I could see him more clearly: about thirty years old, medium height, a short overcoat and a bulky fur-lined cap, the two ear-flaps swinging up and down in the morning wind. A canvas bag hung heavily behind his seat.

Suddenly he turned around and asked, "Know me?"

The question puzzled me. Does he know me? I shook my head. "No, I don't know you," I said.

Again he burst into uproarious laughter. Without looking back any more he said, "What an awful memory! You forget everything."

No doubt, he knew me. But I did not have the slightest idea where I had ever met him.

A long hill stretched before us. We had to muster all our strength to climb it. I began to sweat, so I unbuttoned my coat and threw up the ear-flaps of my cap. I decided to get off the bike and push it. However he didn't seem in the mood to do so. All right, I mustn't show any sign of weakness either, I told myself.

"A little more effort, make a dash!" he said. "When you drive a car, if you don't use the low gear climbing, it'll fall back, and that's dangerous!"

The fellow was panting too. Like me, he also threw his ear-flaps up showing neatly cut bobbed hair. He was a *ber!*

I said loudly, out of breath, "Now I recognize you!"

"Thank you. I was beginning to think you never gave a thought to the driver once you left her truck. Such a grand official from the county town!"

"What a sharp tongue!" I said to myself.

It had happened late the previous Saturday. The county revolutionary committee had decided to deliver a big load of farm tools and machinery to the various production brigades in a week's time. But there was not enough transport for the job, so I had to ask other units for help.

The last unit I telephoned was the transport team of the Liming Machinery Works.

"We have an urgent job," I said. "We have to deliver a large batch of farm tools and machinery within a week. . . ."

"You mean you want some trucks?" I was interrupted from the receiving end.

"Exactly," I said. "Tomorrow will be Sunday. Can you spare us a truck?"

"You take it so lightly!" My words were again cut short. The voice cracked like a machine-gun: "All our trucks have to go on a long trip the day

after tomorrow. Fetching raw materials. They won't be back for a week. We're overhauling them tomorrow."

Obviously they could not help us. I was about to hang up the phone when a burst of laughter pealed in my ear.

"Comrade, I always speak that way, stiff. Don't take it so seriously."

Embarrassing. All I could do was to mumble, "It's all right. . . ."

"In my opinion this is not a difficult matter," the person on the other end went on. "We won't have time tomorrow, but there is always time when we are free."

"But we can't postpone it." This time it was I who interrupted. "It all has to be delivered by the end of the week, you see."

"I know that. Can't we do it this evening?"

"Of course! That would be wonderful!" I replied excitedly. "But the trip to Red Cliff and back is over fifty kilometres. It would be too much for you in the evening."

"Don't stand on ceremony!" The voice was as blunt as ever. "We can do without sleep for a few nights in order to help agriculture."

That silenced me. And he continued, "Apart from overhauling the engines tomorrow, we've arranged time for rest too. In any case we can start the journey on time the day after tomorrow. It won't upset our plans, nor yours."

When I arrived at our warehouse, the truck had already come. Unlike some drivers, this one did not stand around with folded arms or smoking, while we were loading. He pitched in energetically. Dark brown face, big eyes, crowned with a large fur-lined cap, he bustled about in a bulky sheepskin coat dexterously using large hands in slightly grease-stained cotton gloves.

The loading finished, he signalled me with a wave of the hand and said, "Climb in."

It was already dark when we started.

The vehicle rolled like the wind along the winding highway. And indeed I felt draughts of icy wind in the cabin too. The severe winter had not left us.

"Cold?" the driver asked without turning. "Why not roll up the window?"

I did as I was told, then said, "Have you ever been to Red Cliff?"

He ignored me, but with pursed lips nodded towards a sign in big characters on the windshield — "Don't talk with the driver."

I did not dare to speak again.

When we reached Red Cliff we went into the office of the production brigade. The driver took off his cap and put it on the table with a bang. It was a woman!

"You're a woman!" I said involuntarily.

"What do you mean?" she answered drily. "Can only you men be drivers?"

"No, no, that's not what I mean," I explained. "I thought it must be you who answered my phone. I

was just wondering why I didn't find out from your voice."

"From my voice? If you could do that, I wouldn't be the tomboy people call me."

Both of us burst into laughter.

"What are you laughing about?" the brigade Party secretary asked as he stepped in. "What's so funny?" Seeing the driver, he said warmly, "Comrade Liu, again it's you who drives the truck to our place."

"So you know each other, eh?" I said.

"Of course," the Party secretary said. "Last year our steam engine broke down when we needed it most. We were very much annoyed. We telephoned her machinery plant. She brought us a mechanic in a jeep right away. And then she taught us how to repair it. Now we can do the job ourselves. She also helped repair our broken utensils, pots and pails. In the evening we had an entertainment. She played a part on the stage. So she left a deep impression on us. The commune members call her a driver, artist and technician all in one!"

A girl about twenty, in overalls, stepped in lightly like a breeze. Seeing the driver she seized her hand and shouted happily, "Sister Liu, so you've come to us this time all by yourself!"

"You —" the driver was nonplussed, "do you know me?"

"Sure," the girl said proudly, blinking her long-lashed eyes, "I heard you speak at the county conference of militia men and women. I always wanted

to chat with you and learn from you. But I never got a chance. All your spare time was taken by people inviting you to speak about your experience as a militia woman."

"Oh, now I remember you," the driver said.

The Party secretary introduced the girl, "She's Comrade Chin, our tractor driver."

"So we're colleagues!" Warmly she put a hand on Chin's shoulder. "What type of tractor do you drive?"

"Rubber tyred cab job."

"So, we both control the steering gear. We must listen to Chairman Mao's teaching and drive in the direction of his revolutionary line."

Chin nodded. "With you as an example, I won't go wrong," she said. "Ever since I came back from the conference, I have been trying to follow your example."

"Learn from me?" the driver asked. "Learn what?" She glanced at me and went on, "I speak like a machine-gun, some comrades find me quite irritating, you know."

Chin changed the subject. "Sister Liu," she said, "you are out busy all the time. Don't you have to do anything at home?"

"Yes, I have two children. The bigger one goes to school and granny takes care of the smaller one. You see they are well looked after. It's different than my childhood was. From the time I could remember things I went about begging all by myself with a



basket on my arm. I never dreamed I would drive a truck some day."

By now the truck had been unloaded. Realizing it was getting late, the driver stood up. Chin did the same.

The Party secretary said to me, "Old Lin, what did you think of my request over the phone the other day?"

"Repairing your tractor, you mean? We discussed it. We're busy turning out agricultural implements. Short of transport too. Can you wait for a few days? If we can't repair it here we'll haul it to our plant. We guarantee you won't be late for the ploughing season."

Reassured, the old Party secretary nodded with satisfaction. It suddenly occurred to me that the truck would be empty on the trip back. So I said to the driver, "Can you give me a lift on your way back?"

"You've certainly asked the right person," she said.

"Oh," I said in mock politeness, "I have to ask for your approval, is that it?"

She was embarrassed. "Anyone can have a ride in it," she said.

"And it has quite a capacity for big things too," the Party secretary put in. "Our tractor needs repair. Can you take it along with you to the plant?"

"It's not much trouble," she said. "We can tow it behind." But as she crossed the doorstep, she stopped. "Wait a minute. Tell me what's wrong with it."

"I don't know," the Party secretary said. Then, pointing to Chin, he said, "She's learned to run it but she doesn't know what's wrong with it either."

"Let's have a look."

We went to examine the tractor. The Party secretary held a hurricane lamp while I flicked on a flashlight. Both the driver and Chin examined it, now climbing on top, now crawling underneath. They were soon covered with grease and mud.

"To know how to drive is not enough," we heard the driver say to Chin. "You have to be able to repair it too."

"Right," came Chin's soft voice.

"You see," the driver went on, "it's like looking for a melon in the field. If you follow along the vine you'll certainly find it. The same way with engine trouble."

Chin was all attention.

"Shall we sign an agreement?"

"What agreement?" Chin asked.

"I guarantee to teach you and you guarantee to learn the art—the art of repairing the tractor."

"Nothing could be better," Chin said excitedly, "but how are we going to manage? Neither of us has time."

"Use every chance we get," the driver said. "We can write each other. When farm work is not so busy, you can come to our plant to learn on the spot. If I am away, other workers will teach you."

Chin was overjoyed.

Now the old Party secretary took a position. "I thank you on behalf of our brigade."

The driver smoothed her hair back with a greasy hand and showed us a part taken out of the engine.

"This is the devil that caused all the trouble," she said. "We don't have to haul the tractor into the plant. I'll take this part along with me and fix it."

"Excellent," said the old Party secretary. "When it's fixed, drop us a word."

"In ten days, all right?"

"Right. So long as it doesn't miss spring ploughing."

"I can assure you that."

We continued our way on the bicycles. The sun had climbed high. The landscape before us was lovely, early spring had carpeted the hills and fields with a mantle of fresh green.

"Time for spring ploughing," I said. "Are you delivering that tractor part to the brigade?"

"Yes," she answered.

"When did you get back from your long trip?"

"Last night."

"Last night? And you start this trip so early today! This is not a short trip either." I could not help admiring her.

She did not say more, concentrating on pedalling.

When we arrived at Red Cliff, both the old Party secretary and Chin were there to receive us. Chin cheerfully took the heavy canvas bag from the driver.

Then the driver produced a small package wrapped in red paper, and handed it to Chin.

"What's this?" Chin asked.

"Open it and you'll see."

It was a copy of *Five Essays on Philosophy* by Chairman Mao and a copy of *The Tractor Handbook*. Chin squeezed the driver's hand with great warmth. "All I can say is thank you."

The Party secretary was both touched and ill at ease. "You've come such a long way," he said, "and bring us gifts on top of that." He opened the canvas bag. Two shining parts for the tractor! "Why two?"

"Last night when I came back your part had been repaired. But it's old and can wear out easily. So I thought you might just as well have a spare one, just in case."

"You're very thoughtful," said the Party secretary, still more touched. "You've done so much for our spring sowing."

"It's nothing," the driver said and then, taking Chin by the hand, continued, "Let's go to put the part in the tractor."

No one could stop her, although both the Party secretary and Chin tried to make her rest. Picking up the canvas bag she went straight out. Chin had no choice but to follow her.

In a minute the familiar laughter came from the tractor shed. The usual blunt voice asked, "So you won't miss spring ploughing after all?"

"Of course not," the other voice said in the usual soft way.

"When will you start?"

"The day after tomorrow."

"Good."

A fresh peal of laughter broke out punctuated by the din of tools plied on the tractor.

*A Night in "Potato"  
Village*

*Tai Mu-jen*

THE express curved smoothly through the snowstorm into a small station in the northeast — Tungfeng. The conductor opened the door with some effort. The steps were coated with ice.

A year ago when I escorted a group of young people here to settle down in the frontier countryside to do farm work, I had gotten off at this very station. It was spring. The majestic Lesser Khingan Range was dressed in luxuriant green. Now the landscape, cloaked in white, was quite different. It was the season for cutting trees. Carts and lumbermen shuttled to and fro. The atmosphere was a joyous one. I

gingerly made way for huge trucks. Loaded with giant fir logs, they trailed the fresh smell of resin.

As I stood waiting for a lift from a passing car, I heard thumping steps behind me. I turned and saw a tall old peasant, sheepskin coat yanked open, a bag over his shoulder, walking towards me with big strides. His breath clouded in the sharp air and settled on his beard and eyebrows as frost.

"Where to?" he asked.

"The Vanguard Production Brigade."

He glanced at the sun setting on the western hills.

"You've still got about 50 kilometres to go," he said, "you won't get there before midnight."

I mumbled a few anxious words. The old peasant immediately detected my accent. He looked at me for a second, and then asked, "From Shanghai, eh?"

"How do you know?" I said, surprised.

"My ears are used to the Shanghai dialect now," he answered mysteriously. "What makes you go to the Vanguard Production Brigade in such a hurry?"

I told him we were going to have a congress in Shanghai of parents who had sent their children to the countryside to become farmers and my job was to help summarize the advanced deeds of these youngsters in the Vanguard Production Brigade so that I could report to their enthusiastic parents in Shanghai.

The old fellow took in every word I said. "Yes, the Vanguard is a model brigade in these things," he

said. "But have you ever heard of the youngsters from Shanghai in our village?"

"Which village?"

"Potato Village." He waved his arm vigorously, settled his finger on a sturdy fir tree by the side of the road and added, "They're all like that tree, every one of them a little tiger."

He had taken away my bag without my being aware of it, and now insisted that I should go with him over the slope ahead.

"Let's go," he said. "You can stay overnight in our village. It's not far, only 15 kilometres or so from here."

I hesitated. But he pressed hard.

"Let's hurry," he urged. "It won't delay you. We'll take you to the Vanguard Brigade in a cart early tomorrow morning. You know, we've had some trouble with our Shanghai youngsters."

So that's why he was so insistent that I stay for the night in his village. "You want me to do some ideological work with your young intellectuals, eh?"

"That's right," he said frankly, smiling.

"Don't they like their work? Or maybe it's the approach of the Spring Festival. Are they homesick?"

He shook his head. "No! I asked them if they wanted to go home to visit their parents during the Spring Festival and promised to give them leave. But they refused. Said private affairs must be regulated by collective interests and their home is right here

in the village. They want to share the joy of the festival with us. Won't hear of anything else!"

"Did they argue or fight with you over it?"

"They never fight. They say they keep their fists for imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries."

His "explanation" made me all the more confused. He saw it and said sympathetically, "Never mind. Let's go on to the village and have a meeting to solve the problem. All you need to do is to speak a few words in our favour. You mustn't side with them, though."

"Well," I said ambiguously. The riddle couldn't be answered then and there, that much I knew. So I changed the subject and talked about the queer name of his village.

"Yes, people are always curious about it," he said, smiling. "When the Shanghai youngsters came here, they all laughed. One could call it anything. But why 'Potato'? It's an ugly name. They talked and laughed among themselves. We got wind of it. The Party branch decided to give them a first lesson by introducing them to the history of the village."

Potato Village is a living witness of the life in the old society. Originally the country was uninhabited primeval forest. The Japanese aggressors occupied this part of the country and forced a large number of peasants to come here to reclaim land. Most of them died of hunger and cold within a few years, and by the time China was liberated only twelve families still survived. They had no draught animals.

With their few primitive farm tools they could only grow potatoes, which barely kept them alive. That was why the place was called Potato Village.

Liberation saved Potato Village. Now they grew other crops and began to cut timber and establish other sidelines. But traitor Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line caused all the people with a little education to flock to the cities. The villagers couldn't even find anybody to keep simple accounts.

Having vented his grievances, the fellow beamed, his anger gone. "We're much better off now," he said. "Chairman Mao has sent us a batch of successors — a great event for us farmhands in these mountain gullies."

"But you must make strict demands on them," I said. "They came here to be re-educated by you."

"Of course. When they first came, they were very clumsy. They didn't know a thing about farm work. They even had to learn how to walk here! You know, a slip in the snow can make you fall like a bear on its back. Chairman Mao charged us poor and lower-middle peasants\* with the re-education of these youngsters. We must do our job well in order to live up to his confidence in us. They endure every hardship. They said one year in Potato Village had done them more good than several years in school.

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\* This is a political term denoting class status and not present economic status. These were two strata of peasants as determined in the land reform. In class struggle the poor and lower-middle peasants are the most reliable allies of the proletariat.

The peasants now call them propagandists of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, fighters in the class struggle and good students of the poor and lower-middle peasants."

Good. But I was still puzzled. What troubles could such good students get into under the care of such good teachers?

"Chug, chug, chug. . . ." Noise from a motor sounded in the air through the deep forests. Startled pheasants and other birds darted into the sky and vanished. The old peasant halted and murmured to himself, "Here comes the wild horse!" And he waved his cap. I followed his gaze and saw a tractor bumping along through the woods. The snow on the branches of shaken birches plopped on the driver's leather cap.

He looked very young. In a tight-fitting padded jacket and no coat, he still seemed to radiate heat. I was astonished to see him driving with only one hand—the other was in a sling. I could not help being impressed by his daring and ingenuity. Skillfully he dodged a thick clump of trees and piles of timber which lay in every direction in the snow, and drove toward us. The tractor came to a sudden halt beside us, chugging noisily. He jumped down and stood before the old peasant.

"Who let you loose?" the old man asked unceremoniously. "I've told you more than once: you're not allowed to drive the tractor until your arm is healed."

The young man grinned sheepishly and said, "Well, didn't you say that whatever we did we must not forget preparedness against war? In case war breaks out, do you think I must not drive simply because one of my arms is wounded?"

The old man tried to suppress a laugh. The severity on his face relaxed.

"You always think you're right. We won't argue about it in front of a guest. We'll straighten it out when we get back." He pulled out a pair of padded galoshes from somewhere under his coat and handed them to him. "Put these on."

The young man backed away. "Me put on . . . ?"

"Yes," the old man said firmly. "You had a pair, yes? But that pair is now on Young Lin's feet. Don't think I don't know about it."

There was nothing he could do but accept the galoshes. The old man looked around. "Where is Tieh-ying and her crowd?"

"Cutting branches over there." He pointed to a slope ahead. "They're coming."

A group of young people appeared, singing and laughing, with axes in their hands. They were divided into three teams, two each, pulling a sled loaded with wood. When they saw the old peasant and me, they stopped laughing and shouted, "Old secretary!" The love and warmth in their voices revealed the status of the old man.

"So you are. . . ," I began.

Instantly he interrupted me and finished the sentence, ". . . serving the people."

The old Party secretary smiled at the youngsters. Now I had a good look at them. The first three were girls, brisk and lively, ruddy with health. They crowded around the old man, jabbering noisily.

"Old secretary, three days you've been away! You can't imagine how we missed you."

"Did you get me the acupuncture diagram?"

"And the new Constitution of the Party I asked you to buy?"

As they chattered they kept trying to search the old man's bag. He pressed it tight.

"Wait, wait!" he shouted. "Wait until we get home. You'll all get what you wanted!"

"What good news did you bring us from the county meetings?"

"A lot. But for now I'll only tell you one thing — a comrade has been sent here from your home town, Shanghai, to see you."

"Where is he?"

Only now did they notice me. They besieged me as soon as the old secretary introduced me, asking a thousand and one things so that I did not know what to answer first. The secretary saved me. "It's getting dark," he said. "Let's get the sled ready. Our guest is freezing. He'll answer you when we get home."

The old man and youngsters hooked a large sled to the tractor. In a minute they piled all the wood

on the sled, their movements quick and nimble. Then they pushed the old secretary and me into the driver's cabin and they themselves settled on the sled behind. Just as our one-armed driver was about to start the engine, a girl in a green padded army coat jumped in and seized the steering wheel.

"I'll drive," she told him shortly. "You'd better take a rest in the back seat."

But the young man refused to give in. He shot a defiant glance at the girl.

"What does that look on your face mean?" she demanded. "Do you think you could have driven this thing at all today without our support?"

The young fellow had to give up his seat, and with a smile. But as he jumped off he made a face at the girl.

"Instead of riding an aeroplane," he said, "now you come here to drive a tractor."

I asked the old secretary in a whisper, "Can she drive a tractor?"

"Of course," the old man said. "They all can."

"The young fellow was pulling her leg. What did he mean?"

"Well, there's a story behind it. This girl — Wu Tieh-ying is her name — was originally given a job as a hostess on an airline with the Shanghai Civil Aviation Bureau. She turned it down. Wanted to be a fighter in frontier regions, and insisted on it. Now she is secretary of the Communist Youth League branch here. Although she is a regular accountant

for the team, she works in the fields just like the others. She does her accounting job in the evenings. A tireless worker, she is."

"That young chap has a northeastern accent. I guess he is a local man."

"No. He also comes from Shanghai. Niu Chih-nung is his name, but people call him Wild Horse. He used to be a head of the Red Guards in Shanghai, now he's leader of our militia platoon."

The tractor bumped onto a level road. The old secretary gave me a nudge, saying, "Here we are. Arrived."

Three orderly rows of low houses mantled with thick snow came into sight. White smoke rose leisurely from the chimneys, and lamp-light winked from behind green window frames. The loud-speaker in the centre of the village was sending out revolutionary songs. Draught animals, aroused by the noise of the tractor, neighed and moored. A whiff of cooking meat assailed my nostrils. The youngsters told me that they had shot a fat bear and we were going to have potato and bear's paw stew, a highly prized and rare dish in our traditional menu. I could not picture this as the once desolate Potato Village.

After supper the old secretary took me to the youngsters' house. Three whitewashed rooms. The one on the right was for the girls. The other two on the left, with the partition removed, were for the boys and called "preparedness against war" room.

There were two long brick beds, one along the north wall and the other along the south. On the north one were displayed some shiny, well-oiled guns and above them on the wall a map of the world, dotted with small red flags. Below, a few lines read:

This map we hang purposely on this wall  
So that we can look at it every day.  
It reminds us where people are suffering  
And where they have taken up guns.  
When the people of the world rise up to fight together,  
Imperialism, revisionism and reaction will meet their doom.

The room was so warm and cosy that most of the youngsters wore only jerseys. Niu Chih-nung blew a whistle and instantly all the young folk crowded into the room, followed by several young peasants. The old secretary opened his bag and distributed all the articles the youngsters asked him to buy. He gave them books he had bought them. Laughter and joyous shouts filled the room.

This reminded me of what the old secretary had told me during the day. The youngsters were supposed to have created a lot of troubles. Just as I was about to ask about it, the old secretary raised his voice, "Now that this comrade from Shanghai is here, the question about your work points\* must be settled

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\* A basic unit according to which pay is fixed for the amount of work done. Normally, an able-bodied person earns ten work points a day.



at once. We have to make up the account for the end of the year, the commune members won't stand any more delay."

I was amazed and worried that the trouble should be so serious. "What's the matter with you?" I asked Tieh-ying next to me. "Do you fight over work points?"

"Yes," she said, smiling, "and we fight very hard."

The poor and lower-middle peasants turned to me. "Comrade from Shanghai," they said, "please say what's right. In our socialist society we work on the principle: to each according to his work. When we fixed work points for these youngsters by common consent, they refused to accept them."

"It's not that we refused to accept them," Tieh-ying said in a conciliatory tone, "but the rate is too high for us. We don't deserve it."

"You've worked as much as we did. Take you, Tieh-ying. When you were sowing beans behind the plough, you always kept up with the horse. No one in the village can do that as skilfully as you."

"But we came here as pupils to be re-educated," said Niu Chih-nung. "We've been taught here by the poor and lower-middle peasants in person, and have taken much of your working hours. Do you think we should receive work points at the same rate as you?"

No sooner had the youngster finished his words than an old peasant gave him a gentle slap on the back.

"You're the author of all these devilish ideas," the old man said. "You're the leader in this row."

Jerking his head towards the others, the young man smiled and said, "Ask them, please."

All the youngsters spoke at once: "You've spent much time and thought on our political education, but suffered much loss economically on your part. What contributions have we made?"

"A lot. You've spread Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, wiped out illiteracy among us and given us medical care. Apart from that, do you think we could have had such a good harvest on those thirty hectares of land we newly reclaimed and completed the reservoir in one winter without the help of you young tigers?"

"But to deserve that rate of work points we have to make fresh efforts in the coming year," some of the youngsters said.

"No, we won't accept it!" others shouted.

The old secretary coughed, meaning that it was time for me to arbitrate and speak in his favour. I was at a loss for words, being excited as well as embarrassed. Tieh-ying took the offensive, pulling my sleeve and whispering in Shanghai dialect, "You must speak on our behalf."

I was now between the devil and the deep blue sea. At my wit's end, I tried to wriggle out of the dilemma. "In my opinion," I said, "you ought to let the local Party organization deliberate over the rate and decide on it."

"This is the standard rate fixed by the Association of Poor and Lower-middle Peasants," said the old secretary, exasperated.

The youngsters looked at each other and laughed.

I was so moved by the high proletarian consciousness of "my" Shanghai young people that I could not fall asleep that night. Early next morning reveille woke me up. When I opened my eyes I found everyone gone, their quilts folded up neatly on the brick beds. I gazed out the window. A red sun was rising from behind a hill, flooding the great earth with golden rays. The youngsters, bathed in the rosy light, guns across their shoulders, looked all the more lively and brave. They were beginning another revolutionary day.

## *Half the Population*

*Yin Yi-ping*

WHEN we started putting up the poles for the power lines, all the sections complained they were short of labour. Since I was in charge of personnel, that put me on the spot. Socialist construction was sweeping the land. Industry and agriculture were as busy as they could be. Where in the world was I going to find people not already working? I sat down and started writing a report to the project leadership, asking them to solve it.

Suddenly, I heard voices whispering outside my door.

"You go in."

"Not me. You'd be much better."

"Go, I tell you!"

I looked up. Oh! There, in the doorway were a bunch of girls. What did they want, anyway? "It's all right," one of them said. "Here comes the chairman." I heard the thud of sturdy footsteps.

"What are you standing there for like a gang of ninnies? What is he, a tiger?"

I recognized the forceful tones of Chen Ta-chu. The families of the men working on the project had their own organization and she was chairman. She ploughed a path through the girls and strode up to my desk. Chest high, she stood in silence.

"What . . . do you want?" I stammered.

"Work," she snapped.

"Work?"

"Why not?"

Why not, indeed? We very much needed people to transport concrete poles and to dig holes for them. But every pole weighed more than a ton. If women tried to tote them they'd be squashed flat. And the holes had to be dug through rocky ground, high in the mountains. That meant swinging a sledge hammer or holding a steel spike. How could I give such heavy labour to women?

"What kind of work would you like to do?" I asked cautiously.

"Unloading trucks." The woman chairman's reply was confident.

"Unloading concrete poles? Don't be funny."

"Think we can't handle it, eh?"

"To be perfectly frank — no! Do you know how much one of those poles weighs? A ton and a half to two tons." I said this very emphatically to show how absurd the whole idea was.

"Never mind about that. Do we get the job or not?"

Ai! What could I say? I needed people badly enough, but this was no job for women. I scratched my head.

"It's really awfully hard work —"

"Cut the cackle! Yes or no?" She slapped her hand down on my desk.

"No. You women can't handle this job, no matter what you say."

"Ha," she laughed coldly. "A fine way to have faith in the masses."

"It isn't a question of faith. It's —"

"We women are half the population. Can we stand idle?" She waved her arm vigorously, sweeping my words away. "The Foolish Old Man\* could remove whole mountains. You mean to say we can't unload concrete poles from a truck? Is a pole heavier than a mountain? Piffle! Agree or not, that's up to you. We're taking the job." She turned to the excitedly

\* The hero in a Chinese legend according to which a 90-year-old man and his sons began to remove two mountains that stood before his door and obstructed the way. They dug the mountains every day, so persistent in their efforts to clear the obstacles that God was moved and sent two angels to carry the mountains away on their backs.

talking girls. "Come on, 'Half the Population', we'll see the secretary of the Party committee."

Like an army responding to its general, the women swarmed out after her.

I wanted to laugh. Of course the leadership would never approve. Why, even the men had difficulty shifting those poles. Besides, if you broke one you could kiss three hundred yuan goodbye.

I finished writing my report and hurried out. At the door I ran into the Party secretary.

"Hear you're short of labour, Comrade Wen," he said casually.

"We sure are. Every section is complaining."

"We ought to try some untapped sources."

"Untapped sources? Where are we going to find them?"

"What about the workers' families? They have plenty of able-bodied people."

"*Aiya*, secretary, those wives and daughters must have been working on you. We need people to move concrete poles and others to dig holes. How can women do such heavy jobs?"

"Come with me." The secretary took me by the arm and led me to the door of the dining hall. He pointed inside and said: "Listen to that."

". . . Comrade Wen doesn't really understand us," the woman chairman was saying. "Of course, he means well. He's afraid we'll mess up and damage the materials. Some of us are discouraged and want to drop our demand. But all over China industry

and agriculture are developing like mad. People are urgently needed, and we want to do our part in socialist construction. If the Party secretary works on him a little, he'll give in. We've got to prove ourselves to him, too. We're struggling against nature, but we've also got to struggle against people's backward ideas."

I was quite moved.

"See what I mean?" asked the Party secretary, indicating the dining hall with pursed lips.

"But if they drop one of those poles, the cost — " I couldn't help worrying.

The Party secretary patted me on the shoulder, "We must have faith in the masses, young fellow."

I thought a moment. He was right. I'd give them a crack at the job. Besides, if they found it too tough, naturally they'd quit. I said: "All right. We'll let them try."

## II

I worked late in the office the next day, writing up some material. It was dark by the time I finished. As I stepped out the door I met the girls, just coming back from the job. They were chattering merrily like a bunch of magpies. But the woman chairman was very quiet. Something obviously was troubling her.

"Well, 'Half the Population', how goes it?" I walked up to her and quipped.

"You've heard?"

"I didn't have to. One look at you and I know the whole story. I tried to tell you, madam chairman. Heavy work is heavy work. What you need is this." I flexed my biceps under her nose. "Muscle, see?"

"Humph. Muscle? You're just blowing. Chairman Mao says it's a person's thinking and political awareness that counts."

"No matter how you put it, you simply haven't got the stuff," I taunted.

"What! Haven't got the stuff?" She waved her arm at the girls. "Come on, 'Half the Population,' let's show this joker a thing or two."

They began closing in on me, their eyes gleaming.

It didn't look so good. I dashed out of the encirclement. "You haven't got the stuff," I teased, "not by a long shot."

"We let you go and immediately you start acting up again," exclaimed the girls. They made as if to come after me.

"Leave him alone." The woman chairman stopped them with a wave of her hand. "You look at people squint-eyed," she snapped at me. "No wonder you get a distorted view."

That night on the way to the bath house I passed the dining hall and heard her reading Chairman Mao's article *On Contradiction* to the girls. I had my bath, washed a few clothes and headed back to my quarters. In the dining hall, the girls were still at it, arguing hotly about which was the main contradiction and

what its main aspect was. They were trying to connect this with unloading the concrete poles.

For several nights the discussions continued. The woman chairman and the girls always looked thoughtful when they returned from work at the end of the day. But they perked up and argued enthusiastically the moment the sessions in the dining hall began.

I had been sure they were going to back down, but there wasn't a sign of that. And I hadn't the slightest idea what kind of medicine they were cooking up, either.

### III

A few days later they came back, bubbling over with high spirits, very delighted about something. When I asked them what it was, they said it was a "secret".

A fine rain had begun to fall. It was nearly dusk. So I rode with them on the truck to make sure no one got hurt.

All they had by way of equipment was a few crowbars, a thick rope and several thick bundles of straw. How could they unload the poles with that?

"Hey, madam chairman, what are those crowbars for?" I queried.

"Don't ask questions. You'll see when the time comes," was the cold reply.

It was still drizzling when we reached the work site. The girls uncoiled the rope and jumped down.

"What are you all getting off for?" I demanded. "These poles aren't going to sprout wings."

"Don't worry so much. Come on down." The woman chairman waved her arm.

"How are you going to unload with nobody up here?" I was a bit agitated.

"You sure talk a lot. Just come down like a good fellow and stand out of the way." She was very definite, wouldn't take "No" for an answer. I had no choice but to do what she said.

"Sister Chang, tie the rope to that tree." She pointed to a big cedar. "Wrap it around a couple of extra times. It's liable to slip in this rainy weather. Sister Li and Sister Chao will set the bales in place. Be careful, you two. The rest of you be ready to lend a hand wherever necessary." She was strict and methodical, like an experienced field commander.

But what about me? There wasn't a thing for me to do. I simply had to stand out of the way, as ordered.

The woman chairman tied the other end of the rope securely to one of the concrete poles. She told Sister Chang to pull the rope taut around the tree. Then she ordered the driver to start the truck.

Slowly the vehicle moved forward. The pole was gradually pulled out from the rear.

"Hold it!" yelled the woman chairman. All but the tip of the pole was off the van. The truck stopped.

"Bales, quick." She waved her arm. The two girls, Li and Chao, swiftly lined up bales of straw under

the suspended pole. When they were safely out of the way, she shouted to the driver: "Roll!"

The truck inched forward. Then the pole plumped down on the waiting bales, settling softly without a quiver.

"Crowbars!" Again the woman chairman waved her arm. "Half the Population" swarmed around and pried the concrete pole to the side of the road.

I gaped. How efficient the woman chairman was. How smoothly the girls co-ordinated. In less than five minutes they had safely and easily unloaded a massive concrete pole. Their process certainly was neat.

I was excited. On the way back I asked the woman chairman: "Who suggested this method?"

"Chairman Mao."

"What!"

"Of course. You can find it in his writings."

Amazing. An ordinary housewife, a child bride in the old society, today she stood so high and saw so far. It was women like her who enabled their sex to give full play to their wisdom and their strength.

"Comrade Wen," said the woman chairman, "we'll soon finish unloading these poles. We've all talked it over and we'd like to go up in the mountains and dig holes. How about it?"

"Fine," I replied promptly.

What else could I say? "Half the Population" were very convincing. No doubt they'd run into a lot of problems on the job. Digging holes, they'd meet rock.

Then they'd have to swing twelve pound sledge hammers and hold steel spikes whose vibrations, when they were struck, numbed the hands. But they'd win every battle.

The next day a truck laden with construction material wound up the mountain road. Seated on the equipment, the women sang, their fresh voices ringing through the valley.

## *Raiser of Sprouts*

*Chang Wei-wen*

WHEN spring planting started, our team leader said I would learn raising rice sprouts from Uncle Ken-fa. Naturally, I was pleased.

Uncle Ken-fa was a man in his sixties, a member of the Communist Party, and an activist in the study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. He was famous for dozens of kilometres around. Even the kids knew about him.

Our team leader took me to his house and explained why we had come.

"Another proof of the trust Chairman Mao has in us peasants," said Uncle Ken-fa heartily, "and a duty we must do our best to perform. I accept you, son, as my apprentice."

"You're right," the team leader said with a smile. "We peasants have the duty to educate the younger generation. With this lad lending you a hand, I'm sure you'll raise the sprouts especially well this year."

Hearing our voices, Ken-fa's wife Aunt Lo came out, brushing kindling chips from her apron. "This boy has had book learning, old man," she said to her husband, "and was a leader in the Red Guards. You've got to do a good job and teach him well."

"Don't worry," said Uncle Ken-fa. "If a person with book learning feels the same as us, we welcome him from the bottom of our hearts." He turned to me. "Work hard, son. There's a real future for young people in the countryside."

I nodded, "I'll learn modestly from you, uncle. I've made up my mind to be a revolutionary in the countryside all my life."

Uncle Ken-fa lit his pipe and puffed thoughtfully.

"Liu Shao-chi used to say young people should go to school so that they could become officials. He wanted to make 'gentlemen' out of you so you would ride on the backs of the workers and peasants and be his tools in restoring capitalism. Now Chairman Mao has issued the call: **'It is highly necessary for young people with education to go to the countryside to be re-educated by the poor and lower-middle peasants.'** He wants you to be trained into worthy successors of the proletarian revolution so that you can take over from us peasants. You must listen to Chairman Mao."

Aunt Lo laughed. "The boy's just come, and already you're giving him a lecture."

"That's the idea," our team leader said to the old man. "Give him plenty of lessons like this, from now on."

Uncle Ken-fa told me that in order to raise sprouts well you have to put politics first, to give your heart to the countryside and be one with the poor and lower-middle peasants. You have to be streaked with earth outside before you can be revolutionary inside.

His words filled me with strength. I silently vowed that I would learn all his farming technique and raise rice sprouts well.

One day we were selecting seed on the threshing ground outside the village. "These have been picked over already," I said to Uncle Ken-fa. "Why do it again?"

"These seeds are for the brigade's superior strain field. We have to be very careful and select the best."

Her bifocals on her nose, Aunt Lo was also cheerfully picking. Uncle Ken-fa was sitting beside me, and I kept watching how he worked. Suddenly he grabbed a handful of my seed and examined them. His face fell.

"Look, two tare seeds. 'Good seeds give good rice, tare seeds give tare weeds.' You can't be sloppy in farming, son. If you cheat your crops, your crops will cheat you."

I blushed, but my heart was warmed by his kindness.



He was very helpful. Take the way he taught me to sow. One morning I went to the field. The other team members were already at work. Uncle Ken-fa evidently decided to give me a free hand. After a few words of instruction, he rolled up his trousers and went into the field with a basketful of seed. I followed behind him in another patch.

But I couldn't bring myself to start casting. I had heard others say it was a meticulous job. If you did it poorly you wasted seed and affected the quality of the sprouts. I had been practising with gravel for several days, sometimes until quite late at night, and I thought I had got the hang of it. But now I hesitated, conscious of my responsibility.

Uncle Ken-fa saw me, and called from a distance: "What are you standing there for? Don't be afraid. Just keep a steady pace." He came over and took my hand. "Like this. Keep your hand more level. Don't take too many seeds at one time. Cast!"

I screwed up my courage and began casting on the field, which was as smooth as a mirror. Strange enough, once I made up my mind, my hand grew sure.

Uncle Ken-fa's encouragement made me feel fine. It heightened my determination to wage revolution in the countryside as long as I lived.

## II

Daily the sprouts grew, they became a tender green. Just at this crucial stage, Uncle Ken-fa's stomach

trouble flared up. His wife was very upset. I also was worried about him. But his only concern was the seedling plot. He was always going out there to see how the sprouts were faring.

Aunt Lo scolded him. "What you need is a few days in bed, and to stop all this running around."

Uncle Ken-fa was unperturbed. "A little ailment like this," he said cheerfully. "What does it matter?" He turned to me and explained: "I got this bad stomach before Liberation when I worked as a hired hand for a landlord. Who had money for treatment in those days? I've had it so long it's hard to cure. Still, it's not a bad thing. Whenever it flares up, it reminds me of that black-hearted landlord, and how our class had to suffer."

Aunt Lo sighed. "We weren't even treated like humans. You've grown up soaked in sweet water," she said to me. "You've never seen what we poor folk had to go through. Tomorrow I'll make you a few chaff muffins and some wild herb soup. While you're eating what we used to eat, we'll tell you about our bitter past."

"I want to hear, aunt," I said.

"Not a bad idea," said Uncle Ken-fa. "Make some for me, too."

His wife laughed. "Don't worry. Just as soon as your stomach is better, I'll cook up a meal for you, special."

Our team leader opened the door and walked in. Aunt Lo greeted him like a member of the family.

"Make this uncle of yours rest a couple of days at home," she pleaded. "I've been talking myself hoarse, but he won't listen. Just see what he looks like. The minute he takes his pills, he goes running off to the sprout field."

From the tone of her voice, however, it was obvious she was praising, not criticizing Uncle Ken-fa.

"It's his illness that I've come about," our team leader said with a smile. "He's got it pretty bad. The Party branch and the brigade revolutionary committee have talked it over. We want him to spend a few days in the commune hospital."

"Nothing doing," said Uncle Ken-fa grumpily.

"It's only for a couple of days, uncle," I said. "You can't keep dragging this ailment along. I'll look after the sprouts."

"I know a little about them, too," said Aunt Lo. "I can help."

Although his stomach plainly was giving him discomfort, the old man said stubbornly: "It's nothing. I won't go."

Aunt Lo was getting frantic, "You must go, whether you want to or not. Once you're cured, won't you work even better? If you won't listen to me, you at least ought to listen to the team leader."

The team leader added his entreaties to ours. At last, Uncle Ken-fa said reluctantly: "All right. If I must, I must." But first he took me to the seedling field, examined the sprouts carefully, and gave me

detailed instructions. Only then did he return home, get a few things together and depart for the hospital.

### III

One evening a day or two later I went to have a look at the sprouts. They were growing beautifully, all glistening and supple. The sunset clouds were the colour of peach blossoms in a deep blue sky. White mist drifted like veils across the fields. Really lovely. It seemed to me that in weather like this I ought to drain the water out and let the sprouts absorb the night dew. That would be better than any amount of fertilizer.

Uncle Ken-fa sent word from the hospital that a big storm was brewing. I couldn't help laughing. He had always been very responsible in his statements. Probably his illness had made his brain a little fuzzy. I just didn't believe it. I removed the earth from the openings in the mound that encircled the field of sprouts and let the water out.

Then I went over to the sprout field of Team Four. I thought: "It won't take very long. I'll let the water out for them, too." I knocked a few openings in their retaining mound, drained the field, and went home.

But I wasn't quite easy in my mind. Suppose it rained, after all? From my bed, I looked out of the window. The moon rode on the tree tops, and the stars were as thick as the seed I had cast. Frogs in

the fields croaked loudly and clear. How could it rain? Impossible. Drowsily, I drifted off into slumber.

I was awakened by a heavy clap of thunder. The sky, as black as pitch, clamped down on everything like an inverted cauldron. Fiery lightning ripped across the firmament. It was going to rain! With a groan I leaped out of bed. I grabbed my flashlight and a hoe and rushed out.

Thunder rumbled overhead. I cursed myself for not having heeded Uncle Ken-fa's warning. I ran, panting, towards the sprout field. Suddenly, the rain poured down in a deluge. I was instantly soaked to the skin. "With no water to support them, those delicate shoots are sure to be flattened in the storm," I thought.

I put on an extra spurt. Stumbling and skidding, I reached the field. With my hoe I started reblocking the openings I had made in the retaining mound. In the darkness the rain pelted against the sprouts. Each hissing splash cut my heart like a knife.

"Ho," called a familiar voice.

I swung the beam of my flashlight. "Is that you, team leader?"

"Yes. It's raining so hard, I thought I'd better have a look. Did you let the water out?"

"It was very wrong of me. Have you blocked the openings on that side?"

"One more to go."

"Will the sprouts be ruined?"

"Not necessarily."

I finished blocking my end of the field and went over to the team leader. He was soaking wet. Lightning flashed. I saw another man beside Team Four's sprout field. That reminded me — I had let the water out there, too. Why hadn't I thought of it before?

The team leader nudged my arm. "Someone's there. Let's take a look." We hurried over. It was Uncle Ken-fa.

Before I could speak, he said to us: "There are still a few openings. Block them, quick."

He was absolutely drenched. It tore my heart. Our team leader said: "What are you doing out of the hospital, uncle?"

The old man continued pushing earth into the breaches. He plainly considered this a superfluous question. After a while he said: "How could I lie there with the rain coming down like this? I sent word this afternoon, but I know you young fellows sleep soundly. I had to come and see for myself."

Thunder blotted out the rest of what he said. Lightning flashed. I saw rain water streaming down his face. He didn't bother to wipe it away.

Working rapidly, we repaired the retaining mound. "I'm going to write a poster criticizing the man in charge of this sprout plot tomorrow," Uncle Ken-fa muttered. "How could he let the water out in such weather? What kind of a farmer is he if he doesn't understand a simple thing like this? And he doesn't even come to block the holes up again. Where's his sense of responsibility?"

I prickled all over, as if I had fallen into a pile of prickly weeds. But I gathered my courage and said: "It wasn't a Team Four man, uncle. I did it."

"What? How could you have done such a stupid thing?"

"I . . . I thought. . . ."

"Of course you meant well. You didn't know it was going to rain so hard. There's a lot of technique to farming, son. You can't just go at it blindly. You've got to understand weather, and soil, and sprouts. And you must be responsible to the people. It's conscientiousness that counts. You mustn't think you know everything."

"If you opened up their field, why didn't you block it again?" the team leader asked.

"I forgot," I stammered. "I was so worried about our own sprouts."

Gradually, the rain slackened. Uncle Ken-fa finished filling in the breaches. At the edge of the field he washed his hands.

"That's it, you see," he said to me. "You thought only of your own team. You meant well when you drained their water. But your concern for them didn't go far enough, so you forgot to block it again. All our sprouts are for the state. There's no difference between this team and that."

I hung my head, my face burning.

On the way back, Uncle Ken-fa put his big calloused hand on my shoulder. "Why do we till the fields?" he asked kindly. "For the revolution, of

course. If we raise good sprouts and get a bumper harvest, we strengthen the state and are prepared against war and natural disasters. We also have to support world revolution."

His every word went straight to my heart. I walked with head down, not speaking. I certainly respected this man who was an old poor peasant.

Our team leader said: "You've learned the technique of raising rice sprouts from Uncle Ken-fa, you've paid a lot of attention to that. But you haven't put enough stress on learning his spirit of serving the people wholly and entirely. From now on —"

"From now on I definitely am going to learn from his fine qualities," I vowed. The team leader's advice cleared the fog from my mind.

"We've got to take special care now, son," said Uncle Ken-fa. "Those sprouts have been soaked. If the weather turns cold, we'll have to work like blazes. But don't worry. I'll get my discharge from the hospital tomorrow. We won't let difficulties get us down."

"It's going to be a battle," said our team leader. "We must be ready to fight."

#### IV

After the rain, there was a cold wave. The temperature dropped. In a single night the sprouts drooped

considerably. As I lightly ran my fingers over the withered leaves I felt so heartsick I nearly wept. It was all my fault! And I not only hurt my own team but Team Four as well. None of the members of Team Four berated me, in fact they encouraged me. But I felt very ashamed. If, as a result of injuring the sprouts, the transplanting was affected, my mistake would be even more serious. I was quite depressed. I decided to criticize myself before Uncle Ken-fa.

When I got to his door I heard voices inside. He and the team leader were talking about me. I halted and listened.

"The boy is a good sprout," Uncle Ken-fa said.

"With the help of a sprout-raiser like you, good sprout should mature well," said the team leader.

Aunt Lo put in a word. "That's right. I said so right from the start. He's a fine boy. He and we are of one heart."

"He's very happy here in the countryside, and he's got determination and lofty aspirations," said the team leader. "But he doesn't stand quite high enough, or look quite far enough. It's up to us to teach him."

"Right," said Uncle Ken-fa. "We certainly will help this sprout from the city come to full flower in the countryside."

"Well put, uncle," said the team leader. "Raising political levels is even more important than raising rice sprouts. It's extremely important in our fight to

prevent the bourgeoisie from winning over the younger generation. We must train revolutionary fighters for the cause of communism. With you raising both sprouts and young folk's political consciousness, uncle, our team is bound to have a double bumper harvest this year."

They all laughed. My eyes were moist, I don't know why. I pushed open the door and said: "Team leader, uncle, I've let you down."

The team leader ruffled my hair. "Not at all. Learn well, work well, stick to the road pointed out by Chairman Mao, and you're sure to become the kind of commune member we peasants welcome."

I thought of those yellow drooping sprouts and I asked miserably: "What can we do about the sprouts, team leader?"

"What's your idea?" he countered.

"Uncle Ken-fa must have a plan," I said.

"You, also, should be confident that we can save them," the team leader said firmly.

I understood, but could think of no reply.

Uncle Ken-fa slowly lit his pipe, a kindly smile on his face. "We can lick anything in heaven or on earth," he said, "it's man, not nature, that decides whether we have a bumper harvest. Don't lose courage. What's frightening about difficulties? If we have a firm determination, no difficulty can scare us."

Sunlight seemed to flood my heart. I felt all warm inside, and filled with confidence and strength.

A few days later, thanks to the emergency measures we took, the sprouts began to thrive again. Absorbing sunshine and dew, they looked vital and lush, swaying in the breeze. Uncle Ken-fa gazed at them with a contented smile.

### *Third Time to School*

*Lu Chao-hui*

THE rays of the rising sun poured in through the window.

In the office of the mechanical engineering department of the university Hung Kang, secretary of the department's Communist Party organization, examined the entrance forms of the newly arrived worker and peasant students. A smile beamed over his thin face.

Chao Ping-chiang? Hung's brows rose. That name was familiar. The photo attached to the form showed a man in his thirties, with a fine forehead, a serious mien and an expression of implacable determination in his eyes. Hung took a deep drag on his cigarette. On page two of the form, under "previous schooling"

he read: "1945-1948 — Puchiang Primary School, Shanghai."

Puchiang Primary? Hung's heart gave a leap. Chao Ping-chiang? Of course, it was he! Chao had come! Hung rose abruptly. Excitedly, he unbuttoned his tunic, walked over to the window and pushed it open. It was a sunny day, with a fresh breeze blowing. But Hung was thinking of a very different kind of day, twenty-two years ago.

Snow was falling, and it was dusk. Young teacher Hung Kang and twelve-year-old pupil Chao Ping-chiang were plodding along the banks of the Huangpu River in the teeth of the storm.

That morning a crowd had gathered before the school bulletin board. They were animatedly discussing an announcement. Though he stood on tiptoe in the rear, thin little Chao could see only a few lines: "Teacher Hung Kang. . . stirred up discontent among the pupils. . ."

The words struck him like a bolt of lightning. He had an ominous presentiment. Chao didn't have to see any more. He looked at the angry students beside him, many of whom were from workers' families like himself. He waved his arm.

"Come on. Let's see the principal about this."

"We'll all go together." The students followed Chao in a body and swarmed into the principal's office. Chao planted himself in front of the reactionary bureaucrat.

"You have no reason to fire Teacher Hung."

"That's right." The pupils were all shouting at once. "Teacher Hung must not go."

The principal's face turned purple. He pounded his desk. "This is rebellion," he screamed. "I can have every one of you paupers' brats expelled."

"You can't scare us." Chao felt ready to burst. "We don't want to stay in a school like this."

That same afternoon another announcement, its ink not yet dried, appeared on the board — expelled.

Later, walking by the river with Hung, Chao could hear the muffled tones of the school's evening bell ringing in the distance. He halted and looked back towards the rickety entry arch being buffeted by the snowstorm. Through lips marked by the angry marks of his teeth, he exclaimed: "Schools! A fine thing! I'll never go to school again!"

"No, Chao, don't say that." Hung's heart warmed towards this boy to whom adversity had brought a too early maturity. "The day will come when we'll meet in a school of our own."

"Our own school?" The boy's eyes flashed.

Snow whirled in the howling gale. . .

Hung expelled a long breath as he extracted himself from his reverie. With mounting excitement he glanced at his wrist-watch. It was almost time for the big meeting to welcome the new students. As he hastily put the pile of entrance forms in order he happened to see a remark in Chao's form: "Political

status — Communist. Present position — member of the standing committee of the factory's revolutionary committee."

## II

The paper of various hues, bearing slogans, which covered the walls, gave the assembly hall a festive air. Cymbals clashed, drums throbbed, slogans were shouted, there was applause and laughter.

A young PLA soldier, a red star on his cap, red tabs on his collar, addressed the meeting. He was followed by a woman commune member in straw sandals, a conical straw hat hanging down her back. The comrade who chaired the meeting announced: "Next, we invite workers' representative and new student in the mechanical engineering department, Chao Ping-chiang, to speak."

Hung watched attentively, thrilled at the sound of this familiar name.

Amid warm applause, a broad-shouldered worker walked spiritedly to the speakers' platform. Hung stared. There was no trace of the thin little boy he had known twenty-two years before. The man was big and robust.

Chao stood with one hand pressed on the lectern, the other grasping the microphone. His heart beat wildly. For years the word "school," or even the sight of a school gate, had roused in him mingled emotions.

"Comrades," he began, "I entered this university for the first time eight years ago." He gazed around the assembly hall, which seemed familiar, yet strange. His voice trembled a little. "But in less than a year, I was driven out."

A ripple ran through the crowd. There was a low exchange of comments, which settled into a grim silence. Chao took a sip from a glass of hot water to steady himself.

"My mates in the factory saw me off, beating drums and cymbals. But after only a few days here I began feeling very uncomfortable. The bourgeois professors wagged their heads learnedly and bleated that this university was a 'cradle of engineers'. I thought to myself: 'If you keep swinging your noggins like that, you birds will get dizzy and make us dizzy too. To hell with your blather!' Every Sunday, we worker students went back to help out in our factories. When the head of our department heard about this, he was irritated. 'We're training engineers, here,' he said. 'You're just wasting what we're teaching you.' And he snorted: 'It's our own fault for putting elegant flowers into crude vases.'"

Chao took a look around and then continued, "One night I was reviewing for my last two exams, to be held the following day. My factory phoned and said they were making a new type of lathe, which they hoped to have finished by July First, the anniversary of the founding of the Party. But they had hit a



snag. When I and two other of my mates heard that — we were in the same dorm — we left a note for the department head and rushed over. I can't tell you how glad the fellows at the factory were to see us. We rolled up our sleeves and said: 'All right. Let's get at it.' Everybody offered ideas. We talked them over, experimented, made dozens of trials. We worked right through till noon the next day, and finally got the problem licked. Suddenly we remembered those exams. My two classmates and I hurried back to school. But the exams were already over."

Everyone in the hall was listening intently to Chao's recital. Hung felt a stinging pain in his hand, and instinctively shook it. His cigarette had burned down to this fingers.

"We went to the department head and asked to be given make-up exams. He said coldly, 'You've missed your exams in two majors. You'll have to do the whole year over. That's the rule.' We were furious. A whole year, and he was being so casual about it. He was deliberately making things tough for us worker students.

"I've discussed this with the school authorities,' he said craftily. 'We feel that since your factory needs you, well. . . .' He gave a nasty laugh. 'This is an institution of higher learning, not a factory. Understand?' We were being pushed out.

"We told the other worker students about this. They were hopping mad. 'Chairman Mao sends us to the

university, and these men drive us away. Whose university is this, anyhow?"

"We went together to the school authorities and argued with them. We criticized their educational aims, their teaching materials, their examination system. They sat there sweating, unable to say a word. Then we marched out, rolled up our bedding, and left. Later, we found out it wasn't only in our school that things were like this. Liu Shao-chi and his gang had turned the entire field of education over to the bourgeois intellectuals."

The audience seethed with rage. Angry shouts rang throughout the hall.

"Comrades," cried Chao, "with the hopes of the Party and the trust of our class resting on our shoulders, we workers, peasants and soldiers have again entered the university, heads high. We are the grave-diggers of the old educational system, the builders of a new-type socialist university. Chairman Mao has issued the battle call: '**The phenomenon of our schools being dominated by bourgeois intellectuals must be completely changed.**'" Chao's sinewy arm chopped downward decisively.

Again slogans rocked the hall.

Even the usually quiet Hung was excited. Twenty-two years before, Chao had been expelled from primary school by a reactionary principal, eight years ago a capitalist roader had forced him to leave the university. But today, in a "school of our own", they were together again at last.

The cheers were like thunder.

### III

That afternoon the various departments arranged their own activities. Hung sat in on a discussion of the students of the mechanical engineering department on why they were attending the university. Many students spoke, and their words were stirring: "We're here for the sake of the revolution . . . We've come to attend the university, run the university, use Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to reform the university. . . ."

"What latent power in these worker, peasant and soldier students," Hung mused. "What enormous determination."

He was eager to talk with Chao. That evening he went to Chao's dormitory, but no one was there. Where could he have gone? Then Hung remembered that the teachers and students of the mechanical engineering department were holding a refutation of revisionism meeting that night in the university-run factory. He walked quickly across the broad campus to the brightly lit factory building.

It was a large structure, smelling of oil. A big eye-catching banner running the entire length of the room read: "Education must serve proletarian politics and be integrated with productive labour." Thirty or forty people surrounded a gleaming machine. Beside

it a tall powerfully built worker was speaking animatedly, waving his arm for emphasis. Hung immediately recognized Chao.

A man whose hair was streaked with grey turned around and saw Hung. He was about to hail him, but the Party secretary smilingly gestured not to disturb the others. Hsu Ming by name, he was an assistant professor in the mechanical engineering department.

"That was a good meeting, this afternoon, comrades. Before, education didn't serve proletarian politics, it was divorced from productive labour." Chao waved his fist. "We in the mechanical engineering department are going to strike a telling blow against the revisionist educational line tonight by our own practical actions."

"Right," shouted the crowd. "We're going to bring this 'dead' machine back to life."

"It's an imported universal cylindrical grinder," said Hsu Ming. "Not long after it was installed, it broke down. Experts and professors conferred, but not one of them had the nerve to tackle it. They were afraid if they took it apart, they wouldn't be able to put it together again. So it's just been standing here, useless, for eight years."

A happy gleam came to Hung's eye. Chao's ringing voice rang again:

"Who says we can't dismantle imported machines? At that time we students said we ought to apply the theories we were learning to practice and repair it.

But the 'experts' wouldn't let us try." Chao glanced coolly at the complicated grinder. "There's nothing so remarkable about it. Big as it is, we'll take it to pieces and make it as good as new."

Chao patted the grinder with his strong thick hand. The machine crouched there like some broken-spirited horse.

"Several professors have come tonight. That gives us a good chance to learn some theory in the course of practice."

"Right." The teachers and students applauded. Most of them had met only recently, but a common purpose already linked them intellectually and emotionally.

"Although this so-called 'cradle of engineers' has rocked for years," Professor Hsu said with a sigh, "the students it raised were afraid of imported machinery. But the students today . . ."

". . . are students of a new-type socialist university," interrupted Hung, with pride in his voice.

All eyes were drawn to him. Several professors who recognized him said, "So you're here too, Secretary Hung."

The new students crowded around. Chao pushed forward and warmly shook him by the hand. "We wanted to invite you to this meeting, Secretary Hung," he said, "but I couldn't find you."

Hung smiled and nodded. For the moment, he didn't know what to say. Holding Chao's calloused hand, he was very stirred. He remembered Chao as

a boy, his head stubbornly held high, his eyes gleaming angrily. Now, he was a young man who furiously excoriated capitalist roaders.

"This is the second time Comrade Chao has entered school," Professor Hsu said by way of introduction.

"Not the second," Hung laughingly corrected him, "the third." He turned to Chao. "Isn't that so?"

"Yes, yes," agreed the startled Chao.

"The first time was the Puchiang Primary School," Hung continued. "In his fourth year, he led a strong protest in the principal's office."

Memories came back to Chao in a rush. "But, secretary, how do you know so much about me?" he asked, puzzled.

His right hand still grasping Chao's, Hung placed his left on Chao's broad shoulder. "Do you remember what one of your teachers said to you then?" he asked in a moved voice. "'The day will come when we'll meet in a school of our own. . . .'"

Chao began to understand. "You were my teacher, Hung Kang!" he cried with joy and amazement.

Hung smiled, his eyes shining.

Their tightly clasped hands in silence. The reunion was so unexpected. What could they say to express their emotion?

Chao was tough. He had twice been driven out of school and never shed a tear. But now his eyes were damp as they turned slowly to the picture of Chairman Mao on the wall. Warmth laved him from head to toe.

"We have indeed met in a school of our own," he said. "Chairman Mao has given me the right to enter school for the third time."

"The schools will always be ours," said Hung.

Proudly the big arch stood at the university entrance. A solemn row of flags, red as fire in the glow of electric bulbs, rippled in the night sky.

## *The Case of the Missing Ducks*

*Hu Hui-ying*

MAMA Ling, head of the women's team, took my luggage and led me to her house.

According to Comrade Wang, secretary of the commune's Party committee, Mama Ling had a family of three. Her son Ah-yung was in fifth year primary school. Her husband, a cadre in the county administration, was seldom home.

We walked along a dirt road.

The sun was slowly sinking in the west, striking golden glints on the stream beside the road. Beyond, fields of rape flowers and luxuriant wheat reflected a brilliant yellow and green on the water. A flock

of quacking ducks floated by, rippling the placid surface.

On the opposite bank stood a sturdy lad of twelve or thirteen, a red-tasselled spear in his hand, a small basket on his back, a leather belt around his waist. "Ma!" he shouted and flew across a wooden bridge. Then he halted and gazed at me curiously. He had a tanned face and lively questioning eyes.

"This is Li Wei, who has come to settle down in our commune," his mother explained with a smile. "This is the Red Guard sister you've been longing for. Be polite now, and greet her by name."

Ah-yung only grinned.

"Hey, Ah-yung, come quick," yelled another boy on the opposite shore. Ah-yung looked over, then gave me a hasty military salute and dashed back across the bridge. "Little Niu wants me, Sister Wei," he called over his shoulder as he ran. "We have a mission to fulfil. I'll see you at home tonight and you can tell me war stories."

"Those two are in the same platoon of Little Red Soldiers," said Mama Ling. "They're mad about the People's Liberation Army."

"Does Ah-yung tend ducks for the production team?"

"No, our team has no ducks."

"Do they belong to your family, then?"

"They're not ours either. Those ducks are something of a mystery, you might say." Mama Ling told me the story as we walked.

A few days before, as the sky was turning light, Ah-yung and his schoolmates were out on "manoeuvres". It had rained the night before and the ground was slippery. As the boys ran along beside the stream, Ah-yung skidded and fell. As he got up, he noticed something white among the reeds. A closer inspection revealed a flock of white ducks. There was no sign of anyone in charge.

The kids drove the ducks ashore and counted them. Thirty-two. Ah-yung told his mother about it. "We'll look after them for a few days till their owner comes for them," she said.

"Give that assignment to us," the lad requested.

The Little Red Soldiers were put in charge. They tended the ducks and cut grass for the team's pigs at the same time.

Mama Ling pointed ahead. "That's where we live. We're nearly there."

It was a white-walled house with a roof of black tiles nestled in a grove of green bamboo. As we drew nearer I saw a brook and a pair of big white ducks. Mama Ling told me Ah-yung had raised them. He was tremendously fond of them, and fed them worms and snails. The ducks laid an egg each almost every day.

The interior of the house was spacious. "This place belonged to a rich peasant before liberation," Mama Ling said. "It was given to us during land reform."

She put me in the inner room, saying she and Ah-yung would sleep in the outer.

After I had settled in and spread my bedding, I asked her to tell me something about the production team.

Just as she started, Ah-yung came home. He set down his basket and hurried over to me. "My ma says that you students have come to the countryside in response to Chairman Mao's call. She says you're going to be like my own sister. We've got a fine production team here. It's a model at grasping revolution and pushing production." His large eyes sparkled with intelligence, although he talked like a machine-gun.

I jotted down a few notes on what Mama Ling had told me about the team. Ah-yung peered at my notebook.

"Sister Wei, put this down, too: Rich peasant Ling Chin-tsai is a big scoundrel. It's true. He smiles all the time, but don't let that fool you. He's rotten to the core. He's always thinking up all kinds of dirty tricks." Ah-yung grabbed my hand and pulled me into the next room.

He pointed to the rafters. "Up there. During the land reform the work team found a big cache of guns and ammunition. That scoundrel was hoping for a comeback of Chiang Kai-shek."

I stared into the shadows among the beams. Anger rose within me.

## II

My friendship with Ah-yung started from that day.

When I needed a hoe, he got me one with a well-polished new handle. When I needed a sickle, he sharpened it till it was gleaming bright. When I wanted to read, he would sit down, take out his copy of *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tsetung* and study by my side.

In summer, school closed for the harvest. Ah-yung and his Little Red Soldiers, leaving one to tend the ducks, went into town every day to collect sugarcane stalks which the team converted into fertilizer.

At home one evening I saw him bent over a small table laboriously writing. I read these words, in a tipsy scrawl: "To the announcer at the county radio station. How are you, uncle? Did you receive the last letter our team sent you? Why haven't you found the owner of those lost ducks for us yet? They're growing big and plump. Hurry and find someone to take them away."

Ah-yung saw me reading his letter, and he asked: "Is that all right, sister?"

I added a few lines and said comfortingly, "Don't worry. When they broadcast this, the owner is sure to come."

"Really?" His eyebrows arched high with delight. He folded the letter carefully and put it in an envelope.

I sat down beside the oil lamp and placed my newspaper on the small table. That meant I wasn't going out. Ah-yung quickly hitched his small stool over beside me.

"Tell me another war story, Sister Wei."

"Quit pestering her. She's been busy all day and she's tired," Mama Ling scolded. "Let the girl get a little rest."

"Then tell me again about how you saw Chairman Mao in Peking," the boy pleaded.

I gladly complied. I told him how Chairman Mao, wearing a green army uniform, waved to us from Tien An Men, as thousands of us Red Guards marched before it.

Ah-yung's lively black eyes grew larger, smiles wreathed his chubby face. Excitedly, he leaped to his feet, as if he were actually seeing Chairman Mao.

One afternoon as I was returning from a study session at brigade headquarters I could hear Ah-yung singing in the distance. The song was about Chairman Mao. I saw that he was loading fertilizer from a pile. Though still a boy, he always wanted to do a man's work. Taking up the refrain, I walked over to help him. But before I reached the pile, his song ended abruptly. Strange. An old man was saying something to him and gesticulating wildly. Ah-yung was hotly retorting. I hurried towards them.

The old man had a deep harsh voice, like a water buffalo. "Quit making such a blasted racket," he was growling. "All that noise. It gives me a headache."

"A song about our great leader Chairman Mao. You call that a racket? Your brain is so reactionary it's turned to stone. That's what makes your head ache."

"Tough little devil, aren't you? A man can't even say a word against you."

"That's it exactly. Your only job is to behave, not go around stirring up trouble," Ah-yung told him flatly. He stood head high, his chest raised.

"Little wretch," the old man grated, his eyes gleaming venomously. He moved towards the boy. But then he saw me approaching, and immediately changed his tone. "Where are your manners, child?" he said. "I ask you nicely not to make so much noise, and you heap curses on me. Let's ask this comrade," indicating me, "to settle this thing."

"Sister Wei, it burns him up to hear me sing," Ah-yung cried angrily. "Well, let's see him stop me."

"Sing, all right, sing," the fellow seethed.

Ah-yung thumped one end of his carrying pole on the ground. He clamped his other hand on his hip.

"We run this country now, we've every reason to sing," he stated proudly. "My ma says you reactionary rich peasants are like onions hanging under the eaves. Skin and roots all shrivelled, but still alive inside. Love to make a comeback, wouldn't you? You're dreaming, man, forget it."

The old rascal was stunned into silence. Then he said, with menace in his voice, "I'm not going to

argue with you. Later. . . .” He raised his carrying pole to his shoulder furiously and stalked away.

That night while I was helping Mama Ling cook supper I told her what had happened. Soon the meal was ready, but Ah-yung hadn't returned. We ate without him. By then it was dark. Ah-yung came in, scowling, his lips a tight line.

I knew something was wrong. Before I could ask, he walked up to his mother and said in a choked voice, as though his throat was stuffed with cotton, “We're missing some ducks.”

“How many?” I asked.

“Two.”

His mother straightened his army-style cap and brushed the dust from his clothes.

“Don't be so upset. Where did they disappear and how did it happen?”

“This afternoon Little Niu and the boys were tending the ducks and cutting grass for the pigs down by the stream. They heard a lot of threshing around in the water, but they thought the ducks were just playing. But later they counted them and found there were only thirty.”

“Don't worry,” I said, “I'll help you look for them.”

“We searched all around the village and on both sides of the stream, but there's no sign of them.” Tears started from his eyes.

Mama Ling frowned. She pulled the boy before her and said, “A fine Little Red Soldier platoon leader you are. Something happens and instead of using

your head, you drip tears. You say you want to learn from the PLA. Did you ever see any of them cry?”

Ah-yung wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and glared.

“We put those ducks in the care of you boys,” she continued. “That shows we trust you. You've got to get them back.”

Ah-yung nodded.

### III

In the village, rumours flew.

“All kids love to eat. He just took those two ducks home.”

I was annoyed. During lunch I asked Ah-yung, “Have you heard what some people are saying?”

“I've heard. Let them talk,” he said coolly. I was surprised at his calm.

He leaned close and whispered a quotation from Chairman Mao in my ear, “**Never forget class struggle.**”

He wolfed down a few mouthfuls of rice and looking up, noticed the astonishment on my face. “We Little Red Soldiers are trying to trace the rumour-monger. The Party secretary told us to. We'll find him, for sure.”

Through the window we saw the postman coming up on his bike. “Letter for you, Ah-yung,” he shouted with a grin as he entered the yard.



The boy hastily put down his bowl and chopsticks and dashed outside. Reading the letter, he danced for joy. He waved it before my eyes. "The owner of the ducks has been found."

I read the letter. It was from the county radio station. It said the ducks belonged to the poultry farm of the Chiangcheng Commune. I was pleased. But then I remembered. "Two of them are missing," I reminded him.

"Don't worry." The boy confidently puffed out his chest. "I'll take care of that." He spoke as if he had some magic formula.

The summer harvest started and the fields were a hive of activity. The wheat was ripe, the rape plants were yellow. In a few short days, they all had to be cut and gathered, the early rice had to be planted and the fields' golden cover changed to a mantle of green.

Though only a boy, Ah-yung was skilled at transplanting rice. He was so deft and fast, he didn't seem to be putting the sprouts into the mud at all. Rather, it was as if he had only to point at the watery surface and six rows of sprouts sprang erect in the paddy field. Each time he got to the end of the field he would work back to complete the row I was laboriously planting.

Suddenly, he straightened up and peered at the sky. "Aiya," he exclaimed. "It's going to rain."

I looked up. Except for a few dark clouds in the northeast, the sky was quite clear. "Impossible," I said, "a fine day like this."

"Those dark clouds will be here in a minute. The wind is from the northeast. I'd better go back and get your raincoat. A storm is on the way." He jumped out of the paddy and dashed towards the village, his muddy legs racing along the ridge.

Suddenly a gust of north wind blew with such force that it nearly knocked me off my feet. No sooner had I regained my balance than another one struck. The sky turned dark, tumbling black clouds surged above us, thunder boomed in the distance, then crashed directly overhead and big raindrops began to fall.

"Here comes Ah-yung," a boy working near me cheered. Sure enough, his short sturdy figure was running through the rain.

"Aiya!" The boy let out a cry of dismay. Ah-yung had disappeared. I saw a head in the big irrigation ditch. He had fallen in.

But he leaped out and raced towards us along the dyke, holding the raincoat. He hadn't bothered to put one on himself. Barefoot, slipping and sliding, he flew along the slippery surface.

"Here, get into this, quick . . ." Ah-yung handed me my raincoat.

"Were you hurt?" I asked him.

"Oh, no." He shook his head.

I took his hands and looked at them. Both palms were lacerated and bleeding. "Go on home," I directed, binding his cuts with my handkerchief.

"Go home?" He yanked his hands away and cocked his head to one side. "I've got to help Little Niu drive those ducks back into the shed." He turned and trotted off. His small figure was quickly swallowed up in the rain.

Late that night, I was awakened by a clap of thunder. I looked towards Ah-yung's bed. It was empty. Strange. Where had the boy gone? Mama Ling was away at a meeting in the county town. I was responsible for him. Worried, I hopped out of bed.

Lightning slashed across the night sky, followed by an ear-splitting explosion of thunder. Then rain came deluging down. I peered out through the window, consumed with anxiety. Where had Ah-yung gone? Could anything have happened to him? I glanced in the corner of the room. His tasselled spear was not there.

I couldn't wait any longer. I put my raincoat on, rolled up my trouser-legs, took a flashlight, and hurried out. Buffeted by hissing raindrops, I staggered towards the shed where Ah-yung and the boys kept the ducks.

When I was only about a dozen paces away, a sudden childish treble made me jump.

"Halt. Who goes there?"

It was Ah-yung. He was standing in the shadows of the shed, his red-tasselled spear in hand. I went up to him quickly and grasped his arm. He was soaking wet.

"What are you doing here?" I demanded.

"We're on guard," he replied mysteriously.

"Guarding what?" I was puzzled.

"The ducks." He stood like an experienced commander at the front, keeping his eyes peeled for the enemy. I took off my raincoat and started to drape it over his shoulders. He shrugged it off.

"I don't need that, thanks. I'm used to being wet. You wear it, sister."

A few days later, I was returning home from the fields. The two ducks were still missing. Ah-yung came bouncing towards me. He waved something before my eyes.

"Sister, sister, look at this."

I burst out laughing. "A chicken feather. What's there to see?"

He shoved it under my nose. "Look again, carefully. Is this a chicken feather?"

It was shorter and thicker than the feather of a chicken.

"All right, a duck feather. What's so remarkable about that?"

"You don't understand, sister. A duck might shed a fine, downy feather, but not a big thick one like this. Look here." He pointed to the end of the quill.

"This was cut by scissors." He pulled me down and whispered in my ear.

That night, well after ten, he still hadn't returned. I supposed he was guarding the ducks again. But when I went to the shed I found Little Niu on guard.

"Where's Ah-yung?" I asked.

"The production brigade sent a few militiamen to help us. He went with them to search around the rich peasant's house."

I said a few more words to Little Niu, then headed for the home of Ling Chin-tsai. It was near the stream. Surrounded by bamboo and haystacks, it loomed like an evil shadow in the night.

Suddenly a noise broke out in the distance. Then five or six little dark figures emerged from a bamboo grove and hurried towards the duck shed. I hastily followed them. There in the shed I found Ah-yung criticizing one of his companions who had carelessly made the noise.

#### IV

Mama Ling returned from her meeting. I reported to her the events of the past few days.

In the morning I carried fertilizer to the field with the others. Returning home at noon, I washed my hands in the stream in front of the house. Ah-yung met me at the door. His large eyes gazed all around us, then he slowly opened his hand and showed me an object he had been holding. A duck bone.

"I found this in the rich peasant's pig pen. He throws all his garbage there." Ah-yung angrily clenched his fists. "Now that we've got proof, we're going to have a show-down with that scoundrel. Our forces are already assembled. They're waiting for me."

He sped away like an arrow from a bow. I ran after him, panting. There, on a flat, half a dozen bold little lads were gathered around Ah-yung. Many people were watching from the sides. A militant display.

Further off, I saw the rich peasant squatting beneath the date tree in front of his house, eating with bowl and chopsticks. His beady eyes kept darting glances in the boy's direction. This was obviously something he hadn't expected.

"*Aiya*," his wife was screeching, "the Lord of the Sky has eyes. Why are you persecuting us? If we kill and eat one of our own ducks, what business is that of yours?"

One hand on his hip, Ah-yung pointed at the woman with the other. "There's no use denying it. You stole our ducks and now you try to lie your way out. You had five ducks before and you've still got five ducks now."

Her face turned ashen, but she continued to cry shrilly, "Persecution, that's what it is. Not only does the leader of the women's team meddle in everybody's

business, her son meddles even more. How can a person live? Wronging good folk like us is a crime."

Ah-yung and the boys furiously surrounded her. "You're lying in your teeth."

I looked to see what the rich peasant's reaction was. Damn, he had sneaked away. I ran around to the rear of the house.

Five large white ducks were eating out of a big basin. The rich peasant was standing there with his bowl in hand, furtively peering all around. I stuck close to a crumbling old wall and watched him from a distance. He was in such a state, he didn't see me. He extended a hand and grabbed one of the ducks. I started towards him when two militiamen and half a dozen mud-plastered boys charged out of the bamboo grove.

"Don't move," they shouted. "Drop that duck. Raise your hands."

They had been concealed there all along.

The startled ducks waddled off in every direction, but were easily caught by the boys.

One of the lads blew a sharp blast on the whistle which had been hanging around his neck. Ah-yung and his boys came racing to the rear of the house, followed by Mama Ling and the neighbours.

The rich peasant angrily ground his teeth. But when he saw that he was caught with the evidence, he wilted and just stood limply.

People shouted slogans and denunciations. A stormy struggle meeting was held on the spot.

## V

After the meeting, Mama Ling hurried to brigade headquarters to report. She returned accompanied by a man pushing a bicycle. I was heading for the fields with Ah-yung and the lads, all carrying sickles, when she hailed us. The boys dashed towards her. I trotted behind.

She introduced us to the stranger. "This is Comrade Huang of the Chiangcheng Commune. He's come for their ducks."

Comrade Huang told us his commune was more than twenty-five kilometres away. One evening during a storm their flocks of ducks had scattered. The people hastily collected them and drove them home. Only later did they discover that some were missing. They had searched in vain. They were very surprised to learn that the ducks were here. Comrade Huang said he wanted to thank the poor and lower-middle peasants on behalf of the members of his commune.

The boys blushed. Ah-yung took Comrade Huang by the hand. "Rest a while. We'll get the ducks."

Ah-yung and his boys had a private conference. I could hear Ah-yung saying something about "... drive them here ... soon as they've been fed ... ." Then he and the lads went off in different directions.

Mama Ling had to go back to brigade headquarters for another meeting. She shook hands with Comrade Huang and left. I told him about the struggle regarding the two ducks the rich peasant had stolen.

The boys arrived with the missing flock. Every one of the waddling birds was fat and alert. Ah-yung also brought two large white ducks. I recognized them as the good egg-layers belonging to his family. He signalled to me quickly not to speak and placed the birds in with the rest of the flock. Spreading their wings, they quacked contentedly.

Beneath a locust tree were two large wicker hampers Comrade Huang had brought. We loaded the birds into these. When thirty ducks were inside the hampers, Comrade Huang clamped on the bamboo covers. Ah-yung, who had run home again, now returned with a feeding basin, his face as red as a beet from his exertions, his forehead beaded with sweat.

"Take this too," he said to Comrade Huang. The two family ducks, recognizing the basin, approached him, quacking eagerly. It was only then that Ah-yung noticed that they had been left out of the hampers.

"What about these two?" the boy asked in bewilderment.

"You people here have already been more than kind to our commune. We can't take those ducks. They belong to you."

Ah-yung looked at the other lads, standing around helplessly. He nodded and gave them a significant glance. They swarmed forward. Some tried to grab the hampers, others snatched at Comrade Huang's big hands. But he clamped them down firmly on the covers, and they couldn't budge them.

To break the impasse, I asked, "Ah-yung, does your mother know about these two ducks?"

His eyes lit up and he said to Huang: "That reminds me. It's my mother — I mean the team leader — who told me to do this."

How could we solve the dilemma? Just then Little Niu came running up with two more ducks. He shoved them at Huang. Panting, he said, "The Party secretary . . . told me . . . to deliver these. . . ."

They were the birds the rich peasant had to pay in return for those he had stolen and eaten. Comrade Huang was very moved. "We accept them," he said. "They shall be an object lesson to the members of our commune in class struggle. We must learn from your spirit."

"Not from us," Ah-yung contradicted him. "Chairman Mao says everybody should study Comrade Bethune's\* spirit of utter devotion to others without any thought of self."

Comrade Huang nodded. I did too.

He hitched the small trailer carrying the hampers to his bike and got on. Ah-yung dropped the duck he was holding and handed him the basin. "There

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\* Dr. Norman Bethune, a member of the Communist Party of Canada, was a well-known surgeon who came to China to serve in the liberated area in 1938. He contracted blood poisoning while operating on a wounded soldier and died on November 12, 1939. He showed a high sense of responsibility in his work, great warmth toward the people and complete devotion to the cause of the Chinese people's liberation. He possessed the true communist spirit of internationalism.

are snails and worms in here. You can feed the ducks with this on the way home.”

Comrade Huang mounted his bike and pedalled off. The ducks quacked loudly, as if bidding Ah-yung a fond farewell.

*A Detour to Dragon  
Village*

*Ho Hsiao-lu*

A gusty winter day. The river pier was crowded with people and cargo—the usual bustling scene when people are busy “**grasping revolution and promoting production**”. The little passenger steamboat was about to leave when a girl in PLA uniform ran onto the pier and hailed the old sailor who was untying the mooring rope, “Comrade, is this boat going to the county town?”

“Right. Get on board. Be quick!”

But the girl hesitated, then stopped.

“Can you tell me how to get to Dragon Village from here?” she asked.

The old sailor looked at the shining red star on her army cap. Her brows raised, her dark eyes flashing, she stood mopping the sweat from her face while waiting for an answer.

"So you're a PLA comrade!" the old sailor said. "The boat takes about an hour to reach the county town, but if you want to go to Dragon Village, then you'd better walk. You can go on to the county town from there too. But it'll mean half a dozen miles or so extra."

"That's all right."

"Now I remember," he added. "You must be a member of the PLA medical team working in that village. Right? There's a girl there called Liang Cheng-hung who's cured a disease which a city doctor said was incurable."

The PLA girl interrupted the old sailor, "She only does her job like you do on your boat — serving the people." Having made sure of the road the girl waved goodbye to the old man, shouting, "Thank you, granddad." Turning, she started off, facing a stiff head wind.

She was the Liang Cheng-hung the old sailor had mentioned. She was on her way to a conference to be held the next day in the county town. Medical workers were to exchange experiences on how they had implemented Chairman Mao's instruction that in medical work the emphasis should be placed on the countryside. Liang Cheng-hung thought it might

just be possible to have a look at Aunt Sung and her comrade-in-arms Little Kao on her way there.

Little Kao was a member of the medical team in Dragon Village where Liang Cheng-hung had worked the previous summer. When the girls first arrived in the village the people were very busy planting rice. Without a second thought they joined in, going barefoot in the paddy fields in the blazing sun. Suddenly someone called out, "Aunt Sung has fallen down again. She's hurt!" The girls hurried over.

There lay an old peasant woman, her knees and elbows grazed and bruised. With a crutch under one arm and a long bamboo stick in her other hand, she had been watching a pile of grain in the field, shooing off small birds and chickens. The two young PLA medical workers learned that five years before, the old woman had had a paralytic fit which had recurred from time to time afterwards. A doctor in the town had pronounced it incurable. However, Aunt Sung had ignored it, and with the help of a crutch, gone on working as usual. Neither falls nor persuasion could stop her.

"All the peasants in our country are learning from Tachai.\* They work hard to change the poor soil, make terraced fields on the slopes and increase production," she would say smiling. "I can't do all that, but at least I can watch the birds and stir the sunning grain. I have to do my part for socialism."

\*A famous production brigade in Shansi Province. See the story on p. 166 in this book.

Both Liang Cheng-hung and Little Kao were impressed by her courage. The renegade Liu Shao-chi had pushed a counter-revolutionary line in medical work by directing all the doctors' attention to the cities and towns, leaving the working people in the countryside without help. Admiring the old woman and hating Liu's revisionist line, the two girls were determined to conquer this so-called "incurable" disease.

No difficulties daunted these youthful fighters. To quote Liang Cheng-hung, "We are only ordinary medical fighters of Chairman Mao. Nevertheless every day we attack stubborn diseases, solve contradictions and learn from the former poor and lower-middle peasants." To carry out these simple words involved much hard work. And work hard they certainly did! The peasants noticed Liang Cheng-hung's face becoming thinner and her skin showed the marks of much trial acupuncture; it was the same with Little Kao. But with their treatment Aunt Sung found she could move much more easily than before. She even began to walk without the help of a crutch!

It was then that Liang Cheng-hung was transferred to another commune. But her heart was still with Aunt Sung, whom she had resolved to restore to full health. Before she left the village she made careful arrangements with Little Kao to continue the treatment. That was why Liang Cheng-hung was making a detour to Dragon Village to see if old Aunt Sung had recovered completely.

She arrived at the village at dusk. The first thing that attracted her attention was a new granary beside the threshing-ground and a signboard by the road with the slogan: "Aim high, win another bumper harvest!"

In the village outside an open office door she heard Little Kao speaking over the telephone. "We assure you we won't lag behind. . . . Hello, political instructor, can you give me any news about Liang Cheng-hung? Aunt Sung and I—no, all the poor and lower-middle peasants in Dragon Village—are hoping to see her. . . . What? She went to the conference in the county town? Can't she come here to see us?"

"Of course she can!" someone said outside the office door.

Before Little Kao realized who had spoken, Liang Cheng-hung ran inside and put both arms around Little Kao's shoulders.

"How's Aunt Sung getting on?" were her first words.

"So! It's you." Little Kao replaced the receiver and greatly excited, answered, "Fine. She's cured! Usually her disease became worse in winter. But not now. She works like a healthy person."

"Let me see her."

Off they went to find Aunt Sung, hailing the villagers all the way as they returned from fields. When she recognized her voice, Aunt Sung came out of her cottage to meet Liang Cheng-hung. They held



hands and stood gazing at each other: Liang Cheng-hung was as high-spirited as ever, her eyes bright and shining; Aunt Sung looked much healthier than before, her cheeks ruddy, her hands warm and strong.

"So you've recovered, Aunt Sung?" Liang Cheng-hung asked.

"Thanks to your care, I'm cured and now I can do all kinds of work."

In the house, although Aunt Sung tried to persuade Liang Cheng-hung to sit down and have a rest, she refused, went to the stove, and rolling up her sleeves, quickly coaxed the fire into a blaze, for it was chilly. This done, she caught sight of a newly stitched sole for a cloth shoe on Aunt Sung's bed. She picked it up and examined it.

"Did you stitch this, Aunt Sung?"

"Yes. I haven't done any sewing for the last four or five years because my fingers were too stiff."

Night sets in early in winter. The north wind was howling outside. But inside they were warm and cosy as they sat chatting.

"Time for supper," Aunt Sung said, "I'll light the lamp. Cheng-hung, you must tell me about the outside world. News about our country always cheers me up."

She reached for a box of matches.

The smile on the young girl's face disappeared. She became very serious as she watched Aunt Sung's hand when she struck the match. It trembled, so that the match broke in two. The old woman tried

again, but failed a second time. She picked out a third match. Before she could strike it, it fell through her fingers.

Liang Cheng-hung watched Aunt Sung's fingers all the time. She took the match box from the old woman and said, "Let me try." She pulled out a match and with one gentle stroke it flared up. The lamp was lit and the room brightened.

But Liang Cheng-hung's brows were furrowed, her eyes intent, her face full of concern. This was exactly how she always looked when she was dissatisfied with her work or when she discovered there was something wrong with her thinking. Liang Cheng-hung stopped chattering. Aunt Sung noticed the change in her.

"Are you tired?" she asked the girl. "Or are you worried?"

Liang Cheng-hung shook her head. She was watching the old woman's fingers as she used her chopsticks so carefully that she herself stopped eating altogether. She wanted to see how the old woman managed to get the food to her mouth. Little Kao could no longer keep quiet.

"What's the matter with you, Little Liang?" she asked. "You seem to be in a trance."

But Aunt Sung began to understand. Smiling, she said: "Don't bother about me, I'm all right. Eat your food, Little Liang, it's getting cold. I'm quite cured you know. I can work just like a healthy person now."

In their preoccupation with Aunt Sung's hand, neither Liang Cheng-hung nor Little Kao had noticed that the wind had died down. When they left Aunt Sung's cottage, they found the heavy clouds had blown away and the sky was full of glittering stars.

"What's the matter with you this evening?" Little Kao asked her comrade.

Instead of answering Liang Cheng-hung came back with another question: "You told me that Aunt Sung was entirely free from those fits. Is it true?"

"Absolutely true. She's assured me many, many times."

"Do you remember the soles of cloth shoes she stitched before she became ill? Once she showed them to us. How regular and small her stitches were! But what a difference today! They're irregular and large."

"That's because she's old. Her sight is failing."

"But she can't even strike matches properly. What do you say about that?"

"Well . . . ."

"Did you notice how she held her chopsticks tonight? Several times she couldn't lift the food into her mouth."

"Do you mean something's wrong with her fingers?"

"Exactly. The thumb of her right hand trembles nearly all the time. It escaped my notice when I was treating her."

"The responsibility isn't all yours," Little Kao replied. "I share it. But she couldn't even walk at first. Now she can work like an ordinary person. I

think that's marvellous. You can't expect everything to be a hundred per cent perfect. Even our fingers aren't all the same."

Liang Cheng-hung's face was very solemn.

"Little Kao," she said, "do you remember who said 'a perfect cure'?"

"Of course," Little Kao said, a bit piqued.

Some time previously when Aunt Sung was able to walk again, the county hospital sent a doctor to Dragon Village to "study the case". The doctor read the case history and when he came to the signature of the doctor who had first diagnosed the illness as "incurable", his heart sank. He personally examined the patient, and found she was really cured. Only then did his attitude change towards the two young PLA women medical workers.

"Excellent work! According to the data at our disposal you've effected 'a perfect cure'. You should write a book about this. It'll make a big noise, I'm sure."

"Write a book?" Liang Cheng-hung was annoyed. "Proletarian doctors work to cure people, not to write books and become famous. Even if we do write a book it is only to serve the people better."

She spoke with heat and her words were scathing. When the doctor was leaving he said, "To tell the truth the signature to the first diagnosis of this old woman's illness is mine. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution has taught me much, particularly what I've seen today. I feel quite ashamed. . . ."

All this had taken place some time before, but the memory of it remained always fresh in Liang Cheng-hung's mind goading her constantly to make higher demands on herself. To Little Kao, Liang Cheng-hung said, "Chairman Mao teaches us, **'Ideas of stagnation, pessimism, inertia and complacency are all wrong.'** We have to find out whether these ideas are not a reflection of ourselves."

Little Kao became thoughtful. She realized that Liang Cheng-hung was right.

"Aunt Sung may forgive us for the trembling that remains in her thumb," Liang Cheng-hung went on, "but we mustn't forgive ourselves. This is a question of whether we defend Chairman Mao's line in medical work or not."

Little Kao felt that her friend had grasped the heart of the matter with her usual penetrating insight.

"If you could only stay here!" Little Kao said, gripping the other girl's hand. "Then we could work together and completely rid Aunt Sung of this remnant of the disease."

They continued discussing the matter, the lamp burning till daybreak, when Liang Cheng-hung started off for the county town.

Liang Cheng-hung spent five days in the county town at the conference. Gazing at the fields, now snow-covered, Little Kao wondered if Liang Cheng-hung would be back. The boat from the county town arrived about noon, but she was not on it. She might

return on foot? Little Kao went to the highway and waited for Liang Cheng-hung there. But there was no sign of her. Disappointed, she returned to the village and went straight to see Aunt Sung.

A peal of laughter greeted her as she stepped inside. Then a tender voice said, "Aunt, let me insert another needle." It was Liang Cheng-hung. Little Kao walked straight into the room and clasped her friend in a warm embrace.

"How did you come here unseen? Did you fly?" she asked.

"If I could fly, you'd be the first I'd teach. You see, the boat's too slow. I came by No. Two bus—that is, on my two feet."

"She's so pig-headed," Aunt Sung said to Little Kao. "She starts working on me with her needle as soon as she comes. See how the cold wind has reddened her cheeks and how damp her trouser-legs are from the wet snow. But she doesn't give them a thought."

A needle was inserted between the thumb and forefinger of Aunt Sung's right hand. It was obvious that Liang Cheng-hung had found an acupuncture point they had not used before. Would it work? Little Kao wondered.

It was so quiet in the room you could have heard a pin drop. Liang Cheng-hung bent over the old woman and twisted the needle. Then, in a flash she pulled it out. Aunt Sung held out the hand Liang Cheng-hung had just treated and began to move her fingers. Surprised and delighted she shouted, "Look!

It doesn't tremble any more! Now both my hands are cured."

Little Kao could hardly suppress her amazement. She took the aunt's hand and examined it thoroughly.

"Look," Aunt Sung said. "I'll show you. . . ."

She took up the newly basted cloth sole that lay on the bed. "I'll show you how I can sew now. There won't be one crooked stitch."

"You mustn't do that right after the treatment, aunt," said Liang Cheng-hung, "the fingers need a rest."

But the old woman could not keep still. She was too excited. "Well then," she said, "I'll write a few characters." Using a brush she wrote in a neat hand: Long live Chairman Mao!

Little Kao laughed happily too, but all of a sudden a thought flashed through her mind.

"Little Liang, show me your hands," she commanded.

Instead, Liang Cheng-hung hid her hand. In a quick movement Little Kao gripped it, held it up to the light and examined it. The space between thumb and forefinger was swollen and dotted closely with the marks of needle pricks.

"You've been experimenting on yourself," Little Kao said. "Look what a mess you've made of your hand — it's covered with needle marks!"

Aunt Sung stroked Liang Cheng-hung's hand, gazing fondly at her. "Little Liang," she said, "my hands are all right now, but yours. . . ."

At the conference held in the county town, Liang Cheng-hung had studied more deeply Chairman Mao's directives on medical work in connection with the actual problems that confronted her. She talked to many comrades at the conference discussing Aunt Sung's case. Basing herself on their helpful suggestions, in the evenings she had experimented on her own hand. Finally she found how to insert the needle at a new point, carefully checking her own reactions and feeling.

"I've done the right thing, Aunt Sung," she said.

Little Kao wanted to say so much, but somehow she could not utter a single word. For the first time she really understood her comrade-in-arm's selflessness.

Liang Cheng-hung bid Aunt Sung goodbye at sunset, and left Dragon Village together with her friend Little Kao. The setting sun outlined their footprints on the snow-covered road.

## *Raising Seedlings*

*Chiang Kuei-fu*

ON Shanghai's rural outskirts a vigorous movement was launched to build socialism. The peasants' enthusiasm swept ever higher like waves in the Huangpu River.

One evening, members of the Chingfeng Production Team were having a meeting. It was decided to plant an extra thirty *mu*\* of early rice. But there was one problem—all their fields had been planted with summer crops which were growing nicely; there wasn't any place left to raise the seedlings.

A cough was heard in a corner of the room. Everyone looked. It was old Yu Sung, a skilled farmer.

\* One *mu* equals 1/15 hectare or 0.1644 acre.

Sitting next to him was his wife, "Half the Sky", leader of the women's group. The team members urged the veteran peasant to suggest something. His wife also gave him a nudge.

Yu Sung was confident that, technically speaking, he was first-rate in preparing seedling-beds and planting the seeds. It seemed sure that the job would be given to him.

"I have an idea. We can kill two birds with one stone," he said, raising his brows. "Let's uproot a few plots of horse beans. The advantages are, first, the bean stalks can be used as fertilizer and second, we won't miss the transplanting season. If we're sure of our seedling plots, we can certainly raise more rice."

"I object," someone piped up.

Who was that? The members looked around. It was Yu Sung's wife, tall and slender, a woman in her forties. Whenever she speaks at a meeting she seldom fails to mention that "the strength of us women can prop up half the sky." This is why people began to call her "Half the Sky".

"That's how a landlord's pampered son would do it—pulling down the west wall to mend the east," Half the Sky continued. "We want horse beans as well as rice."

Yu Sung was surprised. "She's raised seedlings with me many a time," he thought, "how can she talk so silly?"

"That's easy enough to say," he retorted aloud. "Let's see you do it."

"Some advanced teams have raised seedlings on their threshing grounds. If they can do it, why can't we?" Half the Sky countered unreconciled.

"All right, go ahead and try," shouted Yu Sung furiously.

"That's settled. I'll do it," she rattled, still faster this time. "The strength of women can prop up half the sky. There's nothing so hard about it."

There was a burst of applause. Hardly had it died away when a girl rose to her feet and said, "I fully agree that aunty should take up the task. I'm willing to be her assistance." This girl was called Hsiang Hung. Formerly a student in the city, she had recently joined the production team and was now living with Yu Sung and his wife.

The matter was quickly decided.

As the meeting dispersed, Half the Sky went home with Hsiang Hung. She had meant to have a talk with her husband to bring him around, but when she entered the house she found him already in bed, pretending to sleep. Half the Sky retired too, but she tossed and turned and couldn't fall asleep. At last she got up and began to study Chairman Mao's writings. She kept on reading and did not go to bed again till the cock crowed for the first time.

It was hardly break of day when Half the Sky rose. She pushed the door open and looked outside. There in the bean fields her husband was waving his hands

and talking with the team leader. She wasn't sure what he was up to. One thing she feared was that he might be stubborn and pull up the bean plants. Quickly she ran over, only to find them still arguing over the problem of growing the extra thirty *mu* of rice.

"For the revolution I agree to plant more rice, but raising seedlings on threshing grounds is a new technique in farming," said Yu Sung, waving his hands. "I'm not very sure of it. It's better to clear the bean fields and put the seedling-beds there. That'll keep the loss to the minimum and ensure a big rice harvest."

"We farm for the revolution. That's why we can't allow any loss at all to any crop," said the team leader.

"Pulling up the beans to make room for seedlings is like selling a carp to buy fish," cut in Half the Sky, unable to restrain herself. "Chairman Mao has taught us to look at both sides of a problem. Whatever we do we are bound to meet with difficulties. But where there are difficulties there is also a solution. A difficulty overcome spells advance."

"What I'm afraid of is that we don't have enough time," replied Yu Sung. "Suppose we fail. We'll lose our bait and the fish together."

"Old man," his wife persisted, "in considering a problem we must have the interests of our 700 million Chinese at heart. We mustn't look at it from the angle of only one production team."

"Yu Sung," said the team leader who, seeing that he said nothing, guessed he must have been moved, "raising the seedling in a new way is your duty too. Your wife is shouldering a heavy burden. You ought to lend a hand."

Yu Sung voiced no disagreement.

Meanwhile Half the Sky thought, "I took on the job because there seemed no other way. My old man has always had a high sense of responsibility. It's just that for the moment he hadn't thought the matter through. We should still stir up his enthusiasm." She therefore said, "Better let him take the main responsibility. I can be his assistant."

"You're Half the Sky, you have tremendous strength," said Yu Sung sarcastically.

"Well, you two share the burden equally, how about that?" the team leader said with a smile.

Yu Sung walked away, without replying.

Thus, the division of responsibility was finally settled.

After breakfast Half the Sky and Hsiang Hung began levelling the ground in front of their house. When this was finished, the woman asked her husband, "Which is better to cover the ground with, the mud from the river or the earth from the fields?"

Yu Sung pretended to have heard nothing and went on fixing his hoe. She repeated her question in a louder voice.

"Crops grow on any soil," he responded roughly. "What difference does it make?" Half the Sky was ready to burst.

Then Yu Sung added in a murmur, his chin lowered, "Of course, the earth in the fields is more loose. Everyone knows that."

Obviously, he was giving her a hint. With this clear, she and the girl fetched earth from the fields and covered the ground with a thin layer of it. Then they made furrows and neatly planted the seeds, which were already sprouting. Over each furrow they fixed a frame for nylon sheets to maintain the temperature. Half the Sky was very happy with what they had done.

That afternoon Hsiang Hung left for town to buy the required nylon sheets while Half the Sky went to the production team to plait straw mats. When she came back from work, she saw that something terrible had happened to the nursing beds. Two of the furrows were in a mess, the seeds and earth mixed together. A careful look found many claw prints, clear as if they had been raked.

What a blow! Each mark was a lash on her heart. Soon her husband returned after a day's work. Half the Sky grasped him by the arm and said, "Come and look. See what a mess! Did you forget to shut up the chicken pens after you cleaned them?"

Yu Sung was distressed. But he was absolutely sure that he had closed the pens. He couldn't figure

out how it had happened. Gazing at the spoiled furrows, Half the Sky was in a quandary.

As it was getting late, she went to prepare the evening meal. Rinsing the rice in the brook with a bamboo sieve, she saw bran and chaff floating off with the water. She hit upon an idea and cried, "Right! That's the way to do it."

She got a large sieve and cupped up the seeds and earth mixture into it bit by bit, as gently as if she were handling chicks. Then she carefully washed the earth away, leaving the sprouting seeds intact and whole. While all this was going on Yu Sung stood by and watched. He wanted to give a helping hand but he was held back by his pride.

His wife shouted to him, "Don't just stand there. Go and cook." He took up the washed rice and went in. Half the Sky continued intensely with her work. In an hour the rice seeds were all neatly replanted.

After supper, Half the Sky went to inspect the seedling-beds. Here and there she stooped and made improvements. She was still mystified by the chicken scratches. They had been breeding chicks since spring, but not once had the pens been left open. How had it been possible for the birds to slip out?

Then she remembered Chairman Mao's teaching, "Never forget class struggle," and went back to ask her husband, "Did you see anybody near our chicken pens?" Yu Sung shook his head. She went into Hsiang Hung's room and asked her the same question.

The girl thought a moment. "The rich peasant Teh-tsai went by with a sheep. He looked kind of sneaky. After a while, he came and said our chickens were loose, that I should shut them up."

The girl's account set Half the Sky to thinking. She muttered to herself, "So Teh-tsai walked by our pens. After the chickens had scratched up the furrows, it was he who asked the girl to close the pens. There's something fishy in this."

Yu Sung, who was smoking a cigarette, asked what she was murmuring about. "Raising these seedlings involves not only a fight between different ways of thinking but also class struggle," she said.

Yu Sung agreed. "Better report this incident to our team leader," he suggested.

Spring weather, like a child's face, changes often within a day, and in this changeable weather seedlings were being nurtured. Half the Sky was worried that she might not be able to complete this important task and would affect the team's plan to grow more rice. She couldn't sleep well, her appetite was poor. But she was determined to raise the seedlings well, even if she had to lose weight in the process. She would answer Chairman Mao's call, "**Be prepared against war, be prepared against natural disasters, and do everything for the people,**" with actual deeds.

Half the Sky never failed to water the seedlings when the weather was dry, and shelter them with nylon sheets on rainy days. Through her meticulous



care, the young sprouts grew well. They were a picture of green. The more she looked at them, the happier she was.

One day after lunch, cadres of the team came to ask about the recent activities of the rich peasant Teh-tsai. Half the Sky told them about the chicken-pen incident.

After they left, she went to have a look at the seedlings. As she examined them, her face gradually changed. A portion showed signs of withering. This upset her tremendously. She went around the seedling-beds once, twice, and pulled up several of the plants to examine them. She discovered some white fluff at their roots. But when she touched the plants with a wet hand she did not find any insect or worm.

Like a physician with a difficult case, she couldn't decide what to do. She went back to the house to consult her husband, but he wasn't anywhere.

"The shoots are withering," she said to Hsiang Hung. "I must solve this problem. Keep an eye on them. I'm off to my mother's."

Why was she going to her mother's at a time like this? To see her elder brother Sung Ching, who was an expert on seedlings. He could help her.

Carrying a basket covered with a white towel, Half the Sky hurried off. Her mother's place was in the Red Star People's Commune, six or seven kilometres away. It usually took her nearly two hours to get there on foot, but today she covered the distance in half the

time. When she entered the house she was amazed to find her husband there, too.

Yu Sung was also surprised. "We're all so busy," he said, "but you've got time to pay visits to mama."

Half the Sky silently uncovered the basket. Her brother and husband bent forward and looked. A bundle of withered seedlings!

"I've come for help," she snapped at Yu Sung. "But where have you been all morning? And now you are here paying a social call! While you take things nice and easy, I'm up to my ears in trouble. We'll have a good talk about this in our political study session when we get home."

Her brother burst out laughing, which threw Half the Sky into still greater confusion. "You shouldn't blame him, sis," he said. "Yu Sung came here early this morning, insisting that I show him our seedling plots. He has already learnt how to solve your problem." Half the Sky smiled broadly. She grabbed her husband by the arm and rushed him off.

"We'll drop in again when the seedlings are raised," she yelled over her shoulder.

"Help each other, and you're sure to succeed," her brother advised.

On the way home, the couple talked and talked. Yu Sung said, "The key word to successful nursing is *conscientiousness*. On sunny days leave the nylon covers open at both ends so as to have more air and prevent condensed moisture from dripping. When it's a cold day, be sure to close the covers against cold

air. They have had a lot of successful experience. I'll tell you all that I've learned when we get home." Both were in a buoyant mood, particularly the wife.

Hsiang Hung had not seen such happy expressions on their faces for days. It was like the gloomy weather suddenly turning fine. Before the puzzled girl was able to ask what had happened, Half the Sky said, "Hsiang Hung, we've solved the problem. Things will be better in a few days."

The girl was delighted and helped them as they got to work.

From that day on Half the Sky became more conscientious than ever in taking care of the seedlings. She set up a reed shelter over the seedling-beds to shield them from the hot sun, and watered them four or five times a day. At night, when the temperature dropped, she never forgot to cover them with the nylon sheets and straw mats.

Days went by. The yellow specks on the seedlings disappeared bit by bit. Half the Sky felt much better.

One day the temperature dropped and a cold wind began to blow. Awakened in the middle of the night by the whistling north wind Yu Sung was worried. Knowing that his wife had been working hard and was very tired, he decided to go and have a look himself.

But when he turned on the light, to his great surprise, his wife's bed was empty. He immediately opened the door and ran straight to the threshing

ground. There he saw Half the Sky crouching beside the seedlings and inspecting them with a flashlight. He was greatly moved by her devotion to the collective good. At the same time he felt very bad because at first he had tried to obstruct her.

Seeing her husband, Half the Sky came over and said, "Look at that white patch just below the black clouds in the north. It's going to pour. Let's get ready."

Before long the wind became fiercer and almost carried the nylon sheets away. Half the Sky and her husband ran to hold them down. In spite of their efforts, the sheets fluttered like kites ready to take wing. It looked as if the wind would uproot the seedlings. They used all their strength to pin down the covers, running here and there. Hsiang Hung came to pitch in, finding rope and stones to help fasten the nylon sheets. The team leader and other commune members arrived. But the wind and rain were too strong. They had great difficulty in holding the nylon sheets down. Hitting upon an idea, Half the Sky rushed home and got her quilt. She threw it over one of the nylon covers and then weighed it down with stones. This did the trick. Yu Sung and Hsiang Hung also ran home for their quilts.

At that moment the rich peasant Teh-tsai arrived. He spoke to Hsiang Hung furtively, "The thatch over Yu Sung's pigsty has been blown away. The piglets will catch cold. Go quick and repair it."

The girl was about to go, but then she thought, "No, how can he, a class enemy, be so concerned about us? There's something fishy here! At this moment, when the seedlings are in danger, every person counts. He is only trying to fool me into leaving, so that the seedlings will be damaged."

"Don't you come around, making trouble," the girl shouted. "Get out of here!"

The scoundrel slunk off with his tail between his legs.

Hsiang Hung later told Half the Sky about this. The older woman said, "You did the right thing. It was this same rich peasant who let our chickens out to scratch up the seedlings the other day. The team is going to call a struggle meeting against him in a couple of days. We must never forget class struggle."

The east began to brighten. After a fight in the open for a good part of the night, everyone was tired but happy. The young plants had been saved.

Two days later, under the painstaking care of Yu Sung and his wife the seedlings were growing strong and sturdy. The poor and lower-middle peasants in the team held a meeting to criticize the rich peasant Teh-tsai.

It was the day for transplanting the shoots. The whole team worked, some digging up the seedlings, others carrying them off in baskets with shoulder poles, and others planting them in the fields. In two days the extra thirty *mu* of land were all planted with the early rice.

Bathed in sunshine and waving in the breeze, the young plants were like a green carpet. Yu Sung said to his wife as they and the girl walked along a ridge between the plots, "I've lagged far behind you in raising these seedlings. From now on I'll really keep up."

Gazing at the green plants, the girl said cheerfully, "Through this battle I have learned many things from the poor and lower-middle peasants not only how to nurse seedlings, but I have begun to understand the complicated class struggle in the countryside, which is more important. I am determined to do well in the rural areas and become a new-type peasant."

Half the Sky said, "We three should join hands, help each other and advance shoulder to shoulder."

## *Selling Rice*

*Ching Hung-shao*

EARLY one morning, a man was seen hurrying down the road to the commune office. He wore a grey knit cap, a home-made plain jacket, a pair of cloth shoes, and had a cotton-padded calico coat under his arm. He kept mopping his perspiring forehead with a sleeve as he ran with big strides. Inadvertently he dislodged the cap, which fell behind him. A passer-by stopped him, calling, "Comrade, here's your cap!"

Only then did he realize that he had lost his cap. He halted and took the cap with a "Thanks!" Then he went on running faster.

Who was this man? He was Chu Sung-tao, aged sixty-two, granary keeper of the first production team of the Fengshou Brigade, known among the commune

members as Uncle Old Pine. But he never considered himself "old". He used to say, "I want to make revolution for a few dozen more years!"

He was not talking big. True, wrinkles spread all over his forehead. But his arms were still strong and his hands as large as palmleaf fans. He was a man of great vigour and very serious about his work. He never hesitated to fight the kind of people and things that were detrimental to the public interest.

He stepped onto a stone bridge, stopped and gazed around with anxiety. A man working in a rape field came into his view.

"Hey, comrade!" he called out, "have you seen a rice boat from the first team of the Fengshou Brigade?"

"Yes," the man replied. "It went towards the rice purchasing station."

Uncle Old Pine made straight for the station at a run.

In no time he arrived at his destination. A host of rice boats were moored on the broad river that ran in front of him. People came and went between the bank and the boats. Commune members with rice in full-loaded baskets on their shoulders shuttled to and fro between the river and the rice bins of the purchasing station. Laughter rang out all over the place.

Uncle Old Pine threaded his way through the bustling human currents along the bank, searching from one side to another, murmuring to himself, "Where could Little Tiger's boat be?"

When he came to the second door of the purchasing station, he heard the grain weigher calling, "The first lot from the first team of the Fengshou Brigade, one hundred and five *jin*,\* ready for the bin!"

Uncle Old Pine turned. There was his eldest son, Little Tiger, with a large basket of rice on his shoulder, on his way to the bin. He darted up behind the young man, gripping the basket with one hand.

"Little Tiger," he said, "we can't sell this rice!"

The young man looked around and saw his old father, covered with sweat.

"What's wrong, pa?" he asked, surprised.

Uncle Old Pine was just about to explain when someone shouted, "Comrade, please step aside. You're holding us up."

Uncle Old Pine pulled his son out of the way. But on second thought he decided not to talk with him here. He shifted the basket over to his own shoulder, and headed for the boat. Little Tiger was flabbergasted. He stared at his old father's back and asked, "What's the fuss about?"

The problem was this: Uncle Old Pine had been the team's granary keeper for ten years, always conscientious. The members commended him with the title "Red Housekeeper". During this rice harvest season, whenever he had a moment, he swept up the scattered grain on the threshing ground or the path along the river, as he had always done in the past.

\* One *jin* equals 1.1 lbs. or 0.5 kilogramme.

When people advised him not to take such trifles so seriously, he always answered, "Every grain of rice is the property of the people. I can't permit the loss of a single one, because each grain is a bullet against imperialism, revisionism and reaction!"

Sweeping up all the scattered grain he could find, he managed to collect a basketful of rice by the end of autumn. It was mixed with dirt, though. That was why he had washed it the day before. After having sunned it in the afternoon, he put it in a basket, which he placed by the side of a heap of good rice against the east wall of the granary. He wanted to sun it for a few more days before selling it to the state.

But early this morning, when he inspected the granary, he found the basket gone. What had happened to it? He conjectured every possibility. Finally he concluded that Little Tiger had mistaken it for dried rice and loaded it into the boat along with the other grain to be sold. He locked the door, dashed out of the village and ran towards the rice purchasing station.

Now his fellow team members in the boat were amazed when they saw him returning to the boat with a basketful of rice on his shoulder, with Little Tiger walking behind.

"Uncle Old Pine, what's the matter?" they asked.

The old man placed the load on the bow. And, having contemplated everybody for a second, he countered, "How about that basketful of wet rice I left in the granary? What have you done with it?"

"What?" Little Tiger blinked his eyes, reflecting. "You mean the rice in the basket by the side of east wall of the granary? I thought it was dried grain, so I tipped it into this pile of rice in the boat."

Now the team were worried. "What should we do?" they asked.

Little Tiger was calm. "What's so bad about that anyway?" he said. "A hundred or so *jin* of wet rice is not much."

This infuriated Uncle Old Pine. "Don't make light of a hundred or so *jin* of rice," he said in a very serious tone. "It's like a scale that can test your sense of responsibility towards the state and the Party. We are all poor and lower-middle peasants. We must hold ourselves responsible to the state, to the Party!"

Little Tiger flushed. But he tried to justify himself. "We have more than three thousand *jin* of grain in this boat. What harm can a little wet rice do?"

"A lot!" Uncle Old Pine exploded. The wet rice will ferment and rot the entire pile of grain. It will contaminate not only this boat-load, but thousands upon thousands of *jin* in the station bins. The loss to the state would be a lot!"

All team members in the boat nodded. "Uncle Old Pine is right," they said. "We've been too careless!"

"I've been careless, too," Uncle Old Pine cut in. "I didn't tell you about it."

Little Tiger realized that he was wrong. He felt distressed. "What shall we do with this boat-load of rice?" he asked.

"Take it back — all of it!" was Uncle Old Pine's flat answer. "There's no space here at the purchasing station to sun it."

"The tide's going out," said team member Yung-hsi. "Besides, Hsiaolai Creek is shallow. We won't be able to get back today."

Uncle Old Pine examined the sky and the water. "The tide's not all out yet," he said. "Let's weigh anchor at once. We still have enough time to get home. There's nothing we can do here. If we delay, it will hurt the state purchasing plan."

Everybody agreed. They lifted their poles, pulled up the anchor and pushed the boat away from the bank.

When they came to Hsiaolai Creek, Uncle Old Pine at the tiller-oar was drenched with perspiration. Because the creek was shallow as well as narrow, the oar touched the mud. He could not do much steering, so he asked Yung-hsi to guide the boat with the pole. But the young man pushed too hard, the bow swung off course and the boat grounded in the mud. The tide was fast receding. The vessel refused to budge.

"Jump in the water and push," Uncle Old Pine shouted.

He pulled off his shoes and jumped into the creek. Little Tiger, Yung-hsi and others followed suit.

The wintry water chilled them to the bone. Spasms of cutting pain shot from their feet up to their hearts. While pushing, Uncle Old Pine led his fellow commune members in reciting a quotation from Chairman

Mao: **"Be resolute, fear no sacrifice and surmount every difficulty to win victory."** A current of warmth welled up inside them, giving them strength. They redoubled their efforts, and finally moved the boat out of the mud.

As soon as the boat returned to the production team, Uncle Old Pine made a report to the team leader, and gave his own suggestions for a solution of the question. After careful study the team committee approved his ideas. They immediately set to work, clearing up the threshing ground to make it ready for sunning the rice.

They had only worked a few minutes, however, when the radio weather forecast warned: "Attention, commune members! There will be rain towards evening. Cloudy tomorrow."

"What shall we do?" Little Tiger asked anxiously. "We won't be able to sun the rice!"

Uncle Old Pine gazed up at the sky. Then he turned round, his eyes brightened up. "The problem is solved!" he said.

He took his son straight home. Stepping into the room where his own grain was stored, he opened the bin, and pointed to the golden rice. "In the old society we had to eat rice chaff most of the year," he said. "Now we never need to worry about food or clothes. In order to sell our surplus grain to the state at the earliest possible time, we can replace the grain we have to sun with our own. What do you think?"

"Excellent!" Little Tiger nearly jumped for joy at the suggestion. "Let's tell the team leader!"

As they walked out of the door, they met him coming their way. He was greatly touched upon hearing what Uncle Old Pine proposed. "Wonderful suggestion," he said. "We are all poor and lower-middle peasants. We must have our motherland at heart and the whole world in mind. Selling our own grain, we won't be late—and that's the best way to help us be prepared against war and natural disasters and support the building of socialism.

The team members set to work at once. Everyone hurried home and brought their own grain reserve to the team accountant to be weighed. The boat was soon re-loaded with three thousand *jin* of rice.

The tide was again rising. Uncle Old Pine, the team leader, Little Tiger, Yung-hsi and others leaped on board. Little Tiger took the pole, Uncle Old Pine gripped the tiller-oar, and the boat, riding the new tide in face of the fresh wind, again set out for the purchasing station. On the top of the rice baskets a red flag flew cheerfully in the breeze.

## *Two Ears of Rice*

*Hsu Tao-sheng and Chen Wen-tsai*

IT was 1959. The rice would soon be harvested. One day at sunset a man was rambling in the fields, his eyes fixed intently on the paddy. He was poor peasant Chang, a 54-year-old member of the Chang Family Production Brigade near Shanghai and an expert in seed selection. He was a hale and vigorous man with a dark and ruddy complexion, thick eyebrows and very strong will. One look at his strong calloused hands and people could see he was an experienced farmer.

Chang liked wandering in the fields. It was an old habit of his. Whenever he had time to spare he strolled around. People walked home from commune meetings by the main roads, but he took the small

paths. Why? He was always on the lookout for extra good ears of rice for seed. Why was he so energetic? Well, we have to begin from the very day when the people's commune was set up.

That day, with drums and gongs, Chang and other poor and lower-middle peasants celebrated the establishment of the people's commune. When the meeting was over, the commune's Party secretary came to Chang and said, "Old Chang, Chairman Mao says that we must select good seed. Now that our commune is set up, collective production will increase quickly. You're an expert in seed selection. You must spend more time on this job and improve our seed. You know good bamboo produces strong shoots, good seed yields a good harvest. The same amount of fertilizer and the same field management may produce different yields. Good seed plays a very important role in increasing production." From that time on, Chang spent practically all his spare time in the fields looking for good seed, rarely showing up at home. His wife complained, "Look at you, dropping in for meals as if this were a canteen or just coming back to sleep as if it were an inn. If you ever do show up in the daytime it's like a bus stopping for a jiffy before it goes on again." Though she said this she supported her old man, for she knew he was engrossed in his work for the commune.

One day as Chang was rambling in the fields and came to the ninth patch of paddy, he was struck by something unusual. Gently nodding in the middle of



the patch were two rice stalks with ears twice as big as the rest. Chang rolled up his trouser-legs and went to look closer. The stems were thick, and bore heavy golden ears. He counted. One ear had 264 grains and the other 336, altogether exactly 600. What wonderful seed! The sight warmed his heart. He fingered each ear lovingly, eager to pluck the seeds. But no, they were not quite ripe. Yet if he left them he was afraid he might not find them again a few days later. He couldn't think what to do until he noticed a cluster of green reeds nodding in the breeze by the stream. He hurried over, pulled up some reeds, and stuck them in the mud around the rice stalks like a little fence. He could not tear himself away but, since the frogs were croaking and the moon was already high above the tree tops, he trudged slowly home.

A week went by and patch after patch of the late golden rice had ripened. When Chang finished work he went to the ninth patch, made his way carefully into the middle of the field, found the reeds and picked the two special ears. He went home as happy as a child with a new toy, muttering, "Six hundred seeds, six hundred good seeds."

At home, Chang found a piece of cellophane and wrapped the rice ears in it. He sunned them on the roof each morning and took them in before sunset every evening. He made a special bamboo container for them and hung it in a corner behind the stove.

Time flies and it was soon the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar month, only six days before the Spring Festival. In the villages, it was customary for each household to have a thorough spring cleaning. Chang's wife was a model house-keeper. This year she put more energy than ever into her work. In the kitchen the bamboo container behind the stove was in her way, so she took it down, put it on the stove and went on with her cleaning.

Chang had a small grandson, Hsiao-kang, who was nine years old and had started school the previous year. There had been a drive in the school to learn from the PLA uncles and Hsiao-kang wanted to make a gun. He had all the other parts but lacked a bamboo pole for the barrel. When he came into the kitchen he saw a section of bamboo pole on the stove which was the exact size he needed. He shook it and heard a rattle. He turned it upside down and two ears of rice fell out. Thinking that rice was too precious to throw away, he picked up the grains and on his way to school tossed them on a pile of rice on the production brigade's threshing floor. Then he thrust the bamboo container into his satchel and ran on to school.

When Chang came back from a meeting, he was pleased to find the house so clean. "You're really a model house-keeper," he said. "The place is spotless."

His wife, pleased at the praise, beamed. But her husband suddenly let out a cry of dismay, "Aiyā!"

Startled, she wondered what was wrong.

"Did you see that bamboo container?"

Now that Chang mentioned it the woman glanced at the top of the stove and began to worry, for she knew it was important to her husband. She had put it on the stove for a moment while she was cleaning. Where had it gone? Her husband was frantic. Her heart beating, the woman thought it over carefully and remembered Hsiao-kang had shown up not long before. "Hsiao-kang, come here! Hsiao-kang!" she shouted.

Hsiao-kang had returned home from school again and after finishing his home work, he took the bamboo and began to make his gun. He heard his grandma calling him. He ran into the house. Seeing the bamboo container in Hsiao-kang's hands, the woman took it and handed it to Chang. He let out another cry, "Aiya!" when he found nothing in it. After some questioning, Chang learned what had happened.

Chang was furious at the loss of his six hundred good rice seeds. He threw the bamboo container onto the floor. It rolled to the door and two yellow grains of rice rolled from it. He hurried to pick them up and knocked out four more grains. It was one-hundredth of the original number — six seeds. He carefully put these six precious seeds in a small glass jar, then put the glass jar inside a box.

It was time to sow again. Chang took the jar out of the box, poured out the six seeds and sunned them on the window sill. After noon when the sun was no longer so bright and warm, he put the seeds back

in the jar. When he was just about to put the jar in the box he heard someone outside calling him, "Uncle Chang, you're wanted at the brigade office." The call sounded urgent, so he left the jar on the table and went out.

After Chang had left, Hsiao-kang returned from school. The little boy had a pet hen, which he fed and whose coop he opened and closed every day. The hen, having just laid an egg, and hearing her little master outside, cackled, asking him for some grain. Nobody was home that day, so he took the hen into the house to give her some grain. But he could not get into the kitchen because the door was locked. Hsiao-kang ran off to look for his grandma. The hen pecked here and there on the floor, and then flew up on to the table. She knocked off the glass jar, which fell on a big stone vessel and smashed to pieces. The six seeds rolled out. The hen immediately flew down and in six pecks ate up the last of the old man's precious seeds.

Meanwhile though Chang had left, his heart remained inside the house. Why? Because he had not put his seeds away safely. As soon as he had finished talking with the man at the brigade office, Chang returned to the house. He saw the smashed jar on the floor and the hen still pecking about. Furious, he picked up the bird and killed it with one stroke of the kitchen knife. "Don't kill her, don't kill her, grandad!" cried Hsiao-kang as he ran in.

But it was too late. The hen flapped her wings a few times, closed her eyes and lay dead. Hsiao-kang, grief-stricken, sat down on the ground and howled. Just then his grandma hurried back and saw her old husband was fumbling with the crop of the dead hen.

"This hen was laying," she exclaimed. "Killing her is like breaking a jar of eggs."

She took the hen and drew out from it a string of tiny egg-yolks. She turned to him angrily. "Look! If you had to kill her, you could have waited until after she'd finished laying." Looking closely, however, she discovered something strange: Other people plucked the feathers first and then took out the entrails, but Chang had cut open the crop first and was fumbling in it. He found two rice grains. Then he cut open the hen's gullet and found another four grains of rice there.

"I've found them, I've found them!" Chang shouted happily.

Only when the woman saw the seeds he took out of the hen, did she understand and stop lamenting the loss of her hen. But Hsiao-kang was still sobbing, "Give me back my hen, my poor hen!"

Though Hsiao-kang is still a little boy, Chang thought, I must help him understand that our work is for the revolution. "Don't cry, Hsiao-kang," he told the boy, "I'll tell you a story." So he began his tale, without stopping to see whether Hsiao-kang was still crying or not.

"Twenty years ago, Hsiao-kang, your grandad rented seven *mu* of land from Chang Po-jen, that cruel, miserly landlord. One year I sowed some good seed called 'yellow paddy', which yielded more than seven hundred catties per *mu*. Even after the rent was paid I still had a little grain left for myself. The news spread and many of your poor uncles from nearby wanted to exchange some seed with me, and I was willing. But when the landlord got wind of it he swore, 'Damn it, if those wretches produce more grain, they'll stop borrowing from me. I'll lose my eighty per cent interest.' There was no end to the landlord's devilish tricks. He sent several of his thugs to my house. They yelled that the landlord was going to raise my rent."

Hsiao-kang had stopped crying and was staring wide-eyed at his grandad, who went on, "Your grandad gave them a piece of his mind. Then the ruffians dragged me off. They searched our house and took away all our precious surplus and our seed grain. The landlord hung me up for a whole night, kicked me and sneered, 'A fool of a farm hand wants to be an expert farmer, eh? You're dreaming!' I was so angry I lay ill for a whole month. After that your grandad gave up. I stopped looking for good seed."

"I understand, grandad," Hsiao-kang said.

"After liberation," Chang continued, "we poor people changed things and have become the masters of our country. We must answer the call of Chair-

man Mao, choose good seed and grow more grain. These six seeds are precious. We must plant and cultivate them carefully. Don't you agree, Hsiao-kang?"

"Yes," the boy answered.

The night before sowing started Chang studied Chairman Mao's teaching: **"What really counts in the world is conscientiousness, and the Communist Party is most particular about being conscientious."** I had six hundred seeds, he thought, but now I have only six left. I must take care of them. He could not sleep that night for he was wondering where to sow his precious seeds. Before dawn he went to consult the brigade leader who helped him to find a newly drained pond with a fertile mud bottom, so that the seeds would have a good start. They planted them.

Chang went to the pond several times every day to have a look. Three days later one seed had sprouted. After two more days another three were showing. But the last two seeds didn't germinate because they had been damaged in the hen's crop. So there were only four seedlings. Chang took the greatest care of them. Afraid they might be trampled on, he covered them with a bottomless wicker crate so that sun and rain could reach them but no animal could get at them. When the time came, he transplanted them and as the seedlings grew taller day by day the old man's heart was filled with joy.

One afternoon when all the commune members were out in the fields Hsiao-kang finished his home work and went to see his grandad's seedlings. He had learned a good lesson about class struggle from the story his grandad had told him, and was very interested in his grandad's experiment. Several times a day he went to see the four plants. That afternoon, as he walked along he noticed someone loitering near the pond. He promptly became alert, for his grandad and teacher had often told him that the class enemies were like the strings of onions hanging under the eaves—their leaves and roots might rot but their hearts were still alive.

Running swiftly to the pond, he found the landlord Chang Po-jen cutting grass around the edge. To the very marrow of his bones this landlord had hated socialism ever since the people's commune was set up. He had realized it meant his doom. He also knew that seed selection would increase collective production. When he saw the four sturdy plants in the pond, he raised his sickle and slashed at them, but he was stopped by a loud cry, "Don't move!" Hsiao-kang dashed over and pushed him. The landlord fell over backwards.

The landlord sat up, scrambled to his feet and started to run. At the sight of the damaged plants, the boy was furious. He shouted and ran after the landlord. Hearing Hsiao-kang, Chang and several other commune members chased the landlord and caught

him, held an on-the-spot meeting to repudiate him and put him under guard.

To his old hatred for the landlord Chang now added new as he said to his grandson, "Hsiao-kang, the class enemies prevented seed selection and cultivation in the old society and they are still making a last-ditch struggle even now. We must never forget class struggle." Now there were only two seedlings left. He straightened them up and added some more fertilizer. Chang treasured and cared for them more than ever.

The days passed quickly. The two plants grew well. That autumn when they were cut there were 4.6 ounces of their seeds.

The commune Party committee paid special attention to Chang's work and the following year he was asked to organize an experimental group consisting of an experienced commune member and a few young school graduates. The group worked hard planting and cultivating this good seed. When in flower, Chang hybridized it and in the fourth year produced a new variety of rice with a yield of 1,551 catties per *mu*. They called this "Patriot Number One". By 1964 the whole commune was using the new seed and people were coming from surrounding communes to learn from this experience.

One day in the winter of 1964, the commune leaders asked Chang to attend a meeting of advanced agricultural workers in the county town the following day. He was to make a speech. That night he tossed on his bed, too happy to sleep.

He felt his contribution was very small and that he must make greater efforts to select and cultivate better seed. A few more ounces of grain means contributing more to the revolution both in China and the world.

The next day at the county town he entered the hall crowded with people anticipating a good meeting. Before Chang had time to take a seat, someone called him. He turned and saw his old friend Chin Keng-ti of the Huhsi People's Commune, whom he had not seen for two years.

"Hey, there, Brother Chang. I hear you've done a fine job of seed selection."

"Not me. It was the wise leadership of Chairman Mao and the people's commune. Without that, there would have been no me."

"That's true. In the old days your good seed only got you into trouble. I remember how the landlord nearly wiped out your family."

The mention of the old society reminded Chang of the landlord's former gibes. He still felt a twinge in his back where the landlord had kicked him and with it mixed feelings of anger and happiness. When it was his turn to speak, he told his story of the old society, its poor agricultural production and class struggle in the countryside. He had a thousand other things to talk about but he was too excited and words did not come easily. After a short silence, he just began to shout: "Long live Chairman Mao!" How well it can be said of old Chang:

The red sun lights up the way.  
He cares for the seed with all his heart;  
To serve the people well every day,  
He vows from revolution never to depart.

## *Crossing Chungchou Dam*

*Hung Chung-wen*

DUSK. Lotus flowers were in full bloom on Chungchou Lake. They exuded a delightful fragrance. Water rippled in the golden sunset. How beautiful are the hills and waters of our motherland!

However, as the old saying goes: A man on business has no time to enjoy beauty. Eager to reach our destination, we were in no mood for the picture-like lake. Our iron arms rowed a fast stroke. The two boats laden with military goods skimmed the surface of the water like two arrows, now passing reeds, now dashing through lotus.

Just as our boats were emerging from a stretch of lotus leaves a sudden cry came from behind: "PLA comrades, wait a moment, wait a moment." We all

stopped to look back and saw a little boat dash out from the reeds and approach us like a runaway horse, ploughing up the water a foot high, with loud splashes.

A young man of twenty was plying his oars rapidly. Soon the little boat caught up and stopped beside ours. The young man was soaked with sweat like a runner who had just finished a long distance race. He mopped his face with the edge of his shirt and asked, breathing hard, "Are you going to the county town, PLA comrades?"

"Yes," answered one of us.

"It won't do, comrades. The river is rising and the lock through the dam closed down ten days ago. Boats have to be hauled over the dam. Now it's dark and there will be nobody around to help you do it. You'd better stay in our village tonight and go on your way tomorrow. I'm from Yen Village, just over there." He pointed to a small island nearby on which several lights were twinkling in the gathering dusk.

"What's to be done?" the squad leader said to himself as he gazed at us. "It doesn't matter about us, but we have two boats of military goods. If we can't cross the dam, we'll have to anchor in the lake tonight. But suppose a storm rises? That would be bad."

Seeing the expression on the squad leader's face, the young man thought he must be considering his proposal. "Don't hesitate," he urged. "It's very easy for us to accommodate you in our village. To tell you the truth, as soon as you passed by our village

we realized you couldn't get across the dam and called you to come back, but you didn't hear us. The villagers got worried and sent me after you. We have everything ready. Let's go back." He began to move his oars.

The people's utter devotion to others and their great feeling of love for the people's army heightened our confidence in overcoming difficulties. "No, comrade," the squad leader said. Pointing at our military cargo, he continued, "The army needs this urgently. Any delay will hamper its operations."

The young man nodded understandingly. "I know you are on important mission, but. . . ." He looked toward the distant county town in the darkness. Then, after another glance at our cargo he insisted that we spend the night in his village.

"Don't worry, comrade. We might meet some people at the dam and they'll help us," we said confidently more or less to reassure him.

Since we did not change our mind, the young man said after thinking a while, "All right, go ahead. I won't delay you." He turned his boat around and rowed away rapidly.

The autumn night cast a screen of boundless darkness over the lake. The moon had not yet risen. We resumed our journey. But the figure of the sturdy young man remained in my mind. I thought: the revolutionary people have been greatly tempered in the cultural revolution. How wonderful they are!

The boat moved forward quickly. Suddenly several lights were seen in the distance. I thought it must be a village. "Comrades," the squad leader said, "we're nearing the dam." We speeded up and soon reached the dam.

Sure enough, as we climbed up the dam and looked southward, a totally different world appeared before us. Turbid water was seething in a rapid current. It was some four to five feet higher than the water level of the lake. The lock was tightly closed. How could we push the boats over the dam? We were stumped.

"Queer!" cried the squad leader, "that village seems to be moving."

Indeed, the "village" now looked like a long snake winding forward. The lights grew brighter and brighter and soon we heard people's cheerful voices. Carrying lanterns and ropes and shoulder poles, a column of commune members walked towards us along the dam.

"Comrades, hurry!" A girl at the head of the column with a lantern in her hand cried cheerfully as she saw us. "The PLA comrades are here." Like a tide the commune members streamed over and surrounded us. We were greatly surprised, not knowing what had happened.

An old man in his sixties squeezed his way through the crowd and grasped my hand. "How are you, PLA comrades?" he said warmly. "We came as soon as

we got the call. But we are still late. Sorry to have kept you waiting."

These words puzzled us even more. We could make neither head nor tail of them.

"It's like this, comrades," a strong-built man who was carrying a pole on his shoulder came forward to explain. "A little while ago a young comrade telephoned us from Yen Village, saying that PLA fighters were taking two boats of military goods to the county town. They were afraid you couldn't cross the dam and asked us to help you drag the boats over. Chairman Mao teaches us: '**Support the army and cherish the people.**' When our people heard it was for the PLA, we all came at once."

"Less talk and more action," interrupted a boy of about ten. All the others responded and ran towards our boats. We were greatly stirred and ran after them. "Learn from the poor and lower-middle peasants! Salute them!" we shouted.

The battle began. Soon the two boats were emptied, dragged to the other side of the dam and reloaded. After expressing our thanks to the commune members, we continued on our way.

The moon rose, turning the lake to silver. Our boats sped on more rapidly. I was still thinking about the young man who had asked us back to Yen Village, the girl with the lantern, the grey-bearded old man, the strong-built commune member and that lively boy.



I turned my head to look back: On the bank the cheerful voices had faded in the dark night. The lights became invisible in the distance. But in my eyes they seemed to grow redder and brighter. I raised my hands to feel the red star on my cap, adjusted my uniform, swung my arms to loosen my muscles. Then I dug my oars in with increased vigour.

## *The Seeds*

*Chia Wen-ling*

THE night was tranquil. Only the clock on the wall went on ticking.

It was midnight, yet I was far from sleepy.

Once again I unwrapped my handkerchief and looked at the seeds.

Under the light the red, green, yellow and white millet, bean, corn and kaoliang seeds looked wonderful. The golden corn seeds were especially shiny and smooth, large and full. Slowly, in my mind's eye, I saw a tall imposing soldier of the Red Army. I recalled the old granny, aunty and the lovely "Little Soldier" in a cave dwelling in Yen-an. . . .

On November 10, we arrived at Yen-an, cradle of revolution. Ah, Yen-an! My mother told me about

you when I was barely able to understand. Ever since then I had longed to visit you. At last my wish had come true!

I looked up at the stately pagoda under the setting sun. I looked down at the waters of the Yenho River. All my fatigue due to our long march of the past few days vanished.

Oh, clear waters of the Yenho River where Chairman Mao used to take his horse to drink. Oh, lofty Pagoda Hill where the red flag was unfurled and the Red Army, sons and daughters of the people, grew in strength and numbers.

Though it was only early November the wind at Yenan was piercing. We did not care, for our hearts were warm. As we arrived at the Receiving Station a woman dusted my clothes and asked, "Where do you come from?" Another woman of forty, afraid we might be dragged away by someone else, picked up my baggage and announced to the people at the station, "These four girls will stay with me."

"All right, take them along!"

Happy as a girl of twenty, she led us away.

It was growing dark when we arrived at her home. She urged us warmly, to sit on the *kang* bed while she busied herself about her tasks. We did not want to sit idle, but she would not allow us to do anything. When we picked up a match to light the fire she snatched it away, and she became angry when we picked up the bucket to fetch water.

"Why can't you girls just sit still! You must listen to me while you're here, and you mustn't do anything today."

We were helpless.

Then the door was pushed open softly and in came a white-haired old granny. "Ah! When did you arrive?" she asked excitedly. "Did you come by train or did you walk all the way?"

I scrutinized her carefully. Perfectly combed snow-white hair, happiness and joy showing clearly on her weather-beaten face. A pair of amiable eyes looked at us kindly. Ah! Wasn't she the old woman who had offered us water just a minute ago? Her words rang in my ears again: "Drink some water from the Yenho River, young comrades, and you'll never forget the spirit of the revolution." So this was where she lived!

As I was putting my shoes on after washing my feet the old woman suddenly rose to go into the next room, as if she had only just discovered something. She came back with a needle, thread and a pair of scissors. I quickly threaded her needle, thinking that she wanted to do some sewing, but what she wanted to do was to prick my blisters! Ah! This I could do myself. But she would not let me have the needle. I had to give in.

A teen-aged girl and a little boy of five rushed in. The boy had on a blue army cap with a small red star on the front of it. His red arm band read "Little Red Soldier" and there was a canvas belt around his

waist. He looked exactly like a little soldier of the Red Army.

The little girl ran up as if we were old acquaintances. But "Little Red Soldier" was shy. He had hidden behind his granny, and now and then stuck out his head with a mischievous look in his big black eyes.

After supper we sat on the *kang* bed and the neighbours came over to see us. There was a lot of bustle, but it was a joyful gathering, like a family meeting after a long separation. We talked about many things, from our trip across the country to the days when the Red Army reached Yen-an after the Long March; about Phoenix Mountain and Yangchialing\*, our leader Chairman Mao—in fact about everything from the rice south of the Yangtse to the millet in Yen-an.

Someone broke out softly:

Red is the east, rises the sun!  
China has brought forth a Mao Tsetung. . . .

and the little room burst into song. It was a chorus of crisp children's voices, the spirited voices of youth, the loud steady voices of the middle-aged and the slightly trembling voices of the old people. Our singing, floating out through the window, circled above the Yenho River.

It seemed to me that the happy days slipped away like the ever-flowing water of that rushing

\* Two places where Chairman Mao lived during the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945).

river. We would be continuing our march the following morning and our hearts were heavy at the thought of leaving Yen-an and our new friends. Auntie was busy preparing our food, and Little Soldier clung to my knee all the time. Even our Young Wang, who usually sang like a lark, was silent. Yes, though we had been together for just a few days we were closely knit together with deep class feeling.

It was getting dark when Granny came home.

"Why don't you teach Little Soldier to sing today, Young Wang?" teased Granny. She was very energetic for her age. "Come up on the *kang* bed! It's warmer there," we obeyed, but no one said anything.

"Did you go anywhere today?" asked Granny as she helped Auntie knead the dough.

"We went to visit Phoenix Mountain and Yangchialing once more," answered Young Wang.

"I have some earth from the field Chairman Mao once worked, and we're going to take it home, Granny!" I showed her my satchel. "But it's a pity we haven't got any seeds from Yen-an."

"We saw some corn in an uncle's home at Yangchialing," said Young Wang. "I wanted to ask for some, but. . . ." she sighed.

Putting down the dough, Granny wiped her hands and went into the next room. She came back with a few bowls and a little red wrapper which she placed on the *kang* bed.

"Come over here!" she called to us, pointing at the bowl in her hand. "This is millet."

Millet! Wonderful millet! Yenan's millet had raised countless revolutionary fighters in the past and only the other day Auntie had made us a most delicious meal with it. This grain was what Chairman Mao had eaten in the past!

Then she picked up a bowl containing beans. Some were as big as a finger-nail, bright red. Some were emerald or black, very small. They were beautiful under the light. One by one she told us the names of the beans. Last of all she opened the red wrapper and produced a big full corn-cob, more than a foot long.

"Such a big one!" Young Wang cried.

"Did you grow it yourself, Granny?" I asked.

"Oh! It's the first time I've seen such wonderful corn."

"Why did you wrap it up so carefully, Granny?"

Looking at us, a long sigh escaped her.

"It was nearly thirty years ago," she said slowly. "It was in 1938, earlier in the season than this. My husband and I were working on the threshing floor, while in the corn-fields nearby some soldiers of the Eighth Route Army were helping us with the harvesting. Everywhere people were busy, bustling about their tasks. Who could have imagined that the traitor, Chiang Kai-shek, instead of fighting the Japanese, would have sent planes to bomb us? A dozen or so planes dived. My husband fell. I rushed over.

Someone caught me by the collar and pulled me down on to the ground. At that same moment a

bomb burst in front of me. I blacked out for some time. When I came to my hand was soaked in blood. Beside me lay a soldier of the Eighth Route Army with one hand on my back, the other hand holding this corn-cob tightly. He was dead. . . ." Granny broke down, her eyes moist, while we lowered our heads, our own eyes wet.

"Yes! We must hate; at all times Yenan people should know what to hate and what to love." She wiped her eyes, then said, "but now raise your heads, you silly children! Come, take these seeds home and plant them with some of the earth Chairman Mao used in the past."

None of us stirred. As if she could read our minds Granny put the seeds into our hands. . . .

Dawn was coming up in the east. I stood up and pushed the window open. The morning breeze was refreshing. I inhaled deeply. As the sun rose my room brightened up.

Instinctively I turned to look at the seeds on my table. The corn looked especially full. Again the dead soldier seemed to appear before me, the corn-cob in his hand. He was saying to me, "Take over the seeds of revolution and plant them all over the country!"

*Where the Sunghua  
River Flows*

*Chi Hsin*

WE are covered with sweat climbing in the cloud-capped Changpai Mountains on a summer day.

Waterfalls rumble in the distance like thunder. Step by step we near the cascades. They hang over us like rivers overturned from the sky. The water tumbles down the slopes, sparkling in the sun, pouring into a huge stream below. This is where the Sunghua River begins.

On a cliff under the Sixteen Peaks that pierce the sky we gaze into the distance. An ocean of mountains streaked with hanging white streams! From here the Sunghua winds its turbulent way through

the hilly regions down to the plains. It runs through Kirin Province and passes by Yushu and Harbin, a 1,900-kilometre journey to the sea.

We travel along its course, a landscape of mountains and rivers reshaped by the heroic people of its valley.

*New Seeds*

The Changpai Mountains gradually vanish in the clouds as our car spins down the green slopes. A few decades ago we would have found nothing here but bare peaks and ridges. Now it is planted with pines, so neatly arranged that every branch seems to bear the stamp of human hands. A light breeze carrying the scent of grass drifts into the car, reminiscent of damp mountain coolness. Where the slopes face the sun wild roses, yellow flowers, pinks and lilies of the valley riot.

Our first stop is in Antu County, Kirin Province, a rugged and hilly extension of the Changpai foothills. The temperature in midsummer lingers around 20° C. We have to wear twice as much here as on the plains. Frost begins in September, cutting the growing period to not more than 110 days. Before Liberation the local chronicler wrote of this region, "Haunted by flood or drought, and menaced by early frost, the crops in our fields do not seed."

Crops seldom ripen properly on the uppermost reaches of the Sunghua. But something different happens in the Hsinhsing Production Brigade of the Wanpao Commune. Starting years ago with about 400 kg. of rice per hectare, the yield has gone up steadily to the target of 6 tons. This makes us very anxious to see Liu Chang-yin, the man responsible for the rocketing climb.

Fifteen years ago he was a first-year senior middle school student. Born into a poor peasant family of Korean nationality, he followed the calling of his forefathers and became a well-known cultivator of fine-quality seeds. He is now the deputy head of the revolutionary committee of the Yenpien Korean Autonomous *Chou*.

It is raining when we get to the brigade. Liu is away. While we wait, an old man in the brigade office tells me something about him.

Chairman Mao points out, **"All intellectuals who can work in the countryside should be happy to go there. Our countryside is vast and has plenty of room for them to develop their talents to the full."** Young Liu, already a member of the Youth League, was inspired by this. Making his way into the Changpai Mountains, he came to Wanpao township on a snowy day. There he found the Party secretary Shih Fengchen and told him that he wanted to settle down in Wanpao, work with the peasants and try to develop a special kind of rice seed that would ripen in the cold climate.

The Party secretary accepted this serious young man.

"Liu struck roots here," the old man says to me. "When the rice was flowering, he spent days and nights in the fields, standing hours in the water of the paddy fields, experimenting with cross-breeding. Neither sun, sweat, heat nor mosquitoes could distract him. The Party secretary often went to see him, supporting his work and wishing him success."

The rain doesn't let up. The old man takes me to Liu's home. It looks like an agronomist's laboratory, with books and all sorts of rice ears hanging on the wall. He is not in. We turn to the paddy fields to look for him.

"That must be him," the old man says, pointing to a figure wrapped in a plastic sheet in the rain.

The young man comes to meet us on the path between the fields.

"Sorry you had trouble finding me," he apologizes. "So much rain these days. I want to see how high the water has risen and how low the temperature has dropped."

He is sturdy and muscular. Rain drops roll from between his dark brows on broad cheeks. His legs are tanned. A typical hard-working young peasant.

We inspect his experimental paddy fields where more than 400 different types of rice have been sown. The seedlings in nearby fields are tough and lively.

The rain lets up as darkness sets in. On our way back to the village we ask Liu about his experience.

He smiles. He briefly describes the way different strains of seeds are developed, but does not say a single word about the hardships he has gone through. It is the old man who tells us what pains he has taken to develop fine quality seeds.

In his experiments the young man closely follows the principles in Chairman Mao's article *On Practice* which he has studied conscientiously. He has searched every rice field in the commune for good seeds, leaving his footprints on every square foot of soil. Clothes torn, arms scratched, and skipping meals in the pouring rain or blazing sun, he is always in the paddy fields. As he comes back to the village in the evening only his sun-tanned face shows out from the sheaves of rice that straddle his shoulders, cling to his chest and hang from his belt. He is like a bee collecting pollen. More than seventy different kinds of ears, selected for potentially good seeds, hang from the ceiling and the walls and cover the bed in his room. It looks like a threshing ground.

He spends the winter with his specimens, comparing, grading and sorting out the best seeds. In the spring he tends the seedlings like a nurse. Once water rats uprooted all his best seedlings in one night, leaving his precious shoots floating on the water. He replanted the ones that still had some roots left — and from then on never relaxed his vigilance, guarding the field day and night until autumn. He harvested half a pound of good seed. This strain trebled the yield.

But he is never satisfied. He is now cultivating newer and better species for the county and the region.

"The new seeds we have been using were developed during the cultural revolution," Liu says. "They ripen seven or eight days earlier. We had an early frost in 1969. The yield from the old seeds fell off, but that from the new ones increased."

He smiles, his eyes shining. I think to myself, "Isn't he also a seed of special quality?" Our country with its vast land is waiting for the new generation to display such talents.

### *A Day in the River City*

We climb to the top of Dragon Pool Mountain in the morning. The northern river city — Kirin — comes into view.

Row upon row of new red-tiled buildings set in a criss-cross pattern of trees spread out along the bank of the Sunghua. Three big chemical plants stand on what was once waste land, connected by a network of steel bridges and gigantic pipelines.

"To build this industrial area," a comrade from the municipal revolutionary committee tells us, "we excavated several million cubic metres of earth and used thousands of trainloads of bricks and cement — enough to build another Dragon Pool Mountain. In the past this was an unproductive city of about a hundred thousand inhabitants. Now it is a modern

industrial city of nearly a million people, with chemical, textile, paper, machine, electrical equipment, electronics and scientific instrument plants. It was once called the 'guitar city skirted by a jade belt — the Sunghua'. But now it is much bigger. It no longer looks like a guitar, and the jade belt does not skirt it either — it runs through it."

We come to a dye-works. The leading comrade of the revolutionary committee takes us to see the No. 23 shop. We walk down a tree-lined avenue on our way. Meanwhile he tells us that it was built according to a foreign blueprint, with complicated equipment and outdated technology. "But we have made great changes," he says.

The look of the shop is deceiving. You do not believe you are in a factory. The buildings are tall, spacious and clean, with tall windows, polished floors and a neat network of shining pipes. The rollers move slowly, making no more sound than a gentle rustle. Several youthful workers stand before a control panel, their attention fixed on the gauges. It is here that the well-known trade marks "Peony", "Rain and Shine Blue", "Indelible Blue" and dozens of others are produced.

The shop used to be ponderous and cumbersome. But the workers made many innovations during the cultural revolution. The number of production processes has been cut from 21 to 9, the 105 machines reduced to 54 and the production cycle shortened

from 336 to 101 hours. The rate of production went up by forty per cent, quantity trebled.

"The transformation of No. 23 shop is a demonstration of the workers' creativeness," says the head of the revolutionary committee. "They evolved a new process to convert liquid phase concentration into solid phase concentration. It took more than 300 experiments to do it. No difficulty stops our workers because they're armed with Mao Tsetung Thought. Comrade Li Kuo-tsai of the chemical fertilizer factory is a good example."

Li Kuo-tsai was born in a miner's family in the old society. His grandmother starved to death. His father was harassed by a minor illness which, however, finally took his life simply because he was too poor to see a doctor. Both his older brothers went to work in the mine. The second brother was crushed in a mine accident and only a tuft of hair was found. Life was hell.

We call on Li in the pipe-making section of the chemical fertilizer factory. The blazing furnace lights the sweating faces of the workers, busy converting the red-hot pipes into various shapes. "Where's Li Kuo-tsai?" we ask.

An old worker says, "Out, driving."

"Where to?"

"Hard to say. He has the biggest office, but the smallest desk." This comment puzzles us. So he goes on, "He's the deputy head of the Kirin Municipal Revolutionary Committee, but he hasn't changed a



bit. Wherever there are difficulties, there he is. He's been to every corner of the city and all the villages on the outskirts. All that is his office. But whenever he has a minute to spare, he studies Chairman Mao's works open on his knees — that's why we say he has the smallest desk."

I turn to look at the old worker. He is introduced as Comrade Pao Ching-hung, Communist, Li's comrade-in-arms and deputy leader of the pipe-making section. He has much to tell about Li.

The story starts with the construction of three acid resisting towers for the chemical fertilizer factory. The foreign blueprints required a special steel to be supplied by the foreign contractor. But before the job was half done, the contractor withdrew their engineers and stopped supplying the special steel. The news infuriated Li Kuo-tsai.

"They wanted to strangle us and bring the Chinese working class to its knees!" he said. "But they miscalculated — we workers can even prop up the sky if it falls." The workers agreed with him.

It was winter, the land was mantled in snow. Always thinking, Li paced around the unfinished towers, forgetting meals and sleep. Finally a bold idea was born — why not use porcelain bricks instead of the special steel? Not practical, people said.

"We mustn't always chew the bread left over by others or follow their footprints," he answered. "We ought to blaze our own path."

The leaders and Li's fellow workers agreed with him. Many experiments and scientific tests proved that the porcelain bricks satisfied all requirements.

New problems, however, arose. Cutting the bricks and pipes was done by hand. It was inaccurate and wasted both material and time. But nothing could stop Li. He met the difficulties head-on and designed an efficient and precise cutting machine.

The old worker's story gives me a still greater respect for Li. We wait until the shift is over, then we walk out of the shop together. Suddenly Pao stops and shouts, "At last, Kuo-tsai! These comrades have been looking for you."

I look up. A middle-aged man of average height is standing on a platform in mid-air, welding an overhead pipe. Sparks fly in all directions, forming a ball of fire in the setting sun.

Li climbs down and shakes hands with us. He strikes me as just another worker. Nothing extraordinary about him except for a faint trace of strong will-power that hovers between his brows, over smiling eyes.

He takes us to the tower where chemical fertilizer is being granulated. The fine white particles fly like snowflakes, and then fall into heaps, to be packed in bags. Lost in thought, I look through the myriad lamp-lights that twinkle in the descending night, over the many railway lines devoted to the transport of various industrial products from the plant. Locomotive whistles split the air and wake me up from my

dream. I realize that these bags are on their way to various parts of our country to serve the building of socialism.

### *Yushu the Granary*

We leave Kirin and sail down the Sunghua in a favourable wind. The golden sun dances cheerfully on the waves harnessed by broad dykes on both sides. Peace reigns over what was once an area of devastating flood and drought. Irrigation stations powered by electricity extend their tentacles in all directions to paddy fields, orchards, even up into the hills to feed reservoirs with new water. Our light boat circuits rapids, passes whirlpools and interrupts the shadows of nearby peaks. At places the waves of green rice fields seem to touch the river.

Yushu, the granary on the Sunghua, is in sight.

The Hsiaohsiang Production Brigade of the Bright Commune is well-known for its hard struggle to transform nature. Under the leadership of a woman Communist, Chi Tien-yun, the peasants have converted their barren hills and deserted gullies into fertile land.

Last winter in 30 degrees below zero, a girl named Sung Yun-hsia and her comrades broke the ice-sealed river in order to dig up the silt to enrich the soil on the island where they live. It is heroes such as these

who have embroidered a picture of beauty with their own hands on the landscape of Yushu.

"The same sight will greet you wherever you go," says the deputy head of the county revolutionary committee. "And the people think in the same way — of making more contribution to the state."

On the main street of the county town, bordered with many new buildings, we see a tractor with a few young people on it. It stops. Seeing that we are newcomers, the peasant driver, about forty or so, offers us a lift. We climb on and drive out of the town.

The countryside seems without end. Although this is our first visit, the name Yushu is familiar to us. We have seen it many times at the agricultural exhibition in Peking and the Chinese Export Commodities Fair in Kwangchow. There on pyramids of glittering round soya beans we always saw the label: "Produced in Yushu, China."

"What fine black soil!" we exclaim.

"You're right," says a youngster in stained overalls, "a dead branch would sprout leaves in it."

That accounts for the prosperity of the crops. But in the past it did not belong to the people. The golden soya beans poured out on trains to the port of Pishanchuang on Eastern Liaoning Peninsula. While the Japanese warlords and monopoly capitalists smiled to their hearts' content at the dazzling beans, the peasant growers went without clothes and food. The oily black earth was a curse.

But now it is ploughed by callused hands and nourished by the sweat of our labouring people, made richer with chemical fertilizer and irrigated with water from the Sunghua. Over 500 tractors are working it. During the spring sowing the rolling fields undulate into the distance. When night sets in, electric lights perforate the darkness to wink with the stars. "We shall no longer need draught animals to plough the land and oil to light the lamps."

Our conversation touches on the Red Star Production Brigade, to which our hosts belong.

The youngsters on the tractor burst into laughter. "We now have five tractors; one walking tractor, one rubber-wheeled and three caterpillar tractors," they say. "Enough for the time being. And our Party secretary says that it is time to get a Liberation truck too."

One of the young fellows flings a glance at the tractor driver. "This Party secretary of ours is a studious type," he comments. "When he sees a piece of land he tries to figure out how to make it grow more soya beans. When he sees trees he studies how to make them a forest so it will help regulate the weather. When he comes across a ditch, he thinks of some way to make it produce something. No place escapes his attention. He turns everything, however insignificant, to good account for the community."

Farming in the Red Star Brigade has been 90 per cent mechanized, so has the processing of sideline products. Life is getting better and better. Every

family has spare money to lay aside and surplus grain in store. The pharmaceutical factory of the brigade supplies the commune members with free medicine, and children have fresh milk straight from the brigade's dairy farm.

"We need more and more technical personnel for our countryside," adds the young fellow. "So we've set up a technical school as our Party secretary suggested. It has three departments with forty students: medicine, agronomy and farm mechanics."

"You're in the mechanics department, I suppose?" I base my judgement on the soiled overalls he wears.

He shakes his head. "No, I'm a tractor driver."

"Like him?" I point at the middle-aged man at the wheel.

"Him? He's our Party secretary, Comrade Tung Wan-sheng."

A thinnish man of medium size, an ordinary peasant plus tractor driver, a jack of all trades.

We get off at the brigade headquarters. We greet Comrade Tung with hand-shakes. Escorted by him, we make a tour of the brigade.

Most of the fields are terraced on hill slopes closely planted to soya bean and maize, all of the best strains. The commune members are busy spreading fertilizer. Herds of cattle are grazing on the green slopes and meadows. The famous local stallions, with coats as silk, browse side by side with piebald cows. Leghorns peck energetically in the ditches. At the chicken

farm, newly hatched chicks, mistaking us for their feeders, hurry to the door jostling for food.

We come to another hillside covered with various kinds of medicinal herbs. The vale below is filled with heavily laden fruit trees.

Standing on the hilltop Comrade Tung says as if to himself, "This year the people of Yushu have grown 350,000 tons of grain, enough to feed the entire population of China for one day. We hope in a few years we can provide them food for two days."

### *The New Great Wall*

A forest of willow trees spreads out on the western bank of the Sunghua. This is Fuyu County. Our car cruises on tree-lined roads between green paddy fields. The landscape is so well designed that we believe it must have been thoroughly reshaped by men's hands.

But, we are told, there was once a ridge of sand dunes along this stretch of the river, 175 kilometres long, 1 to 2 kilometres wide and 50 metres high. Local people called it "the sand dragon". Not a single blade of grass would grow on this yellow waste. When the dry wind swept in from Mongolia, the sky darkened, humans shut their doors, shops closed, roads became impassable and all work in the fields came to a standstill. The sand dragon swallowed as much as 50 metres of the plain every year.

This state of affairs continued for a while after Liberation. In the spring of 1949 the first floor of a five-storey flour mill in the county town was buried by a sandstorm. Its courtyard, too, was packed with sand pouring in over the walls. This galvanized the county into action. Under the lead of the county Party committee the people waged a hard struggle against the sand dragon. From among them emerged a hero, Tien Fu, who became a national model worker in afforestation.

He is a man in his forties, of medium height, with a smiling round face. We meet him in a village in the Paitu Commune well-known for its green forest. He takes us to a green hill in order to have a glimpse of his brigade. Climbing up the slope we ask him, "Can you show us the sand dragon?"

"You're standing on its back!" he laughs.

Before Liberation, his village, pushed by the shifting sands, had moved three times, and finally settled here. But in 1948 the sand dragon again pressed close to the village, which had just been liberated from reactionary rule. Tien Fu, now no longer a hired hand but a master of his own, stood defiantly before this monster immeasurably bigger than him, and said, "Chairman Mao and the Party gave us this land and village. You shan't devour them. That would only please landlords and moneybags." He declared war on the sand dragon.

With Tien Fu in the lead, all the villagers joined the fight. They built a wall of willows around the

sand dragon and planted the plain with bushes and shrubs. But the monster was immense and had an enormous appetite. Even working for a lifetime might not be enough to bring it under control, some people thought. But others quoted the hero in Chairman Mao's article *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*: **"When I die, my sons will carry on; when they die, there will be my grandsons, and then their sons and grandsons, and so on to infinity. High as they are, the mountains cannot grow any higher and with every bit we dig, they will be that much lower. Why can't we clear them away?"** Tien Fu and his fellow villagers acted in the same spirit.

They persisted. Every one had their meals in the field and drank water from the river. Their sweat soaked the sand. But their labour brought results. The next year the willow saplings put out fresh leaves. Grass also struck roots. The dry sand began to wear a garment of green. So the afforestation went on year after year. The cultural revolution inspired the commune members with a still greater enthusiasm for building socialism. The look of the land was changing.

But the afforestation does not stop at harnessing the shifting sand. It must be made to produce. Pines from deep in the mountains, oil-bearing nut trees and other industrial plants have been transplanted on this sand. The sand dragon is now tamed and harnessed. Covered with trees, grass, medicinal herbs and

mushrooms, it holds a thousand treasures on its back. Even wild animals and birds flock here to make their homes.

Will the project succeed? "Of course," Tien Fu tells us. "We've planted 400 hectares of pines and a dozen hectares each of oil-bearing nut trees and mulberry trees. They all struck root. They prove that we can make this place perpetually green."

Then he takes us to the top of the once formidable sand dragon for a more extensive view of the place.

The Sunghua winds northward, escorted by two columns of trees. We can just see the highway that meanders in the shade of thick green foliage. Chequered fields, lines of trees and snug villages extend to the horizon like a patterned carpet. Only the skilful hands of the 730,000 people of Fuyu County could have woven this work of art in twenty years. A gentle breeze carrying the aroma of many different plants reaches us. We begin to understand the wisdom of Chairman Mao's plan to turn barren land into orchards, parks and forests.

How many trees have they planted? A comrade from the afforestation bureau tells us that according to a recent count, if the trees were lined up one metre apart, they would go around the equator four and a half times. In other words, the people of Fuyu County have built a green Great Wall with four trees abreast which could encircle the globe.

Man is invincible.

*A Fishing Village*

On an August afternoon we come to the fishing brigade of Talai Township in Ta-an County, the "home of carp". It is on the Nunchiang River, the greatest tributary of the Sunghua.

Ours hosts treat us to a hearty meal of the different fish from the river. At sunset the head of the brigade's revolutionary committee takes us to the water front.

We stop at a new sable farm enclosed by a palisade fence. Wooden kennels stand in neat rows on timber frames.

Unfortunately these nervous but cunning animals, surfeited with a meal of fresh fish, are asleep. Our host Old Pan, a veteran fisherman, does not want to disturb them.

Old Pan tells us the brigade also has pearl and fish farms. The brigade has exploited every possibility in the area to create wealth for the collective. Chairman Mao's directive for collectivization is their guide, hard struggle and self-reliance is their motto.

"But of all the wealth, the most precious is man," Pan explains. "And we have the most precious men!"

We jump into a boat. Pan steers it to midstream. Paddy fields and meadows stand on both sides of the river. The intense green shades into faint purple in the setting sun, which in turn tints the ripples in the water rose. Fish leap out of the water.

We draw into a cove where calm reigns supreme. The water is as smooth as a mirror. River birds hover quietly, watching the surface. Old Pan glances at them and a smile passes over his face. He rows the boat with doubled speed.

We approach a trawler surrounded by a dozen small fishing boats. On the trawler a tall young man stands gazing intently into the water, his dark brows knitted over penetrating eyes. Suddenly he shouts, "Haul!"

The small fishing boats pull away all at once, their winches humming. Impatient, young fishermen jump into the water to disentangle the nylon net which begins to loom on the surface. It draws nearer and nearer. Suddenly the water foams and tumbles. White-bellied fish brought up from the bottom of the river thrash and struggle, threatening to break the net. For the fishermen it is the climax of a battle which they must win. And they win.

Old Pan oars our boat back towards the shore with fast, steady strokes, the laughter of the fishermen lingering in our ears. He is wreathed in smiles, eyes excited. As for us the image of the commanding young man on the trawler looms larger and larger in our minds. Old Pan tells us about him.

He is called Wang Chih-hsueh, a man Old Pan has carefully trained to be his successor. He is now deputy commander of their militia company, deputy head of the brigade's revolutionary committee and an activist in the study of Mao Tsetung Thought. Like

all the other fishermen he has a bitter past. His grandfather was a hired hand for a landlord who literally worked him to death. His father was a worker in a factory and died of tuberculosis. Helpless, his mother had to sell his younger brother when he was barely one year old.

Wang alone survived. Liberation brought him new life, but he could no longer recover his family. It was only in 1968 that he found his younger brother after twenty-seven years. They fell into each other's arms, bathed in tears. Past suffering and present happiness created a turmoil of emotions in their hearts. He took his younger brother by the hand to the portrait of Chairman Mao and swore: The Communist Party made our reunion possible, we pledge to be loyal for ever to your revolutionary line, Chairman Mao, and contribute our part to the building of socialism in our motherland.

It is a clear night. Raising our heads, we see a vast expanse of cloudless sky with myriad stars that wink in harmony with the lights of the fishing village reflected on the river. Our boat beaches with a jerk.

Long after the journey Wang Chih-hsueh still lives in our memory, together with Liu Chang-yin of the cold highland, Li Kuo-tsai of the chemical industrial city, Tien Fu the hero in the building of the green Great Wall, and Tung Wan-sheng the tractor driver

— men bred with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, forever advancing, men of moral integrity and above vulgar interests, men of high value to the people.

## *The Story of Tachai*

*Pien Hsi*

**I**N the far-flung ranges of the Taihang Mountains, at the foot of Tiger Head Mountain, nestles a village of little more than three hundred inhabitants. This is the nationally famous Tachai Brigade of the Tachai Commune in Hsiyang County, Shansi Province.

Early in the spring of 1965, when the hills were still in the grip of bitter cold, some stirring news threw this small village into a ferment. Tachai's pace-setter, Party secretary Chen Yung-kuei, had just returned from the Third National People's Congress in Peking where he had seen Chairman Mao!

All Tachai rushed to welcome him as he entered the village. Chen Yung-kuei called out friendly greetings and asked how things had been going in the

village. He told them about the congress and how he had shaken hands with Chairman Mao. As he gripped the calloused hands of Chia Chin-tsai, a model worker in building up the mountain region, he told the villagers that Chairman Mao had sent his regards to the people of Tachai and to Chia Chin-tsai. Happy beyond words, some of them wept for joy.

Tears sparkled in the old poor peasant Chia Chin-tsai's eyes. "Just fancy Chairman Mao caring about an old stonemason up in these hills of ours!" he exclaimed. "Who could have dreamed of such a thing." The old man, who had been one of the first in Tachai to join the Party, held Chen Yung-kuei's strong hands in a powerful grip.

The sun was coming up. Piercing the mist on the hills, it clothed in gold the fruit trees on the hillsides and the neat terraced fields of Tachai's seven gullies, eight ridges and single slope. The red tiles on the village's new houses glowed like countless red flags.

In the sparkling sunshine, Chen Yung-kuei told the smiling people that Chairman Mao thoroughly approved of their revolutionary spirit of self-reliance and hard struggle. "And," Chen Yung-kuei added, "I promised Chairman Mao that the people of Tachai would never rest on their laurels but keep forging ahead."

**"In agriculture, learn from Tachai!"** Chairman Mao's call to the nation's peasants now gave Tachai's people redoubled confidence and determination to march ahead.



*The Man Who Took the Lead  
in Co-operation*

But before liberation, no one more than thirty *li* away had ever heard of this poor hill village. Tachai only had 800-odd *mu* of land scattered in plots over seven gullies, eight ridges and one slope at the foot of Tiger Head Mountain. The two largest plots were no more than five *mu* each, the smallest less than one tenth of a *mu*. The soil on the high, stony hills was as hard as iron, swept dry by parching winds. Even in an exceptionally good year, the grain yield per *mu* was no more than 140 catties. Most of this went to one landlord and three rich peasants. Forty-eight of the village's sixty-four households were poor or lower-middle peasants, thirty of them had been working outside as hired hands, thirteen of them had to go out begging. Tachai's people lived on chaff and wild plants. Although it lay only ten *li* from Hsiyang, the county town, nobody but tax-collectors went there.

In August 1945 the red flag of liberation at last came to Hsiyang. The great storm of land reform began. Chen Yung-kuei and others led by the Party overthrew the landlord and seized back the land. The paupers had stood up.

But they were wretchedly poor. What path should Tachai take after land reform? Two diametrically opposed answers were given. One was to get organized and take the path of socialist collectivization. This

was the path pointed out by Chairman Mao: "**Without socialization of agriculture, there can be no complete, consolidated socialism.**" The other was the continuation of individual farming by each family. This was the capitalist road advocated by the hidden traitor Liu Shao-chi: "There can be no collectivization of agriculture until industrialization has been carried out."

Tachai's liberated peasants kept stubbornly to Chairman Mao's teachings. Chen Yung-kuei consistently refuted the fallacious theories of Liu Shao-chi. "During the war against Japan," he said, "we relied on hand-grenades and locally made land-mines to defeat the Japanese with their modern guns and heavy artillery. During the War of Liberation, we relied on millet and rifles to wipe out Chiang Kai-shek's eight million troops equipped by U.S. imperialism. Now that we're building socialism, why must we have machines before we can collectivize agriculture? If we wait for machines before starting to build socialism, that will hold everything up." Then he added, "If the liberated peasants continue their individual farming, how are they different from their position in the old society? When men are united, they can move mountains. If we want to free our children and future generations from poverty, we must organize together and take the road of socialist collectivization pointed out by Chairman Mao." He talked things over with Tachai's poor and lower-middle peasants; they launched into mutual aid and co-operation.

Some well-to-do middle peasants, however, thought the paupers would "take advantage" of them, and they did their best to defeat them. They got together a group of men of their own sort, and some of the best farmhands among the poor peasants, and formed the Stout Fellows' Team. In fact, though they called themselves a mutual-aid team, each continued to farm on his own. Because Chen Yung-kuei was a strong man in his thirties, they got him to join them. But Chen Yung-kuei was determined to take the co-operative road. He disapproved of the way they excluded most of the poor and lower-middle peasants, so he withdrew from the team. He organized the nine households left out, including four men over fifty and five boys aged eleven to sixteen, into a genuine mutual-aid team. They called it the Old and Young Team.

This gave rise to a good deal of talk. Well-to-do middle peasants sniggered, "Those old men in Chen Yung-kuei's team are on their last legs, and the youngsters don't know the first thing about farming. We shall soon see some fun!" Some put on a show of sympathy and said, "Fancy a husky fellow, a first-rate farmer, working himself to the bone with that bunch of old crocks and kids! Chen Yung-kuei must be out of his mind."

But neither jeers nor soft-soap could shake Chen Yung-kuei. They only made him more determined to run his team well. Although the Old and Young Team was short of draught animals, tools and manpower, its members saw eye to eye and worked with

a will. By going all out for a year they got a good harvest—a higher yield, in fact, than the Stout Fellows' Team. This indisputable fact convinced the people of Tachai of the advantage of getting organized. That winter forty-nine of the village's sixty-seven households joined Chen Yung-kuei's Old and Young Team.

In the spring of 1952, Chen Yung-kuei and his teammates were eager to turn their mutual-aid team into a co-operative of the semi-socialist type.

Chen Yung-kuei made over a dozen trips to the county town to relay the demand of Tachai's poor and lower-middle peasants to start a co-op, but the county authorities dared not allow this because they were under the thumb of Liu Shao-chi and his agents in Shansi Province. Not until 1953, when the surging tide of agricultural co-operation was sweeping the whole country, did they grant a grudging permission.

Chen Yung-kuei's team was a large one, of forty-nine households, but the county would not allow more than thirty households in a co-operative. Since none of the team members wanted to go back to individual farming, Chen Yung-kuei, elected as chairman of the co-op, kept two sets of accounts, one for thirty households and a secret one for forty-nine. When the time came to share out the autumn harvest, the county cadres discovered this and gave them a dressing down. Nevertheless, the co-op's average yield that year went up to 237 catties per *mu*. This strengthened the co-op members' faith in collectivization and they drew up

a ten-year plan for building up their barren mountain region. Relying on their collective strength, they made up their minds to wipe out Tachai's poverty and backwardness.

But co-operation was not plain sailing. A handful of class enemies in Tachai began spreading slanders and rumours. "Men have men's way, water has water's way," they said. "Hens don't fight dogs, men don't fight water. No man, however able, dares to defy Heaven!"

Some co-op members lost heart. "Our mountains are so high, our gullies so deep," they said. "How many years will it take to build them up?"

But Chen Yung-kuei would cross hills of knives, seas of fire in the interests of the Party and the people. He said, "If we can't finish it in three years, we'll stick at it for five or ten. If our lifetimes aren't enough, our sons and grandsons will finish it! Chairman Mao has pointed out the way and he also told us the story of the Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains. We must learn from the foolish old man! The mountains are dead, men are living. Each ridge we level will be one ridge less, each gully we fill in will be one gully less. If we stick it out, in the long run we can reclaim it all."

After many discussions, the co-op members and cadres saw things in the same way. "We've four stand-bys," they said. "First, all of us are poor and lower-middle peasants. We're poor as a used up stalk of sorghum, so we want to make revolution. Give

the word and we'll get cracking. Second, our collective. Our manpower, land and funds are concentrated in the co-op. Men and women, old and young in our village, we're all pulling together. So there's no difficulty on earth we can't cope with. Third, we have a good Party branch and good cadres. If they give the lead, we can put the whole village's manpower to the best use. Fourth, we have hands and hoes. Operas depend on their singers, the earth on its tillers, and work on men. If we have revolutionary drive, mountains will have to bow their heads and rivers make way."

The heroic people of Tachai stepped up their war on the barren mountain region.

### *The Battle to Transform the Hills*

Chen Yung-kuei said, "No slack winter season in Tachai!" That winter, the villagers put their shoulders to the wheel. Braving bitter cold, crunching over snow and ice, working by moonlight and starlight, they started their fight to level hills and fill in gullies.

They quarried stones in the hills, built embankments in the gullies, carried earth to fill in the gaps behind these and turned the gullies into good arable land. The first year they built twenty-four stone embankments and reclaimed White Camel Gully, over one *li* long and more than thirty feet wide. From this triumph they went on to reclaim five other gullies.

At the end of 1955 the battle to tame Wolf Lair started. Wolf Lair was the largest gully in Tachai, over three *li* in length, thirty to forty feet across, and between one and two hundred metres deep. In the rainy season each summer, water roared down it like stampeding horses.

Was it possible to reclaim this formidable gully? Some co-op members had their doubts. But Chen Yung-kuei, putting the collective first as usual, urged them to persist. "We must tame Wolf Lair to grow more grain," he said. "So long as we're all of one mind, we can do it!"

No tree but is buffeted by wind and rain, no boat but is pounded by stormy seas. The people of Tachai battled hard for two years to reclaim Wolf Lair, but each year their work was washed away by flash floods.

The class enemy gloated. Some co-op members couldn't help losing heart. "Fine fools Chen Yung-kuei has made of us," some better-off peasants grumbled. "It's no use trying to reclaim Wolf Lair. We've put in two winters of back-breaking work for nothing. You won't catch us at it again this year!" Even one or two of the cadres started wavering.

But Chen Yung-kuei, like a man of iron, never lost heart. Time after time he squatted silently on the hillside above Wolf Lair, smoking his pipe as he thought the problem over. He imagined how the landlord and rich peasants were gloating and he swore to himself, "Poor and lower-middle peasants aren't

going to admit defeat to any landlord or rich peasant. We will never pull out of Wolf Lair."

He called another meeting of Party members. To boost their morale he read them *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*. "We must follow Chairman Mao's teachings," he said. "And learn from the spirit of the Foolish Old Man who removed the mountains."

The Party members agreed with Chen Yung-kuei. "No retreat from Wolf Lair!" they insisted. "We poor and lower-middle peasants aren't going to please the class enemy by failing in revolutionary courage! We must prove the worth of our collective economy."

There were spirited discussions among the poor and lower-middle peasants. "We're more than a match for those swine any day," one declared. "Who's afraid of hard work? Not we! Only landlords and rich peasants."

"Stick at it, I say. Don't lose heart. So long as it's for the good of the collective, we'll slog away as long as needed."

Now Chen Yung-kuei went to Wolf Lair with a few old mates, men who had worked as hired hands with him before liberation. They carefully examined each embankment, and discovered where the trouble lay. The gradient between embankments was too steep. If they could lessen it and dig drains under each embankment, the freshets could be slowed down and it would be harder for them to sweep the embankments away.

Still Chen Yung-kuei wasn't easy in his mind. He pondered this problem each minute of the day and when he was lying on his *kang* bed at night. His eyes on the domelike ceiling of his cave house, he wondered how it could stand the weight of the hill above. And how could arched bridges stand up to the weight of heavy traffic and the pounding of rivers in spate? That arched form must have special powers of resistance. If they arched their embankments too, wouldn't they be better able to withstand the onslaught of freshets? Yes! He jumped up excitedly and rushed off to tell his old mates.

So started the third battle against Wolf Lair. Chen Yung-kuei, skilled in building embankments, went into the attack with his trusty comrades. The old stonemason Chia Chin-tsai, a hammer and a drill slung over his back, was the first to start up the hills every day, at the first glimmer of dawn.

This time they meant to build over thirty big embankments across the gully, the largest of them twenty-five feet high. Sixty thousand cattles of lime would be needed for the mortar, and tens of thousands of cubic metres of earth to fill in each gully. But greater difficulties than these could not have daunted the people of Tachai. On that snowy hillside in the icy wind, they sweated away quarrying stone and burning lime, repairing their own mattocks when they broke.

Self-reliance and arduous struggle, that was their motto. Going all out in snow and ice for twenty-seven

days, they finished Wolf Lair, the most stubborn stronghold erected by nature against the people of Tachai.

Tachai's fearless revolutionary people kept hard at work for ten years from 1953 to 1962. All this time they never asked the state for supplies. With nothing but their hands and mattocks, their shoulders and carrying-poles, they remade the seven gullies, eight ridges and single slope of their brigade. They quarried 130,000 cubic metres of stone, built over 180 stone embankments with a total length of fifteen *li*, turned over two hundred *mu* of land in the gullies into high-output plots which would grow crops regardless of flood or drought, and made terraced fields on their six hundred *mu* of land on the ridges. Finally, they managed to achieve an average grain output of 774 cattles a *mu*.

Consciousness can be transformed into matter. The people of Tachai, armed with Mao Tsetung Thought, overcoming difficulties of every kind, standing up to the tests of both success and failure, finally, after ten years of arduous struggle, made a thorough job of transforming their poor natural conditions.

### *Working Miracles*

Summer, 1963. Tachai's crops had grown thick, lush and green. The commune members rejoiced at the prospect of a good harvest. As far as yield was con-

cerned, Tachai had already surpassed the average reached along the Yellow River. Now they determined to raise more than eight hundred catties per *mu*.

Then the unforeseen happened. The worst rain and flood in a century brought terrible ruin.

From August second to eighth, the rain poured down steadily. In this single week Old Man Heaven deluged the district with the equivalent of the entire rainfall of 1962. No sterner test had ever confronted the people of Tachai.

Chen Yung-kuei was away that week at a conference in the county. Just as he was about to telephone for news, Brigade Leader Chia Cheng-jang put through an urgent call from Tachai. In a worried voice, he told Chen Yung-kuei, "I've bad news, Yung-kuei! Whole masses of earth have been swept away. Over thirty cave houses have caved in!"

"Anyone hurt?" Chen Yung-kuei asked.

"No, we managed to get everyone out in time."

"Good for you, Old Chia. Organize all the Party and Youth League members, militia and peasants into flood prevention and rescue teams. And see to the safety of the families of martyrs and soldiers, as well as the old folk living on their own."

That afternoon the storm wrecked the telephone lines. Chen Yung-kuei had to get back. He crossed the racing Sunghsi River and, covered with mud, made as fast as he could for Tachai.

The nearer he got, the worse the road became. Chen Yung-kuei pressed on, sloshing through the mud, consumed by anxiety. His first glimpse of Tachai held him rooted to the spot. Some of the cave houses in the hillside had collapsed, and loess blocked their entrances. Nothing could be seen of others. The embankments in the gullies had been smashed, soil and crops had been swept away, and all that met the eye was the bare bed of the gully. Maize and grain had been knocked flat or lay under muddy water. Apple trees had been uprooted. The record harvest they had anticipated had been hit by a record disaster. Chen Yung-kuei's heart burned. His legs went limp; he could not move a step further. He had to stop to take a grip on himself.

"Our homes in ruins, our soil swept away . . ." he thought. "What a catastrophe — looks like the end of the world. The commune members must be just as broken hearted as I am. What can I do?" In a flash he remembered Chairman Mao's teaching: **"In times of difficulty we must not lose sight of our achievements, must see the bright future and must pluck up our courage."** True, a Communist mustn't be frightened by difficulties. He must find some way to buck the villagers up.

As soon as Chen Yung-kuei reached the village, the brigade leader and others rushed up to him. Chia Cheng-jang gripped his hands hard. "Yung-kuei!" he cried. "How we've been longing for you to come back!"

Chia's eyes were bloodshot from lack of sleep. He had lost weight. He was streaked with mud from head to foot. Chen Yung-kuei realized what a struggle these last days had been.

"What of all our people?" he asked.

"All safe," replied Chia.

"And the livestock?"

"All safe too."

"The grain?"

"We salvaged it -- but some's been spoiled."

Chen Yung-kuei heaved a sigh of relief and wrung Chia's hand. "So long as our people, livestock and grain are safe, that's a big victory," he declared.

Tears started to Chia's eyes. "It's a fearful disaster all the same, Yung-kuei!"

"Never mind," was the encouraging reply. "It's up to us to shoulder this heavy load. We must back up the commune members and buck them up. Where are they?"

"It's too risky in the cave houses. They're all in the Club."

"Let's go and see them."

In the Club the commune members eagerly gathered round Chen Yung-kuei. There was much they wanted to tell him, but the lump in everyone's throat made it hard to speak. Some women started sobbing. Their distress cut Chen Yung-kuei to the quick, but he forced a smile.

A white-haired old villager exclaimed in amazement, "Disaster's hit Tachai, Yung-kuei. How can you smile?"

After a second Chen Yung-kuei answered seriously, "It's a disaster, all right, but I want to congratulate you all."

They could hardly believe their ears.

"Congratulate us?" the old villager muttered. "What on earth for? It's all we can do to keep from sobbing."

"No, I mean it. Congratulations!" Chen Yung-kuei smiled. "First of all, not a single life has been lost -- that's fine. The proverb says: so long as the mountain remains, we shan't lack fuel. Where there's a will, there's a way. In the second place, we've lost nothing that really matters. With our livestock and grain safe, what's there to be afraid of? We'll fix new plots, build new cave houses. In the third place, if this had happened in the old days, goodness knows how many people would have hung themselves or been forced to sell their children. Remember 1920, the year of the big drought? No homes collapsed and there was no flood, but dozens of people starved to death just because it didn't rain for forty days. There were five of us in my family. We had to sell my mother, my elder sister and my younger brother, leaving only father and I; and later father hanged himself, leaving me, still a kid, to work as a hired hand. Right now, disaster's struck again, but our brigade has 70,000 cattles of grain in reserve, and over 10,000

yuan in the bank. More important still, we have the good leadership of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, the superiority of the collective economy, and our own earth-rocking drive. With these three treasures. . . ."

Before he could finish, an old peasant sprang to his feet and put in, "With these three treasures, we'll fight it out with Old Man Heaven! We relied on these three treasures, didn't we, in our three battles against Wolf Lair?"

"What do you suggest we do, Yung-kuei," the members asked.

He answered cheerfully, "Our job now is to eat and sleep well, until the weather clears. Then we'll work, produce and overcome this disaster!"

By the time he had reassured the commune members, it was dark. Leaving the Club, he took a lantern and made the rounds of the village.

The downpour finally stopped, but the weather remained capricious. Chen Yung-kuei and the other cadres hastily called a meeting and discussed the problem of the villagers' housing. Having settled this, he hurried off to inspect the fields. The flood waters had attacked like wild beasts—the damage was fearful! The flood had caused landslides, whole fields had been washed away, buildings had collapsed, cave houses had fallen in. The arable land in the gullies which had taken ten years to build up had been washed away. Most of the land on the hills had lost outer borders. In some places the subsoil had shifted, the

earth had gaped open, the crops were lying flat. There had been over a hundred houses and over a hundred cave houses in the village. Seventy per cent had collapsed, leaving the villagers homeless, the livestock without shelter. Not even old men in their eighties could recall such a calamity.

Could the people of Tachai overcome such a serious catastrophe? What could they rely on to overcome it? Chen Yung-kuei called meetings to discuss these questions carefully. Some commune members said that since Tachai had done its bit for the country by selling the state over 1,758,000 catties of grain in the eleven years since co-operation, now that they were in trouble the state ought to help them. A few cadres felt that a loan would lessen the ideological problems and facilitate their work. Most of the members, however, were against asking for relief. They said that Tachai Brigade would not have existed if not for liberation. If Chairman Mao and the Party hadn't led them along the road of collectivization, if the state hadn't backed them up, Tachai couldn't have done anything for the country.

Old Party member Chia Chin-tsai said firmly: "We can walk this road ourselves, without being propped up. Let the state keep its relief for those who really need it."

This increased Chen Yung-kuei's determination not to apply for relief. But how to turn belief in self-reliance into mass action? How to spur the villagers' revolutionary drive? He pondered these questions



carefully in the fields, at meals, and when lying in bed. Eventually he summed up the masses' arguments for self-reliance as ten reasons for not asking for state relief — ten big advantages.

1. It was in the interest of the state. Money was needed to build up the country. If Tachai did without state aid, that was equivalent to aiding the state and the building of socialism.
2. It was in the interest of the collective. Overcoming difficulties by their own efforts would further reveal the strength of their collective economy and make the villagers love the collective more.
3. It was good for the cadres. Self-reliance would temper them and force them to use their brains more.
4. It was good for the commune members. It would overcome any idea of depending on others and would spur them to strive hard and work tirelessly.
5. Overcoming the disaster by their own efforts would greatly strengthen the determination of the poor and lower-middle peasants and deflate the arrogance of the class enemy.
6. It was good for the socialist emulation campaign for overtaking and learning from the advanced and helping the backward.
7. It was good for developing production.
8. It was good for maintaining the honour of being an advanced unit.

9. It was good for unity.

10. It was good for training successors.

Chen Yung-kuei lost no time in outlining these "ten advantages" of self-reliance at a meeting of the whole brigade. "Tachai has been hit hard this time," he said. "The Central Committee of the Party and our people's commune have sent delegations to express their concern. We've received messages of good wishes from all over the country. The government has sent us a medical subsidy, relief funds, winter clothes, matting and other relief supplies. We're tremendously grateful for the concern shown by Chairman Mao, the Central Committee and the people of the country. We'll accept half the help offered us by the state and send back the other half: we'll accept the moral support, but send back the money and supplies. We'll overcome difficulties by our own efforts, so that the state can relieve places which really need help. In any case, the money and grain from the state could only solve our problem for a time, whereas the spirit of self-reliance taught us by the Central Committee and Chairman Mao will always be of use. That's what we want — it's an inexhaustible treasure!"

This analysis helped the villagers to see things in the right light. Their unanimity led to united action. With Chen Yung-kuei giving the lead, old and young, men and women set to work. In the short space of five days they propped up 250 *mu* of seedlings which had been flattened out, and most of these grew well

after being manured. Next, as life became more settled, they started rehabilitating the fields, collecting fertilizer and preparing to sow winter wheat, so as to ensure a good harvest the next year.

Old Man Heaven went on making trouble, as if bent on testing the determination of the people of Tachai. Tachai was hit by six more calamities: two hurricanes, a hailstorm, a severe frost, spring flooding and summer drought. But the villagers, like men of iron, relying on their own hands, won through one calamity after another.

Struggle is happiness, struggle wins victory. After overcoming seven natural calamities, the people got in a good harvest. The 560 *mu* of grain producing fields left after the flood yielded an average of over 740 catties a *mu*. Their total output of more than 420,000 catties was 10,000 catties more than their high yield of 1958.

At the members' request, the brigade sold 240,000 catties of grain to the state. The good harvest increased the villagers' revolutionary drive. By the end of 1963, less than five months after being flooded out, the hundred able-bodied men and women of Tachai, in addition to the autumn harvesting, ploughing and sowing, had repaired thirty-five houses and twenty-seven cave houses which were on the point of collapse, built forty houses with tiled roofs and twenty cave houses lined and reinforced with stone.

The peasants of Tachai had reckoned that it would take from three to five years to rehabilitate their

fields, and ten years to solve the housing problem. But by working with one heart they fulfilled their ten-year plan in five months. Thus their own experience brought home to them the value of the policy of self-reliance put forward by Chairman Mao. If they followed Chairman Mao's teachings they couldn't go wrong. So commune members and cadres alike were eager to make a better study and application of Chairman Mao's works, to make revolution without stopping and never to cease advancing.

Studying Chairman Mao's works gave the people of Tachai a vantage ground from which they could see farther. It increased their courage tenfold. At the beginning of 1964, when drawing up the production plan for the year, they put forward the fighting slogan "Surpass the yield of 800 catties per *mu*."

To reach it, Chen Yung-kuei knew that they must act according to Chairman Mao's teachings in *On Contradiction* and find their own principal contradiction. The Party cadres studied the matter and decided to reclaim land and build houses at the same time, to spur the land reclamation by building houses and the house-building by reclaiming the land.

After New Year the brigade's main labour force concentrated on reclaiming land. Neither snow, ice nor cutting wind held up their work for a day. Row after row of new houses were going up at the same time. When the commune members moved into these new quarters they worked with even more zest.

Eighty-odd *mu* of land were reclaimed before spring and more than two hundred put into better shape.

A busy farming season lay ahead. But fifty *mu* still needed reclaiming and more than three hundred needed rehabilitating. What was the solution? In line with Chairman Mao's teachings, Chen Yung-kuei tackled the principal contradiction — the shortage of hands. They divided the whole brigade's labour force, women as well as men, into three shock teams: one to rehabilitate land, one to sow, one to carry fertilizer. That year, Tachai had the biggest harvest in its history, with an average yield of 826 catties per *mu* and a total output of over 620,000 catties, 200,000 more than the previous year.

### *Keeping Tachai's Red Banner Flying*

In 1964, Chairman Mao issued the call: "In agriculture, learn from Tachai." It was a sharp blow to Liu Shao-chi and his agents in Shansi, for the red banner of Tachai impeded the restoration of capitalism in the countryside. Tachai was a thorn in their side. For ten years and more they never ceased their criminal attempts to smirch and tear down the red banner of Tachai.

In 1961 the Party secretary of Hsiyang County was transferred and a successor appointed by the capitalist roaders. Just a week later, the new Party secretary led a dozen persons to Tachai to investigate its "boasts

and exaggerations". When they failed to prove this charge, they alleged that Tachai had understated its acreage and forced the brigade to reduce its yield figures. In 1960, Tachai had produced 620 catties a *mu*. They insisted that this be reduced to 580, and the figure of 240,000 catties sold to the state reduced to 220,000. This was an unreasonable attempt to discourage the poor and lower-middle peasants of Tachai and discredit the red flag of Tachai.

In the winter of 1964, taking advantage of the socialist education movement, Liu Shao-chi and his agents in Shansi attempted another planned and systematic attack.

A work team controlled by a handful of capitalist roaders in the provincial, special administrative region and county Party committees went to Tachai. Instead of carrying out the correct line and policies drawn up by Chairman Mao for the socialist education movement, it faithfully carried out the reactionary line advanced by Liu Shao-chi.

During their stay in Tachai, members of the work team deliberately sought out people with grudges against the local cadres. Landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and other bad elements seized this opportunity to vent their hatred and discontent, only too ready to supply "material". The poor and lower-middle peasants and local cadres headed by Chen Yung-kuei became the main target of attack.

The work team cudgelled their brains to think up "grounds" for discrediting and overthrowing Tachai.

According to them, an arid hilly district like Tachai could only have arrived at the high yield of grain claimed by reporting less land than was really owned. To discover "hidden land" they spent more than fifty days in surveying. All it proved was that Tachai had a few *mu* less — not more — than it had reported.

In that case, they argued, the record of grain output must be wrong. They went through the records, checked with each household and weighed the grain held in reserve. Result: there was not a catty less than recorded.

Next they declared it was impossible for a few dozen households with only a few hundred *mu* of land to sell the state 240,000 catties of grain a year. There must be some falsification somewhere. They went to the county grain bureau to look through the records of the grain sold by Tachai each year, but again found no evidence of fraud.

Despite all the pressure put on them, the people of Tachai refused to give in. When Chen Yung-kuei read Chairman Mao's works and thought of his meeting with Chairman Mao he was filled with strength. As Chairman Mao had said, "**Retgression eventually produces the reverse of what its promoters intend. There is no exception to this rule either in modern or in ancient times, in China or elsewhere.**" The ruthlessness of the work team following the reactionary line of Liu Shao-chi taught the poor and lower-middle peasants of Tachai a lesson. They rose up and rebelled.

Led by Chen Yung-kuei, the peasants waged a tit-for-tat struggle against the work team members who stood truth on its head and confused black and white.

But unwilling to accept defeat the work team accused Chen Yung-kuei and the others of doing away with work-point quotas and using a pace-setter system of management. This, they said, failed to differentiate between hard workers and slackers, but "lumped everyone together in the same category". "It did not conform to the principle of 'to each according to his work'." And "Chen Yung-kuei talked the brigade members into it against their will."

The brigade members calmly refuted them with facts. In the past Tachai had also used the labour management system of recording work points. There were over a hundred different farming jobs, and a set number of work points was fixed for each. They tried this for several years, but it did not work out well. After studying Chairman Mao's works the brigade members felt that they could improve the system by relying on their political consciousness. So Tachai had started a system of reckoning according to pace-setters. Each said what he felt he deserved and the others discussed his appraisal. After the introduction of this new system, more people turned out to work and efficiency went up. In 1962, the year before they adopted this system, the average number of workdays for everyone — men and women, full-time and part-time workers — was 250. It increased in 1963 to 260; in 1964, to 280. The brigade members thoroughly

approved of this method. It put political consciousness, not work points, in command. It embodied the principle of "to each according to his work" and was simpler and more rational than the complicated work-point quota system. They had worked this out for themselves from practice, it was not something a cadre had foisted on them.

The work team members were at a loss until, finally, they "discovered" something "wrong" with the brigade's living conditions. Tachai grew so much grain and yet, they alleged, the villagers did not eat well enough. Chen Yung-kuei and the others refuted this bluntly by saying, "First, though we don't eat too well, we eat a darned sight better than did in the old days! Second, it's not just for ourselves that we poor and lower-middle peasants of Tachai have worked hard to increase production by self-reliance, but to help build socialism. Third, Chairman Mao has called on us to practise strict economy, to build our country and run our homes through industry and thrift. Every year Tachai accumulates public funds. With these, we can overcome natural calamities ourselves and help other brigades as well, making very clear the superiority of the collective economy."

The firm struggle waged against the work team by Chen Yung-kuei and the others at last forced them to beat a retreat.

Chairman Mao showed concern for Tachai, his revolutionary line lit their progress. Later, with the help of men sent from the Central Committee, the

Tachai Party branch carried out the socialist education movement along with the commune members in accordance with Chairman Mao's instructions. The result showed that Tachai had constantly abided by the directives of Chairman Mao politically, ideologically, organizationally and economically.

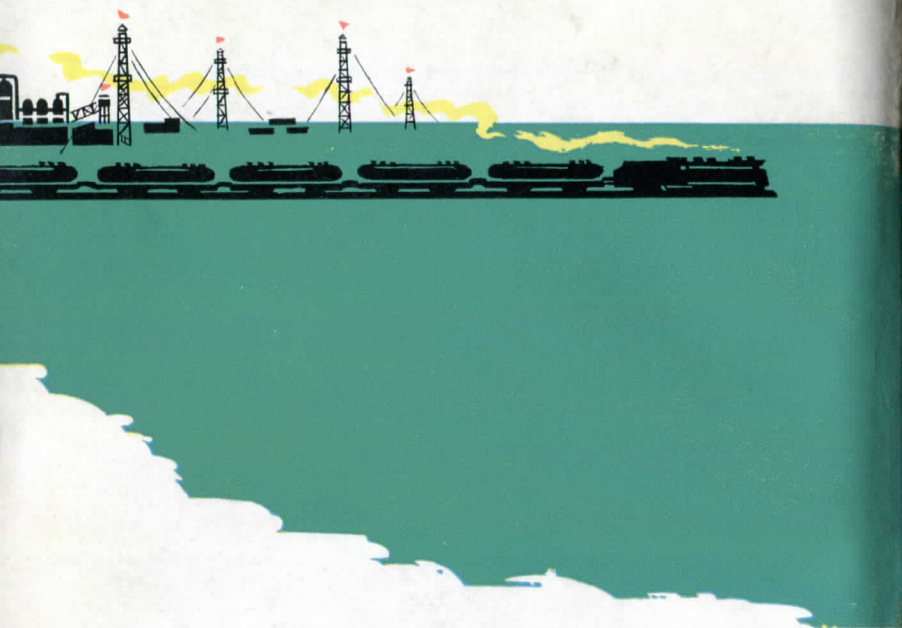
During the cultural revolution, the poor and lower-middle peasants of Tachai, headed by Chen Yung-kuei, united with the revolutionary masses and cadres of Shansi Province to rebel against the handful of capitalist roaders in the Hsiyang County Committee and the Shansi Provincial Committee. They seized power from them. Closely following Chairman Mao's strategic plan and holding firmly to the main orientation of the struggle, they won great victories in grasping revolution and promoting production.

Today, Chen Yung-kuei and the heroic people of Tachai remain modest and prudent. Following Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, they are marching rapidly along the broad highway of socialism.

The Chinese people have long been engaged in a struggle for national liberation and social progress. The Chinese Revolution is a part of the world revolution. The Chinese people have long been engaged in a struggle for national liberation and social progress. The Chinese Revolution is a part of the world revolution. The Chinese people have long been engaged in a struggle for national liberation and social progress. The Chinese Revolution is a part of the world revolution.

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