



THE PEOPLE  
SPEAK OUT

TRANSLATIONS OF POEMS AND  
SONGS OF THE PEOPLE OF CHINA  
BY REWI ALLEY

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TRANSLATIONS OF  
POEMS AND SONGS OF  
THE PEOPLE OF CHINA

Translated and Published  
by Rewi Alley  
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## P R E F A C E

*From the earliest times in China, the chief medium for protest against oppression and social injustice, has been the poetic forms and songs in which the people have been able to express themselves.*

*Poems had accumulated since the beginning of history, right down through the ages until the liberation. Since this great people have been released from the thralldom of the old society, poems of the people sing not only of the joy in entering the new day, but also of the desire for those things which will ensure the right to continue with peaceful construction; of things like the resistance against imperialist aggression, defence of national independence, protest against Japanese remilitarization and support for the cause of world peace.*

*At no time in their long history, have the Chinese people suffered meekly. Always has there been rebellion, always outspoken criticism. Although there have been periods of fierce oppression during which much of the written word has been destroyed or lost, yet there does still exist a vast reservoir of material which can be drawn on. The small selection which is here presented and which contains some historical, some pre-liberation, and some post-liberation poetry, it is hoped, will enable the English-speaking reader to understand more fully the new China that has emerged and which is rapidly establishing itself again as one of the main stabilizing forces in our world.*

*Translations have been made from the original manuscripts, with the help of friends, and the translator*

*is especially grateful for the final reading and corrections by Chu Kwang-tsien and Yang Hsien-yi. He is also in debt to Shirley Barton, for her work of editing.*

*The main purpose of these translations is to try and carry through the poet's idea into that kind of language which would enable the ordinary people of the English-speaking world to receive much of impact of the message given—whether or not they are in the habit of reading poetry, and whether or not they are familiar with the long history of China. The usual devices of the poet to help him to give appeal to his song—rhyme and rhythm—have been abandoned in favour of clarity and simplicity.*

*Rewi Alley*

*Peking, November 17, 1953*

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**PART ONE**

PEASANT AND LORD  
*From the "Book of Odes"*

*Anonymous*

From the woods came sounds  
of chopping, of trees falling,  
of peasants dragging the timber  
to the banks of the river where  
cool waters went rippling by.

In the great home of their lord,  
who neither sowed nor reaped,  
was stored the produce  
of three hundred families; their lord  
who shared not the hardships of the hunt  
yet had wild game hanging in his kitchens.

Surely  
the men we should respect are those  
who work, and thus  
earn their livelihood.

The sound of axe on wood  
continues; and now it is  
timber for wheel spokes  
they are hauling to the waters' edge;

while the grain from countless  
sheaves — whose sowing and whose  
reaping, we ask? — brings wealth

to their lord; who caught the wild pig  
hanging from his hooks?

Surely  
the men we should respect are those  
who work, and thus  
earn their livelihood.

And now the ringing of axes  
means hardwood for wheel rims  
carried to lay beside the rising  
river.

Our lord who takes but does not  
work has three hundred grain bins  
filled; he does not hunt but  
strings of quail hang in his home  
waiting for him to eat.

Surely  
the men we should respect are those  
who work, and thus  
earn their livelihood.

GOVERNMENT RATS\*  
*From the "Book of Odes"*

*Anonymous*

Great rats, great rats,  
keep away from our wheat!

---

\* This poem expresses the sentiments of the peasants who are forced to emigrate to another county through the depredations of the officials.

These three years we have worked for you  
but you have spurned us;  
now we shall leave this land  
for a happier one —  
that happy land, that happy land,  
there we shall find all that we need.

Great rats, great rats,  
keep away from our wheat!  
These three years we have worked for you  
but you have not done one good thing for us;  
now we shall leave this land  
for a happier one —  
happy land, happy land,  
where our rights shall be secure.

Great rats, great rats,  
keep off the shoots  
of our growing wheat!  
These three years we have worked for you  
but you have not shown gratitude for service rendered;  
so now we leave this land  
for the broad plains of another —  
broad plains, broad plains,  
where we shall sing  
for joy.

OFFICIALS  
*From the "Book of Odes"*

*Anonymous*

Even the dung beetles are arrayed  
with beautiful wings of gauze; so  
think I sadly when I see  
our officials decked out in such splendour;  
the country is in imminent danger  
where shall we seek refuge?

How those dung beetles do  
dress themselves up! Yet are they  
living on decay  
like our officials;  
the country is in imminent danger  
where shall we seek refuge?

When the dung beetle first emerges  
its covering is as white as snow;  
I grieve when I think of officials  
who understand nothing;  
the country is in imminent danger  
where shall we seek refuge?



THE COURTIERS AND THE PEOPLE  
*From the "Book of Odes"*

*Anonymous*

There are those who do the work  
of the court, humbly equipped  
as befits their rank; then the grand lords  
with retinues of noble born, all wearing  
scarlet.

The pelicans beside  
the waters' edge collect  
food, but do not wet their wings;  
the best-dressed people often  
give the least service, are the most  
worthless;

and pelicans like to make  
their catch, without even  
wetting a beak; officials  
enjoying the highest favour  
simply receive, giving  
nothing.

Each morning the clouds rise up  
covering the hills like rank grass  
but no rain falls; so in the villages  
even lovely young women  
are stricken with famine.

CHAOS  
*From the "Book of Odes"*

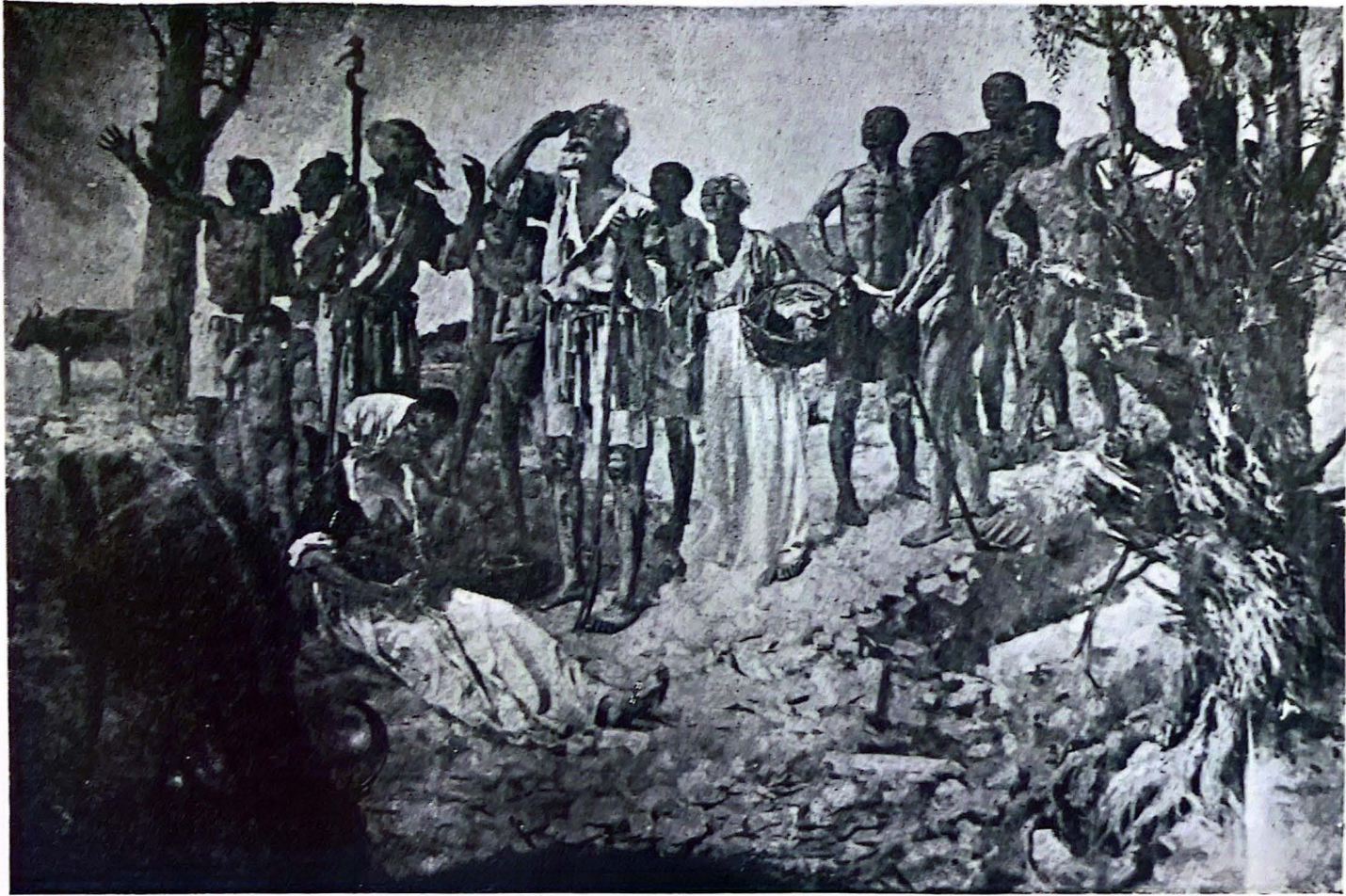
*Anonymous*

All-powerful Heaven,  
now we are stricken with your displeasure;  
for famine has come, so that everywhere  
the people die, everywhere land  
turns to waste;

traitors, like poisonous creeping things,  
start civil war; eunuchs exceed their office,  
corrupting society with their rottenness; surely  
it is these who are ruining  
our country;

arrogant manipulators  
of petty intrigues at court, the King  
can see no wrong in them; and we  
are kept in anxiety, subject  
to their oppression.

Life, like the plants in a land  
stricken with drought, withers;  
like the growth on a useless tree  
we become stunted, sickly; with  
our land in chaos, who shall rise  
and save it?



Waiting for the Emancipator

*Oil painting by Ju Pe-on*

SONG OF THE AUTUMN WIND  
AND THE STRAW HUT

*Tu Fu\**

The eighth month and an autumn gale  
tore from my hut three layers of thatch  
spreading it everywhere — over the river,  
along the river banks, into the marsh,  
high up in tall trees;

and from the neighbourhood came  
a crowd of small kids seeing me  
old and feeble, took the thatch away  
in front of my face, stealing and hauling it  
away to their bamboo grove. I tried to stop them  
but my voice was not strong enough;

so I came back to the hut with a sigh; the gale  
stopped, but black clouds gathered and the sky  
was dark, with no sign of light — truly  
a forbidding night.

My old bedding quilt was as cold as iron,  
my delicate son beside me complained of all the holes  
in it; rain streamed through the roof  
like unbroken strings of hemp, drenching all.

After all the disasters of war, this wretchedness  
seemed too much to be borne;  
so no rest came in sleep

---

\* Tu Fu (712-770 A.D.) was a great patriotic realist poet of the Tang dynasty. His poems are filled with love for the people and for his country, and give a faithful picture of political corruption, social disorder and the suffering of the people. Thus his works are poignant, tragic and great, and have been loved and admired by the Chinese people through the ages.

wondering through the night when all these sorrows  
would end;

then dozing toward morning I saw in a dream  
an immense building with thousands of rooms  
where all who needed it could take  
welcome shelter, a mansion as solid as a hill  
not fearing wind or rain; and waking, thought,  
how absurd — when could I ever see such a house?

Yet could I believe that such would come to pass;  
even though this poor hut be pulled down entirely  
and I frozen to death, I would be content.

## FEUDAL MILITARISTS

*Tu Fu*

Now a little gang of military  
adventurers have seized the country  
so that the people have become  
of no more account than fish  
for the table; the new masters conspiring  
to oppress the people, with  
none daring to defend  
the innocent;

in front of the people  
are the instruments of torture,  
behind them the mockery  
of sweet music. the sound  
of laughter as men are slain  
and streets ran with blood;

out on the land made  
desolate by war, the sound of ghosts  
in the wind and rain; while sad-eyed wives,  
mourning their husbands, horses  
riderless, are forced into revelry  
with the butchers.

## THE CYPRESS

*Tu Fu*

Strong are its roots  
linked so firmly beneath  
the good earth; towering high,  
may its branches thus stand  
against the storm; the spirit  
of nature its bright strength  
and maker; and when for a palace  
great beams are needed, why then  
even though ten thousand oxen  
are brought to pull, would it  
stand immovable;  
it is held in respect even  
though its full strength and beauty  
is yet unrevealed; though willing  
to be made into useful timber, none  
are strong enough to fell it;  
maybe, into its bitter heart  
insects have already eaten; surely  
it has been a haven for many  
a glorious bird;  
you, who have been denied  
opportunity to express yourselves,

complain not; for always has there been  
great ability found difficult to be made use of.

## FAMINE

*Tu Fu*

With a world in confusion  
and demands for taxes great,  
the people  
try to get nutriment from husks.  
What heart can you have, you  
lordly ones, in your gluttony;  
for while the kitchens of the rich  
stink with the reek of cooking meat,  
out on the battlefield of life  
the bones of the poor bleach white.

## PEARLS\*

*Tu Fu*

There came a man from the south seas  
bringing pearls, pearls with characters  
hidden in their depths; and as I gazed  
into them they seemed to hold

---

\* According to Chinese legend, the pearl is a tear shed by pearl finders. Here it symbolizes the money for taxes which is the blood of the working people. The "hidden characters" represent the people's grievances which cannot be expressed.

tears of blood, tears for the sorrow  
that had gone into their getting;  
like the tears of our peasants who are taxed to death  
with none to feel  
the pity of it all.

## ON TAXES\*

*Yuan Chieh\*\**

Now, one looks back with longing  
on days gone by; days of peace;  
I think of my twenty years among  
the wooded hills; clear waters  
bubbling from the spring beside  
our home; memories of the valleys,  
the caves, so near, so dear;

times were they when taxes  
were collected in proper terms and one  
slept well never minding  
if one lay in a little  
in the mornings; then abruptly  
the world changed for me  
from the pleasant country

---

\*In the preface to this poem, the poet-official relates how robber bands came one year and raided the place of his official seat, Tao Chou, in Hunan Province. They came again the following year, but because the people of Tao Chou were so poor they went on to the next district. He says that the Tao Chou people could not have kept out the robbers but that the robbers probably pitied them. After this came the imperial tax collectors and the poet wrote the lines above for their edification.

\*\*Yuan Chieh (723-772 A.D.) was a Tang poet. When he served as a provincial official he helped the impoverished peasants by allotting them land and abolishing the system of forced labour.



to service in army barracks  
and finally  
the appointment to Tao Chou;

so this year when robbers  
came down the mountain they  
looked at our people with pity;  
knowing them to be poor and wretched,  
this time they did not kill but just  
passed by; of all the districts  
only ours  
unmolested;

so this is the condition, you  
tax collectors, armed with all  
imperial authority, find us in  
today; you who are worse for  
our people than the robbers  
who came to take and slay; for  
the levies you now extract  
are to the people as if you  
were roasting them over a slow  
fire, simply for your own scrap  
of credit;

for myself,  
no longer can I stand  
being an official, watching  
such things happen; oh to be  
in a boat, back in my native  
countryside, living with my family,  
living on a little grain and  
the fish that I would catch;  
contentedly passing into old age  
beside our rivers and lakes.

## HARVEST

*Pai Chu-i\**

Farmers have but little leisure  
especially in the summer months;

yesterday evening there came  
a strong south wind and wheat  
turned golden in the field;

then work started, and wives and daughters  
came to the reapers with food, children following  
with pots of gruel.

Farmers at the threshing bins  
feet burning from the heat  
of the ground, backs tanned  
under the sun, yet because of the work  
and its urgency, giving no heed to their pains;  
only with the sunset, in utter weariness knowing  
how long are summer days;

so as they toiled came a lone woman  
with her baby; in one hand some gleanings  
in the other a basket;

and all heard her sad story  
heard it with heartache; how  
she could not pay taxes and so

---

\* Pai Chu-i (772-846 A.D.) was a great Tang poet who loved the people. He wrote many satires exposing the abuses of his time and reflecting the agony of the people. His poems were simply written and easily understood by ordinary folk, so they were loved by the people of his time.

her produce had been seized; now they could eat  
only what they could glean.

And I the official  
am suddenly seized with shame  
wondering by what right I  
who have never sown or reaped  
have a salary of three hundred piculs  
of grain, with each year  
plenty left over.

## ON STAYING IN THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

*Pai Chu-i*

In the early morning I climbed the mountain  
walking around the peak and staying there  
until sunset; then going down to the village  
to pass the night;

the village folk  
glad to see me, put out  
supper and a bowl  
of wine;

yet before my lips  
had touched it, there  
burst in a man  
in livery, with knife and axe,  
and with him some ten  
followers, snatching up  
wine and food,  
consuming it all, with

the master of the house  
standing behind, too  
scared to say a word,  
more like some outside guest  
than owner;

there in the courtyard stood a great tree  
loved by the family for some thirty years;

and with rough words  
the soldiers cut it down  
yelling that their orders were  
to collect timber;

so these were the "soldiers of supply," able  
to confiscate anything; yet with none  
daring to protest, knowing them protected  
from on high.

## FAMINE

*Pai Chu-i*

Since in the spring there came  
no rain the wheat seed lies  
dead in the ground and now  
with the coming of frosts, no  
harvest and naught to live on;

so out we go to search  
for a certain herb which  
may be changed for a little  
grain to eat; each morning

with a spade to search, a full  
day's work and by sunset  
scarcely a basketful;

then to the homes of the wealthy  
we must go, giving our herbs to them  
to feed their horses, making them sleek  
and shiny; and in exchange, we take for ourselves to eat  
the worst kind of grain for animals;  
and still we are  
stricken with hunger.

## COLD SPELL IN THE VILLAGE

*Pai Chu-i*

In that eighth year, in the last month,  
on the fifth day, the snowflakes started  
to fall; even the bamboos and cypresses  
were killed by the cold; so you may know  
how those without clothing suffered; one  
went round to see conditions in our village  
finding that out of ten houses, eight or nine  
were poor; so with the north wind cutting  
like a knife, and with not enough to cover  
their bodies, the peasants sullenly crouched  
over their fires, longing for the return  
of the warm sun; surely it is these who suffer most;  
and then I, on such a day,  
would stay in my home, closing the door  
tightly, in my fur coat and with stuffed silk  
bedding to keep me warm sleeping or sitting;  
nor will hunger or cold worry me; yet I am

not a tiller of the land; and thinking over  
this thing, I am ashamed and ask  
"What kind of a man am I?"

## TWO ALTERNATIVES

*Pai Chu-i*

One kind of music pleases  
this ear; another kind, that;  
so does the beauty of women  
not appear the same to every  
eye; yet in marriage it is  
hardly beauty that determines  
choice; men wonder whether  
the lass is rich or poor; for  
if poor will she suffer rejection  
many times, while if wealthy  
does she become the centre  
of attraction;

the rich girl from the great  
red house, clothed in silk  
and gold; a bold mannered chit  
of sixteen, not even bothering  
to hold her hands before men  
in the proper manner; yet will  
she be married even before  
her family has gone through the usual  
arrangements; but the poor girl  
in her hut, with no pearls to show,  
hairpins of crude bramble twigs,  
will wait long years for marriage;

men attracted by her looks will see  
her poverty, then at the last moment  
change their minds;

mine host  
you give this dinner to honour  
a match maker; yet before  
you start your drinking, would  
I sing to you, this song:

beware  
of the bride from a rich home  
who marries so easily that  
she is proud, holding her husband  
in easy contempt;  
look  
for the lass from a poor home  
who after the bitter years of denial  
will value you, and care for your  
family well;  
you have in front of you  
these two alternatives  
choose!

## THE OLD MAN OF TU LING

*Pai Chu-i*

The farmer of Tu Ling district  
who tilled a piece of poor land  
came to a bad season, with no rain in spring  
and hot winds blowing everywhere;  
so many of the wheat shoots parched

and dead! And in the autumn with frosts  
beginning, crops that grew at all grew useless  
green ears that would not ripen;

all this the local officials knew  
but would not report, their only anxiety  
to preserve their names by gathering  
wheat taxes.

So came this peasant selling his  
mulberry trees and land to pay taxes;  
no way of knowing where the next year's food  
and clothing would come from; for even now  
clothes are stripped from his back, food torn  
from his mouth, for taxes.

Officials like the fiercest wolves  
tearing at the flesh of the people with their  
claws to take their food.

Who would know that one had reported  
this to the throne and that the emperor had seen  
the pity of it? And had sent a command down  
on white hemp paper with orders that in this district  
taxes would be remitted.

So yesterday the scribe came to the door  
with the command in his hand telling the people;  
but since of ten families nine have paid already  
this consideration is wasted.



## THE OLD CHARCOAL SELLER

*Pai Chu-i*

The old seller of charcoal  
cutting and burning his wares  
up in the South Mountains; a face  
coloured by the smoke and fire  
of his trade, the hair on the temples  
grey, the fingers blackened;  
and with the profit gained  
so little can be done—bare sustenance  
in food and clothing, his coat a pitiful  
thin one without padding against the winter;  
yet he must hope for winter so that  
the price of fuel will rise.

One foot of snow outside the city  
and still the old cart lurches  
over the ruts, bringing in fuel in the early morning  
with worn-out oxen, the old man hungry  
and the day already well on, when  
they come near the south gate of the market,  
stopping in the mud there, waiting  
with wonder at the two horsemen who ride over  
waving a written order and shouting.

These turn the peasant and his cart  
taking them to the north,  
yelling at the oxen to move along.  
The whole cartload of charcoal —  
over a thousand catties — the palace officials  
grab and the peasant must accept dumbly  
the bit of red silk and strip of  
cloth tied on the necks of the oxen —

a contemptuous trifle  
in lieu of payment.

## THE SMILES OF LI YI-FU\*

*Pai Chu-i*

One can measure the height of heaven  
and the breadth of the earth; but  
as for the bad intentions of some,  
these are not easily guarded against;

judging from his outward appearance  
he may seem honest and sincere, but  
who can guess that his honeyed words  
are false? Leading you to death  
or separating you from your love; or again  
causing bitter family quarrels, so that  
members attack each other like wolves;

in the sea there are fish  
and in the heavens are birds;  
yet the fish from the depths  
may be hooked on a line; the

---

\* Li Yi-fu was a bad official in the imperial court of that day.

This poem contains references to various episodes of slanderous talk well known at the time. For instance, there is a line "covering up the nose or not," referring to an imperial concubine who was told by a jealous fellow that the emperor did not like her nose so that she should cover it up, when in his presence, with her hand. The emperor, seeing her do this, then asked the trouble-maker the reason and was told it was because she objected to his body-smell. This led to serious consequences for the poor girl in question and favour for her rival.

This and other examples are given in the original poem of "Deceitful words that (may) lead to death."

birds on high brought down by  
an arrow; but the human heart,  
though so near, seems unfathomable;

how can one know what goes on  
in the heart of a Li Yi-fu? In front  
a smiling face, behind, the dagger that kills;

the forces of nature can be  
understood; but how to evaluate  
smiles that cover so completely  
both anger and hate?

## TOO BRILLIANT

*Pai Chu-i*

From distant Annam there came a gift —  
a scarlet parrot with coloured plumage  
like peach blossom; so clever that  
it could speak like men;

so, as with clever men  
they put it in a cage  
where it sits wondering  
when it shall taste of life again.

## THE SILK WEAVERS

*Fan Cheng-ta\**

The little wife sits  
for nights in succession at her loom;  
the big pests collecting  
the silk tax\*\* fly in with  
their demands; good for the women  
that this year the mulberry  
leaves are thick and silkworms  
many on every farm; so at least  
there will be silk waste to spin  
for poorer cloth to make  
summer clothing.

## THE LANDLESS PEASANT

*Fan Cheng-ta*

With no plow or hoe, he toiled  
gathering water chestnuts, his  
hands bleeding with the prickles  
his withered body as thin as a ghost;  
with no money to buy land  
he farmed this water, yet still  
finding that on this marsh taxes  
must be paid.

---

\* Fan Cheng-ta (1125-1193 A.D.) was a poet of the Southern Sung dynasty who wrote well about country scenes and the peasants' life. His poems about the countryside are well known.

\*\* In the Sung dynasty the policy of buying off enemies who threatened invasion from the north was implemented by the levy of heavy silk taxes on the people.

## THE BRIBE

*Fan Cheng-ta*

Taxes remitted by imperial edict  
were still demanded by district  
officials; hurriedly there came  
to our village a black-robed official,  
saying deprecatingly that his chief  
— that blockhead — still wanted  
payment, then for himself asking  
money for wine.

## BEFORE THE UPRISING

*Li Yen*

This year as last the great drought  
continues; so the harvest has failed and  
the price of grain soars  
to the sky; everywhere  
may be seen those who will not  
survive; with roots and leaves  
all eaten; children and small babies  
wail with hunger; dust blows  
into the cooking pans and from no chimney  
rises smoke; only once  
in a few days do the people get thin  
gruel to eat; while

rapacious officials as fierce as tigers keep  
demanding and the rich landlord pursues

debt payment like the fiercest wolf; pitifully  
the people slide into a famine death; some  
still breathing but as good as dead; skeletons  
of those who breathe no more lie everywhere;  
the most difficult wall to break through  
is the wall of famine; how

can the people help but weep, their tears  
turning to blood as they fall;  
so do I appeal to you, the gentry,  
with your united effort come to  
relieve the famine; so moving  
Heaven and Earth by your goodwill  
to preserve the lives of our  
fellow men.

## PROTEST

*Huang Tsun-yao*

A simple countryman, I sorrow for soldiers  
exhausted by incessant war; now, all over  
our land is civil commotion, costing so  
many lives; north of the Yangtse, the people  
die of hunger; only yesterday here, there  
came enemies of the people, plundering; but  
our officials were bribed with a share  
of the loot, making scapegoats of the innocent,  
executing them, hanging their heads from  
the trees; at dawn, letting the enemy escape  
unmolested;

then do I sorrow for this year's harvest failure, due to drought and locusts; the poor farmers put all they had into their farming, now all is lost; and the added burden of new tax exactions from the government, causing the farmers to come together, going to the yamen to protest; but there, officials waved their hands forbidding speech; on the roads returning the people met tax collectors, sitting haughtily on their horses, in splendid robes demanding money again;

and lastly do I sorrow in that the court holds no able men; simple cliques of office holders, busy with their petty intrigues; when summoned to audience, nine out of ten officials dare not speak out, crawling and fawning, so as to hold their posts secure;

so now, shall I at least speak up, say what I think so may none accuse me of being part of the evil.

## FRIENDS SUFFERING IN JAIL

*Kuo Mo-jo\**

Friends in misery, crowded together  
in prison — for indeed are sub-rented  
rooms in Shanghai prisons, where never  
a single green tree may be seen, nor  
the song of a single bird be heard; just  
walls, and more walls, closing off  
the winds of heaven, leaving to us  
a little sky, seen  
as from the bottom of a well,  
to mock at us;

friends in their sadness and in  
their confinement; shut in until  
the restrictions of these places seem  
the limits of the horizon; are not we  
all becoming people  
with a jail mentality?  
For we live as though in a dense  
fog, as though being poisoned continually  
in the court of the money-god  
his throne, heavy with gold,  
stands over our heads  
and we dumb, not daring to move;

ah, ah!  
so are we dumb and not daring to move!  
Let us be up and go to the front

---

\* Kuo Mo-jo is a poet, historian, political figure and fighter in the peace movement. He is Vice-Premier of the Government Administration Council of the Central People's Government and President of Academia Sinica. His historical play, *Chu Yuan*, was produced in 1953 in China and the Soviet Union.



with our soldiers! Stand with  
our people!  
friends!  
to be sick of suffering is of small use  
and many words  
are useless also.

## THE SOUND OF BATTLE

*Kuo Mo-jo*

With the rising swell  
of the sound of battle  
the pulses of all quicken;  
then comes a lull and all  
are left downcast;  
sound of battle rising  
and falling, determining the fate  
of our people;  
are we in the end to exist  
as slaves or shall we be  
masters in our own house?

Stand up! Without one  
fraction of a second's  
hesitation! Resist!  
Life is no life if bought  
with abject submission;

peace  
has always been the sure aim  
of our people; but now we see  
peace can only be born

out of the great tumult  
of our resistance.

## I REMEMBER

*Emi Siao\**

I remember when I was a boy at home  
we went together to climb the city wall  
and seeing below us a river of beautiful  
water stretching out to the horizon and  
in the distance just one sail floating  
through the countryside, my father  
standing there and pointing said,  
“A man’s life is like water flowing on  
its course; you see on the banks the poplars  
and willows grown so big; these trees  
have I planted and cared for with my own  
hands; next year the spring colours will be even  
more beautiful; and so may our songs  
go higher, ascending;” and the sound  
of the voice that taught me  
lingers; the words so fresh in my memory  
it is as though the old man  
still lived and stood there;

so beautiful a country have we inherited,  
how may we leave it to suffer under  
the iron heel of the enemy?

---

\*Emi Siao is a member of the National Committee of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. He has written a volume of poetry called *The Path of Peace*.

## IF WE DO NOT GO TO FIGHT\*

*Tien Chien\*\**

If we do not go to fight  
the enemy will use his bayonets  
to kill us; and then afterwards  
he will point to our bones and say  
these are the bones of  
slaves.

## BEGGARS\*\*\*

*Ai Ching\*\*\*\**

In the north  
beggars stand listlessly on both banks  
of the Yellow River on  
both sides of the railway;

---

\* This poem was written in 1938.

\*\* Tien Chien has written many poems since the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression. His volumes of poetry include *To the Fighters*, *Wartime Poems* and *Shorter Poems of Tien Chien*.

\*\*\* This was written in the spring of 1939, while the poet was travelling on the Lunghai Railway. During the years of anti-Japanese resistance and after, right up to the time of liberation, there were, in the Kuomintang-controlled areas, millions of starving. It is like a bad dream to remember them in this day when all people are fed, clothed and wanted. Then they were a terrible indictment of Kuomintang rule.

\*\*\*\* Ai Ching is a member of the National Committee of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. His works include *Towards the Sun*, *The North*, *Cries of Joy*.

in the north  
the cries of the distressed  
rend my heart; ask them,  
and they will say  
they have come from  
famine areas, from battle  
fronts;

hunger is a terrible thing,  
hardening the hearts of the old,  
filling young people with hate;

in the north  
the hungry, with obstinate eyes,  
stare when you eat;  
watching the way you pick  
your teeth, the movements of your  
fingers

in the north  
refugees  
with hands stuck out  
forever, hands  
black as crows', beseech  
anyone, everyone,  
for a copper or two,  
even asking  
the penniless soldiers  
who pass by them.

## THE STREET\*

*Ai Ching*

Once I lived in a street with those  
who had been driven from their homes  
by the fire of war; women pregnant,  
men sick; old men coughing, old women  
carrying babies;

people leading lives  
of hurry and chaos; with so many carts  
bringing in those from other places;  
out on the streets, refugees crowded;  
wounded soldiers, wandering students,  
different dialects, on different tongues;

the street changed, now jammed  
with people; on both curbs  
the stalls of street vendors;  
beancurd sellers now keep  
restaurants; shops have become  
inns; the house across the street  
a hospital;

then one day came a flight  
of black aeroplanes covering  
the city and explosions rent  
it in concentrated fury; poisonous  
fumes and flame from the bombing  
enclosed the street; that day half  
the city was reduced to ashes;

---

\*Written in 1939 in Kweilin, capital of Kwangsi, which was then heavily bombed by the Japanese. It was finally almost completely destroyed in 1944.

see  
houses split in two,  
roofs torn off,  
walls in jagged fragments,  
wells full of fallen brick,  
the bigger timbers  
burnt to charcoal;

in disgust the people scattered,  
who knows where they vanished to?  
One who had lived in my courtyard  
I saw, a little girl, coming over  
from another street, happily  
waving to me; hair cut short,  
wearing puttees and in army  
uniform.

Kweilin, 1939

## STRETCHER BEARERS\*

*Ai Ching*

Please move on and let us pass,  
please walk on the sidewalks and  
let us get the wounded out; please  
do not crowd; please stand clear;  
please do not shout; please show your sorrow  
with silence and let us get them  
away;

---

\* Written in 1940, in Chungking which was then heavily bombed  
by the Japanese.

this is a woman, you see,  
her head has been cut by  
a bomb fragment; let her  
close her eyes; and sleep  
well; maybe she will get  
through this and wake again;  
let us carry her to her home,  
let her family, in the midst  
of their wailing, understand  
who has done this;

now here is an ambulance  
section head; on his uniform  
of grey shines his badge,  
face covered with dust and that  
arm which had loved to work  
torn off with a piece of bomb;

please clear the way,  
think of this man; he  
wanted to do more for  
you all and so was wounded;  
please do not push, here  
there are many more; this was  
the hospital for wounded  
soldiers; they wanted to get  
well and return to the front;  
now the hateful enemy has destroyed the hospital  
and given them fresh wounds;

please move along  
and let us carry them off;  
please stand by the edge  
and let us put them  
on stretchers; please all  
remember who has caused this  
bloodshed. . . .

## WINTER IN SHANGHAI

*Ma Fan-to\**

One could knock on numberless doors  
finding each one closed so tightly  
and behind each door would be people  
upon whom one had no claim;

one could glance over numberless rice bowls\*\*  
seeing each bowl clutched so firmly,  
each single bowl with so many dependents  
guarded so carefully from being snatched away;

Shanghai the vortex drawing in people from all sides,  
bits of timber that were floating in the sea  
with the bitterness of winter and the cold north winds —  
how many hundreds frozen to death today?

One could ask numberless people  
who in this China has happiness and freedom?  
And the reply would be dead silence  
broken only by the sound of weeping.

---

\* Ma Fan-to is the pen-name of Yuan Shui-pai. Before the liberation he published many popular political satires. He is now the literary editor of the *People's Daily*. His volumes of poems include *The People*, *Winter*, and *The Songs of Ma Fan-to*.

\*\* "Rice bowl" can also mean a job.



## NURSERY RHYME

### *Ma Fan-to*

The little darling wants a slice of cake,  
the little darling a peach would take;  
do stop that row,  
not for you just now,  
little darling, little darling,  
don't stamp your feet,  
there are so many little darlings  
looking for grass to eat.

## CLEANING THE JAWS OF A DOG\*

### *Anonymous*

Then they started to speak out  
all the old bitterness, one by  
one; and the first to have his say  
was Hsieh Min-yi;

and when we asked him  
what he had to tell he wept  
bitterly and for a time was unable  
to say a word; then he told us:

his family lived in Honan,  
Fangcheng County; and  
there was the bad year

---

\* In the old society the attitude towards the poor was such that happenings as terrible as that described above were not uncommon.

when grandfather died and  
the family had no coffin  
or any place to bury him;  
no way out, so secretly  
they buried him on the land  
of the landlord;

but the landlord came to know  
and, flying into a rage, yelled:  
“Who dares bury poor men’s flesh  
on my ground?” And then, “I  
will not have the stench of  
the poverty-stricken around  
my farm! Dig it up and take it  
away!”

So had the corpse to be  
thrown on to that bit of ground  
where rubbish was dumped and  
dogs scavenged.

The landlord had a dog  
which was always biting people,  
a hateful cur;  
and when the corpse had been dumped  
out on that horrible place  
our family  
saw this landlord’s cur tearing  
at it;  
a bad thing to think of, even now;

but even fiercer than his hound  
was the landlord; he came by  
cursing:

“Stinking rotten flesh,  
stinking filth, making  
my dog’s mouth reek;  
quickly, clean his jaws  
for me!

Huh!  
What kind of a thing  
was this?”  
His own uncle, oppressed  
and with no way out,  
nose and eyes running  
in helpless anger, had  
to go  
and clean out the jaws  
of the landlord’s  
dog.

## REVENGE

*Anonymous*

Kids of those with money  
go to school; the children  
of the poor look after pigs  
and sheep; when the pigs  
smashed the yard fence, the  
landlord beat me until  
I spat up two mouthfuls  
of blood; and then never  
any but cold food to eat,  
cold *kang*\* to sleep on, with

---

\* The bed made of mudbrick used in farmers’ houses in North China. Heated by a small fire underneath in the cold winters.



Tenants thrown out from the land

Woodcut by Yang Ko-yang

a livelihood scarce as good  
as that of the pigs and sheep.

One family of us —  
from bitterness to bitterness!  
How I remember elder brother  
sitting on the *kang* naked  
head down, gripping his neck  
with both hands, in desperation;  
and mother with her short skirt  
woven from waste cotton yarn;

then when father was sick from overwork  
the landlord came, ordering us  
out of the cottage, taking away  
the cooking pan, smashing the  
pottery bowls; then how father  
at last got well and had to go  
and work for him again;

then came bandits and took away  
the landlord's ox; the blame  
being put on our family, all we had including our houses  
seized to pay for the ox; bit by bit  
forging in us the conviction  
that, without revenge, never  
would one's heart be comforted.

## BLOOD\*

*Li Tuan-cheng*

The sun has started to set  
and with a heart full of frustration  
he stares down at the earth, knowing  
that today the ploughing still will not  
be completed; drops of sweat  
as big as peas fall from his head  
on to his body;

the old man, with arms withered  
and stiff, has not the strength  
to hold the plough over the bumps;  
yet when it stops he automatically  
shouts as to an ox, "Heh — get up!"  
then, remembering it is his son pulling,\*\*  
changes his tone, saying tiredly,  
"Come along, lad, let's get it done,"  
and his son turns and looks at him,  
then with all his strength tries  
to lurch forward, his thin  
tubercular body dragging the heavy plough,  
all going black in front  
of his eyes, his feet slipping  
on the damp earth;

till at last he stumbles,  
starts to spit blood and  
sinks to the ground; in the

---

\* Written in June 1946.

\*\* It was a common sight in many a poor district to see farmers whose homes had been ruined by famine and who had no draught animals left, pulling their own ploughs. The translator has seen many sights like this in the famine districts in the old Kuomintang areas.

twilight the share of the  
plough, now fallen on its side,  
gleams dully; the whole heaven  
has changed to red, a red glow  
on the two figures that seem  
entwined together.

## THE LAST BIT OF BRAN

*Li Tuan-cheng*

This was the last bit of bran  
in the house; we used it for the  
making of the midday meal, which  
we ate in the evening;

the biggest child  
lifted up his bowl  
only eating the bits  
of wild herbs added  
as vegetables; not daring  
to look at father; the  
little one frowned and  
looked from the nasty stuff  
back to mother, inquiringly,  
then, weeping, pushed the bowl  
away; then mother lifted  
her head, looking at father's  
set face, set as iron, yet  
so full of anger;

then she turned her face away  
and comforted her child;

“child, eat it up,” she  
said, knowing that for tomorrow  
there was no bran, even; then  
she lifted her little boy,  
kissing him on the lips, her tears  
wetting his face;

bran and fine rice  
grow on one head of grain; and men  
divide it up, giving the rice  
to the rich and the bran to the poor;

yet this bit of bran  
was so precious, has  
lengthened our lives a little;  
but tomorrow?  
Ai-ya, tomorrow  
what hope is there?

## THE HIRED MAN

*Chant from Nanchang, Kiangsi*

Fifteenth of the first month  
and time to pay New Year  
respects and look for work;  
so grasping an umbrella,  
walk in front of the landlord's gate,  
then entering, give the proper bows  
and am handed a bowl of hot water  
and a pinch of tobacco for my pipe.



In the middle of the floor are set  
a square table and chairs where  
the landlord sits; here we take  
the sip of ceremonial wine that  
makes me his servant, and we talk  
of wages;

he says three and a half,  
I stick out for four strings  
of cash, for the whole year;  
and friends urge the landlord  
to meet my request; I am invited  
to eat a bit of meat, and then told:

“Now you must work harder  
for us; today the wages  
have been decided, too high this year!  
responsibility for the crops  
is now on you; if the harvest  
does not come up to usual  
then I'll come to you  
about it.”

Out on the fields in the second month  
I carry the plough each day; then from  
east to west, from daylight to dark  
I work the land.

Third month comes on, and so do I toil  
wearing my raincoat of bark fibre, bare  
feet swollen; left hand grasping  
the plough handle, right hand the whip  
to urge the ox onward; tired to death;  
but this, of course, is no concern  
of the landlord's; only if the ox  
came to any harm would wages  
be docked.

In the fourth month  
the barley is already ripe;  
so do I carry the grain  
to the flour mill, the good flour  
going to the master for food,  
bran and the leavings for hired workers,  
so that my throat is sore, my bowels run

In the fifth month is the summer  
festival; and the landlord's family  
all go to watch the dragon boats'  
display; but I must dig weeds  
the whole day, digging all the way  
to the roadside, and then my holiday —  
one short rest by the road and  
a puff at my pipe.

The sixth month comes in tiger heat,  
water carriers all busy while I stand  
on the water wheels treading them all day  
with my feet; thinking of my old  
father and mother.

In the seventh month  
the autumn wind blows cool;  
out on the threshing floor  
we flail the grain; the tops  
going to the master; the  
seconds to be kept for paying  
wages.

Eighth month and the time  
to wade in ponds and take in fish;  
a big one is caught, to be eaten  
by the landlord family; to me there comes  
half of one head, and from it a bone  
gets stuck in my throat.

Ninth month, and the time for  
the hired worker to make wine,  
and put it in a jar; others make  
wine for the whole family, but  
the hired worker makes it only  
for the landlord.

In the tenth month, I clean  
out all the stables, and half  
way through the work, I smell  
wine and food of the master's  
feast tables, making my mouth  
water.

The eleventh month  
winter coming on  
with bitter winds and driving rain  
freezing me stiff; but a frozen  
worker, a dead worker, of what consequence  
would that be to our boss? Only for  
my parents would it be  
like tearing out a piece  
from their hearts.

The last month of the year  
and the snow drives about me;  
the landlord agrees that I may go,  
gives me the wages; so tomorrow  
I shall start back, thinking  
of the bitterness of a hired man's  
life; for one year, four strings of cash\*  
only; one string deducted for  
a bit of a quilt; not much more  
than one's body to take home  
and pass the New Year with.

---

\* About nine strings of cash went to one silver dollar.

## HARVEST SONG

*Kao Chia-so*

In July, the weather is so hot  
it is like being in a furnace,  
even the mud becomes like hot soup  
and rice stalks are withered  
with the heat;

working out on the land  
is like being with bread  
in the steamer; like being  
with cakes in the oven; feet  
get so hot that they are swollen  
with blisters; from our  
bodies there pours an everlasting  
stream of sweat;

so all our energy goes  
into the harvesting of rice,  
bending over so much that  
backs will not easily straighten,  
from earliest dawn until after dusk,  
eyes bloodshot with weariness;

and watching us from  
the edge of the crop land  
sits the landlord; the more tired  
we get the more he laughs;  
we weep with fatigue,  
weep inwardly; and the  
harvested grain we carry  
into the landlord's home.

## THE YOKE OF THE LANDLORD

*Kao Chia-so*

Bringing up a girl, never let  
her be taken  
by the landlord, as a child  
wife; bringing up a boy, don't make him  
herd stock for the same  
landlord;

in the off season one  
must look after the landlord's  
animals, cut grass for fodder;  
in the busy months, ever ploughing  
and digging for him, with  
one year's wages not enough  
to buy three measures of rice; and  
through the whole year, not  
one bit of time to rest;

no hope to wear shoes  
through the summer months,  
nor any to wear padded clothing  
through the winter; no hope  
that if the animals ate  
some of the standing crop  
one would not be called upon  
to make amends; no hope  
that if you were sick there would  
be medicine or doctor;

and then in that house  
of the landlord, must you say  
that you have eaten enough, though

still hungry; that you are not  
tired, even though weary to death;

it will not matter if your stomach  
is completely flat; only important  
that the ox get fatter and fatter,  
wider across the rump;

and so goes a man's life;  
as a child, a cowherd,  
getting bigger, then  
becoming a hired man;  
are such things really due  
to fate, and are the children  
of the poor doomed to be slaves  
forever?

## FOXES AND WOLVES\*

*Ho Chi-fang\*\**

Yes,  
still there are wolves,  
and wolves are still  
as fierce as ever,  
wolves that can change

---

\* From a long poem called "Dream of a New China" written in Chungking in 1946. The "foxes" are people of the "Marshall Plan" kind, wolves "that can change into cunning foxes" pretending to "aid" China while in reality moving Kuomintang soldiers into liberated areas and so on.

\*\* Ho Chi-fang is a poet and literary critic. He is a member of the National Committee of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and director of the Research Institute in Peking University. His chief collection of poetry is *Songs of Night and Day*.

into cunning foxes; so  
must our people ever  
be watchful.

## MOTHER AND SON

*Ni Hai-shu*

The mother thinking always  
of her son who joined the  
New Fourth Army;

then came the traitor attack  
on this army's rear; and the son  
died in the misery of a prison camp  
at Shangjao;\* and all knew of this  
dark thing, save the mother.

In the occupied areas  
each month became more difficult  
to live through;  
even  
after victory over the Japanese  
oppression remained, until there came  
the flag of revolution, bright red  
with the blood of fighters; and amongst  
those longing for the dawn  
remained the mother  
still thinking of her son.

---

\* During the united front between the Kuomintang and the Communist New Fourth and Eighth Route Armies against the Japanese, the Kuomintang treacherously attacked the New Fourth Army taking the fighters to the infamous Shangjao concentration camp where many were done to death.

A head of white hair,  
eyes full of tears; what  
can be compared with the depth  
of feeling a mother has for  
her son? Only when reaction  
has been cleaned out, will  
such tears end! For you, that mother,  
a million sons and daughters now  
rise in salute.

## KUOMINTANG POWER

*Ni Hai-shu*

If you speak out  
I can shout you down;

if you write it out  
I can have you beaten;

if you say you have the right  
I have arms;

you say you love  
and work for the people;  
but I  
can destroy you and all  
you have.



## RICE

*Ni Hai-shu*

At Changsha there was a farmer; they said  
that he had killed a man; therefore would he be  
executed.

Asked  
why did he kill, they said,  
"It was about a *tou*\* of rice."

In defence  
would he say nothing; neither did he  
weep or murmur; calmly and simply he said,  
"Open my belly, then see if it contains  
rice or straw."

Now is the government  
imposing extra grain tax;  
a small county like this must provide  
two hundred thousand piculs.

All edible bark  
has been eaten by  
the people; now  
they are eating  
grass roots; when  
these have all gone  
they are forced to break  
all government laws.

---

\* *Tou* is a measure.

## WHEAT FOR YEN HSI-SHAN\*

*Liu Chia*

The grain collectors  
for General Yen Hsi-shan  
come as is their wont to  
the village; first arresting  
the village head, telling him  
of the levy and to have  
it all collected within  
three days, failing which  
his own head would make up  
the shortage;

then the officer  
getting on his horse  
to go; in his wake  
a cow and a couple of sheep  
being driven; his personal  
levy;

the people stand behind  
barred front doors, eyes  
running with tears; and when  
the village head bangs the gong  
for meeting, their hearts grow  
cold; then returning  
from the meeting and looking  
into grain bins to see  
what they have left, taking  
the grain just put into the cooking pots

---

\* Yen Hsi-shan, warlord-general-governor of Shansi Province, was also the last deputy-premier of Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary government.

even, to try to make up  
the quota; going out to sell  
clothing, bedding, anything to buy  
grain to fill the levy;

the Japanese  
and the soldiers of Yen  
are just the same; the  
grain collectors come again,  
their horses chewing  
the heads of standing grain,  
the men sitting on the biggest  
flat house tops, drunk;

now by the gate  
of the village office  
crowd the ragged peasants;  
eyes watching grain  
going over the scales,  
hearts dropping like stones;

those who climb  
over walls to escape  
are hauled back;  
so many try to run away;  
those who are sick  
on their *kang* are  
dragged along also;

the whips of the collectors  
are lifted ever higher and  
higher; the ropes that bind  
the farmers drawn ever tighter  
and tighter; boxes, bedding,  
clothing, cooking pans, all  
manner of property being hauled  
out through people's gates;

then suddenly there runs  
towards the crowd a woman  
carrying a grain sack, her  
hair wild and dishevelled;  
pushing the people aside,  
throwing the grain sack down  
in front of the village head,  
shouting,

“This is my grain  
to give Yen’s army;  
if  
it is not enough  
take me to the army  
to make it up.”

And the village head,  
when he sees the bag, is puzzled,  
but advancing  
opens it with a rip  
and all the people  
step back a pace;  
for  
tumbling out on the  
dusty ground are the heads  
of two children, covered  
with blood, each with its  
hair plaited, her own  
children’s heads, one a three-  
year-old they called “Hsiao Yin.”

“Murder, murder!”  
the people cry  
and all want to  
get away; the woman  
turns her body, lifts  
her head and says,

"With my own hand  
I killed them to give  
the Governor for grain."

And the collectors standing there  
laugh a little; and coldly  
look at the village head, saying  
"Come along with the quota — quicker!"

And the people stand huddled together  
and the bitter north wind beats against them  
coldly.

## GRAIN FOR GUERRILLAS\*

*Tien Chien*

"Just one more  
ear of grain;  
just one more to  
equal one more bullet  
to kill the enemy."

Do you understand?  
This is what we want  
to hear.

So we must at once  
rise up in our strength  
and make the land

---

\* In the Eighth Route Army areas the first and most important thing was to feed the fighters so that they could continue the struggle.

produce grain and more  
grain;

for it is with grain  
that we shall maintain  
our long struggle;  
a little more of it,  
then still a little more;

more grain  
and a bigger victory.

### KILLING THIEVES\*

*Ke Chung-ping\*\**

Stealing our grain  
burning down our homes,  
eating up our chickens,  
oxen, sheep; seizing  
our womenfolk and dragging away  
our sons; Chiang  
and Hu,\*\* the two thieves,  
should you both not  
be killed, then we  
have no face to remain  
on earth.

---

\* Lines engraved on a stone face by Chen Mi Chia Valley, near Suiteh, Shensi Province, at the time of entry of the Kuomintang armies, 1947.

\*\* Ke Chung-ping is vice-chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers. He is the author of *From Yen-an to Peking*.

\*\*\* "Chiang and Hu": Chiang Kai-shek and his follower, Hu Tsung-nan.



The grain tax is extorted

Woodcut by Li Hua

PART TWO



## PEOPLE'S HOPE\*

*Huang Yu-teh*

Thinking of it as something  
so distant, so deep,  
and now, suddenly, reality;  
the hope of thousands of  
years, a people's government,  
with Chairman Mao leading all  
to change;  
this

is surely happiness for us;  
lanterns of red  
lanterns of green,  
lanterns throwing colour  
as they swing; great days  
are these;

like a forest of trees  
stand the flags of red,  
these are days of jubilee.

---

\* Written on the occasion of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

## NEW DAY\*

*Ho Chi-fang*

He has made it possible  
for dreams to come true—  
the dreams of the people;

with revolutionary progress  
by steady measures, he has made  
the hard roads smooth; all that  
we have learnt over the past  
five thousand years, and the heroic  
struggles of the last century, are  
embodied in him; a great people  
surely shall produce a great leader;  
through every critical test, and over  
every severe difficulty, his road  
has always been the road to victory;

he teaches us not to be proud,  
nor to be impatient; that the dream  
of the last century is now for us  
to realize; that just as in fighting  
fascism, we used all our strength, so  
now in the construction of our country  
we face a task no less difficult,  
in the battle for peace;

from the young to the old  
from the city to the country,  
from the vanguards to those  
not yet fully awakened,

---

\* Extract from a much longer poem. These lines refer to Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

rise up, forge a new base  
for a resurgent China; sweep  
away all useless rubbish; don't  
allow any to break down  
our determination; nor permit  
any obstacle to remain in  
our path; then, in all corners  
of our land shall grow  
life-giving grain;

machines shall turn incessantly  
in our factories; culture will grow  
on everyone like an angel's wings,  
soft, warm, and able to soar high;  
then we shall go further into  
the golden world where even  
greater happiness awaits us.

## WIDENING HORIZONS

*Ho Chi-fang*

The quest for life  
now opens out in front of all  
like a vast expanse of ocean  
for now, wherever people work,  
there is opportunity, rich  
treasure to be found; so much  
that can be done.

Join a song group,  
take part in drama,  
construct railways,  
become an airman;

work in a research  
laboratory; write  
poetry; play in Alpine  
snows; steer a ship  
through great waves;

explore the arctic  
or the tropics, living  
in an explorer's tent.

Through all your common daily living  
open your eyes for ordinary things  
kindle the fire in others with your  
own fire, discover heart with heart;  
life is so large, so wide and so fragrant,  
wherever life is, there lies joy  
and treasure.

## PROPHECY\*

*Tien Chien*

No need for me to have  
my fortune told, or  
anything of that kind;  
yet now I believe that my fate  
is surely good;

for to be born in this day  
is a great thing indeed,  
with the responsibility

---

\* Written on the day when Peking was liberated.



There come our troops

Woodcut by Chang Yang-shih

for a bright new world now  
on our shoulders;

knowing that only  
when the red flag waves  
can the new day be  
surely born;

as for the old society,  
I will pull it down; the  
new day I shall welcome;  
into my songs I shall  
put all my heart for  
the new world to hear;

now I am a new man,  
writing new poetry  
to the accompaniment  
of revolutionary cymbals,  
I enter  
my great new family.

## THE COMMUNIST PARTY BRINGS CHANGE

*Anonymous*

As a kid, too poor  
to go to school;  
in all weathers  
out herding the animals,  
animals that ate until  
they were stuffed, while I  
starved;

then came the Communist Party  
and all changed; so  
to protect land and home  
I joined the army;

in that other day  
the simplest thing  
one could not write  
down; now we study  
both theory and  
practice.

## GROUP SONG\*

### *Ke Chung-ping*

You may ask, whence did we come?  
and we answer  
we came from the people; and then  
will you say  
where are you going now?  
and we answer again  
we are going into the midst of the people  
to learn from  
their true experience for, you see, they  
have already lived so many thousands  
of years;

we have come to mobilize  
the people for production  
and to resist the enemy;

---

\* Written in the earlier part of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, in the Eighth Route Army districts.

the strength of the people is limitless  
in its depth,  
and as for ourselves we but drink the milk  
of the people;

and now we have come to find  
how we may help; to open up areas,  
to bring in new ways;

in our democratic regions  
on these borders we can  
move with freedom;  
here we shall nourish the flower  
of victory, making it blossom  
all over these barren hills.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Liu Su-ying\**

Our labour union is like a bridge and we  
must make strong its foundation;

so in the matter of establishing  
a machine shop committee, many agree  
this is the correct step; so we may  
bring union matters down to the workers;  
the ideas of workers back to the union;  
strengthening the factory administration;  
speeding production together.

---

\* Liu Su-ying is a worker of the No. 6 State Cotton Mill in Shanghai.



To make sure this foundation  
is really strong, our committee members  
must be carefully chosen; he who understands  
policy shall be our first choice;  
then we shall look for that one  
who can take responsibility, carry out  
the toughest work; these shall we choose  
so shall we  
gain our objective.

## THE DIFFERENCE

*Chou Ching\**

In the old days  
the factory bosses  
were as haughty as the king of hell,

stalking into workrooms  
raging at mistakes  
abusing the workers;

and as for the workers, why  
they did as little as they could,  
talking together on how  
to fool the management; wasting time  
gazing out of windows to see  
when the boss was coming,  
then when someone saw him on  
the way, secret signals were given  
and all became alarmed, pretending

---

\* Chou Ching is a worker in the No. 12 State Cotton Mill, Shanghai.

to look for tools, hiding cigarettes,  
everything in a mess; machines could make  
a noise like thunder but no worker  
would care; each day was worse  
than the last.

Then came liberation  
and all was changed;  
now the working class  
became the master, taking  
over everything, responsible  
for all; so how could work  
go on as before?

With any of the staff now  
it is easy to talk; anyone  
who has an idea or wants to express  
an opinion straightway says all  
that he has to say; strength and brains  
work together; when production succeeds  
it is the victory of all; so you, the elder  
and I, just a kid, will help each other  
with one heart, determined  
to throw out all gangs of robbers  
liberate all China.\*

---

\* Written before the liberation of China was completed.

## THE LATHE WORKER

*Liu Yi-ting*

Working with a lathe  
the hand must move surely  
and with speed; eyes  
fixed on the cutter so that  
the cut will be exact;

and from these steady hands  
flows the result—ten,  
then a hundred, a thousand,  
ten thousand.

On the chin of the lathe worker  
grows a thick beard; this worker  
has worked for thirty years, yet  
never so carefully as he works  
today;

now each piece of work  
shall be exact; if it has to be re-done  
production will be lowered.

You may ask, why  
do these no longer wish  
to work slowly on purpose?

The answer is simple—  
now the worker is the master himself;  
what he makes is for the people  
and for himself.

You say, the worker comrades  
love their machines; you are right,  
for they love their means of livelihood  
just as a fighter loves his rifle,  
a farmer loves his land.

You see  
the old lathe is polished so well  
that it glints like lightning;  
it and the worker together  
daily making new records, saying  
"To construct our new China  
must we work  
still harder!"

## THE SHIPBUILDERS

*Kang Ying-fu\**

In the machine shop  
belts from the motors  
glitter as they spin;  
machine tool workers  
concentrate;  
lathes and milling machines  
work day and night  
turning to support the front  
and drive out the enemy.

Bench workers  
with hammers sounding on chisels,

---

\* Kang Ying-fu is a worker in the Kung Mou Shipbuilding Works, Shanghai.

with files turning metal bright,  
fitting the engines that will  
go into the bowels of the ship,  
that will carry goods between  
town and country.

On the dry dock there is the sound  
of motors purring; a dead ship  
is towed in and made into a live  
one again, bearing the people's  
produce.

Amongst the winches and cranes  
a thousand catties of steel rope  
and hook descend, the winch  
keeps on working and up comes  
a five-ton boiler, hoisted into  
the air; something the strongest  
man of history could not do.

The pattern makers and foundrymen  
know that good patterns mean  
good moulds; down the overhead  
rails rub the crucibles, pouring  
out the iron for castings.

Now we come  
to the blacksmith's shop;  
it is the sixth month  
when the heat outside is so great  
people can die of it; yet here  
with the heat from the forges  
it is still hotter; sweat pours from the bodies  
of our comrades, sweat falls  
on to their tools—sweat gladly given  
to clear out Chiang Kai-shek  
now and forever.

## THE COALMINERS

*Chang Yang*

Fighters have rifles and bayonets  
but we have lamps and picks;  
wearing miners' helmets into  
the cage and down the shaft,  
tools in our hands, we go to mine  
the coal;

hai-yao! hai-yao!\*  
coal hard as iron  
meeting our picks of  
roughest steel;  
mainshaft a thousand feet down  
and our headlamps so bright;

not fearing the worst  
difficulties; our workers' hearts  
become like true metal, tested;  
not daunted by the time construction  
takes while our Party  
ever leads;

like a mountain in front of us  
the task of construction; but we  
can move mountains; we shall ease  
it with the sharpness of our picks  
with the toughness of our determination  
to fill the plan;

finding just where the  
best coal lies

---

\* "Hai-yao" is a sound of exclamation.

then mining it right,  
picks going ding, dong, ding,  
sounding to me like chickens  
pecking grain from the floor;  
one fall of coal, two falls,  
like the rushing wind or  
the opening of a bursting  
pomegranate, its seeds falling  
through; wha-la-la,  
down they come;

and dropping too  
is our sweat; and rising,  
ever rising, is our  
production rate; surely  
our names will stand in  
the record of people's heroes.

## SALT WORKERS

*Tsai Hen-san\**

Out on the shores of the Po Hai Bay  
a stiff wind blows up the waves  
so that they dash on the beaches;  
sea birds scream as they float  
over the salt fields, their cries  
mingling with the drumming of our  
engine; the ocean we draw our wealth from  
stretching wide, limitless,  
our fields of drying salt like  
fields of snow;

---

\* Tsai Hen-san is a worker at a salt field near Tientsin.

to strengthen our industrialization  
we workers gladly toil together, each  
competing with the other for the honour  
of making top-grade salt, salt piled  
as high as a mountain.

Long run the channels  
bringing in the brine,  
white gleam the evaporating pans  
lying so close together; on all sides  
is salt; our work on this sea frontier  
of our land, our beginning in using  
the boundless strength  
of our resources.

## A NEW THING IN OUR LAND

*Shih Hsin-min\**

The winds of spring blow;  
thunderstorms crash over us;  
lovers of China get to work  
controlling the Huai River;\*\*  
for one year only have we  
been at Pan Chiao; and now  
the great reservoir is fixed;

---

\* Shih Hsin-min is a worker at the Pan Chiao Reservoir.

\*\* The Huai River conservancy work, one of the greatest river control projects in the world, was launched by the People's Government after the liberation. Its control affects the livelihood of some 53 million people and one-seventh of China's arable land.



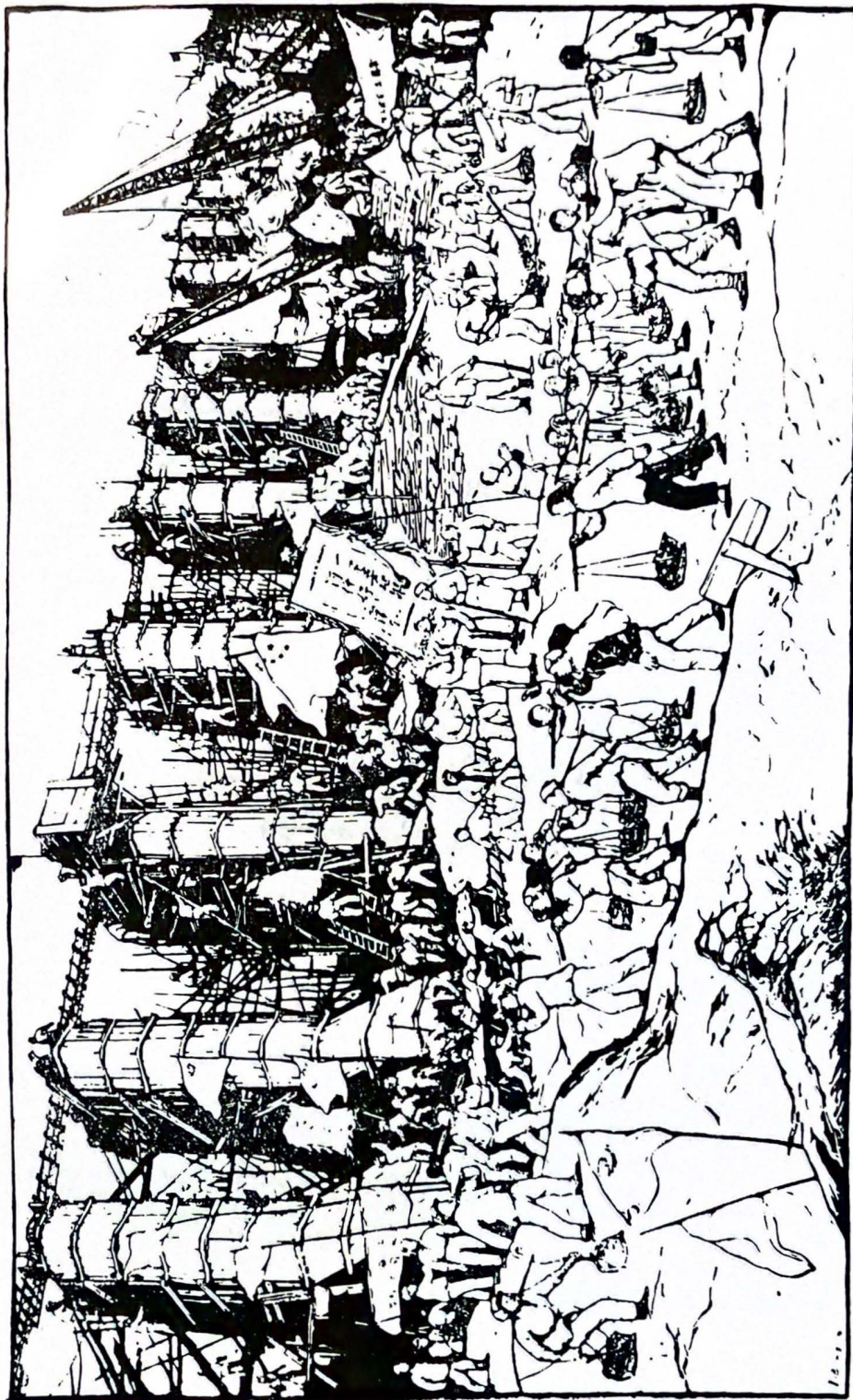
our five-starred flag  
unfurls in the wind; each  
group competing with the next  
for results; workers and  
the peasants who have come to  
work, all in their tens  
of thousands, to do credit to themselves  
in the service of the country  
and our people;

the now-safe river banks  
have let spring flowers come  
to bloom; for now there is no fear  
of flood; one hundred and fifty thousand  
*mou*\* of ground will be irrigated; and  
for tens of millions of *mou* there will be  
no more flood; and with irrigation  
electricity will come; so there will be for all  
plenty of food and clothing, much happiness,  
new production massing; our land turning into  
a great garden, power driving its new machines  
swiftly and victoriously;

so now, with our elder brothers,  
the industrial workers, to work  
creating a new country is really  
something.

---

\* One *mou* is a sixth of an acre.



Building the dam on the Huai River

Woodcut by Yen Han

## THE LITTLE CARRYING POLE

*Wu Chen-pao\**

Oh my little carrying pole!  
Springing up and down in time  
with my feet; each day we work  
together.

There was a time when  
we worked for landlords  
and the skin wore off  
our shoulders so that  
blood was always running;  
making the wife sigh so  
deeply and the old mother  
weep;

but now  
we have been set free,  
now  
we have our land; so  
gladly we take the  
little carrying pole  
and go  
to make the reservoir;

for this is work  
we want to do; our  
own work for ourselves;  
next year we shall finish  
this one dam and after  
we shall not fear  
any flood.

---

\* Wu Chen-pao is a worker on the Huai River conservancy project.

Little carrying pole!  
So bright, so polished  
with use; my companion  
on so many a long tramp;  
everywhere have I carried  
for other men; the landlord  
sat by his fire in the winter,  
I carried the coal for him;  
the landlord ate good rice,  
I carried it to him;

then came the Communist Party;  
food and clothing came to us  
and many another happiness  
and, with our new found freedom, all  
was changed.

Yet still this little carrying pole  
can do so much; coming to  
the Huai River have I carried  
earth, sand and gravel, so much,  
so happily; and when they  
gave me the flag of honour  
I stuck it  
on the little carrying pole.

## POOR AND RICH

### *Village Wall Newspapers\**

“If there are not a thousand  
poor people, how can there be  
one rich man?”\*\*  
where do these words come from?  
surely the landlord himself has said this,  
the hearts of landlords  
are full of cruelty.

## THE LANDLORD'S ACCOUNTS\*\*\*

### *Village Wall Newspapers*

Watching  
the thumbing over of leaves  
in the landlord's account books,  
the hearts of the people are as if  
cut by a knife, while the clack-clack  
of the abacus counting up  
what is still owing brings  
tears down the waiting faces.

---

\* A few selections from the great mass of village wall newspapers when the people, following liberation, had the chance for the first time to publish openly what was in their hearts.

\*\* This sentence is an old proverb.

\*\*\* At the end of the year the landlords would go over each tenant's account. Oppression, robbery and extortion were the rule, rather than the exception.

## ONE WORD

### *Village Wall Newspapers*

One word  
from the landlord would mean  
a plague to the people; one  
grin from his running dogs  
would strike terror  
into our hearts.

## ON MEALS

### *Village Wall Newspapers*

Two meals  
in three days;  
an empty belly  
is not easy to take;  
the cries of hungry children  
bring to the old incessant pain,  
to hell with the landlord!

## THE OLD FEUDALISM

### *Village Wall Newspapers*

All the best land  
the landlord owns;  
in his granary the  
big bins are full;  
small bins running  
over; every kind  
of tool and implement  
he has; standing by  
the door is a great  
buffalo; yet the poor  
have none of these; if they  
want them then they must  
quickly knock down  
the old feudalism!

## THE LAND DIVIDED\*

### *Village Wall Newspapers*

Now the land  
has been divided  
properly; all the  
new boundaries are  
settled; the new deeds

---

\* The peasants' breathless interest in the distribution of land with Land Reform following liberation, had to be seen to be believed and one needs some background knowledge of village life in the old society in order to understand it. It affected all so deeply.

will now be written—  
just what land will be whose  
to till!

## RIGHTFUL OWNERS

*Village Wall Newspapers*

Tools for production  
return to their rightful  
owners—those who use them;  
the land comes back  
to the people who till it;  
the people turn to a new  
way; hope of the ages becomes  
reality.

## NO NEED TO SUBMIT

*Village Wall Newspapers*

We have put out our hands  
and seized back our own  
country; and all its lands  
have returned to its  
people; we ourselves now  
plough, sow and harvest  
our own; gone is the need  
to submit to the anger  
of others.



## NOW HAVE I LAND!

*Hsiao Yu*

Now have I land of my own;  
this is really something!  
The day they divided up the land was August 21;  
how could one forget that happy day?  
yet up on the wall of my house  
I mark it.

My own bit of ground,  
none of that poor stuff  
white with alkali or covered with drifting sand;  
the very best kind of heavy soil,  
so good that I pick up a little of it,  
hold it to my nose and smell it,  
to me, of all fragrance, the sweetest.

I must look after this ground,  
put more of my strength into it  
for it is part of our country's  
resources. Factories open their  
great mouths waiting for it to fill  
their stomachs. For myself, I depend  
on it for food and drink, for summer  
and winter clothing; then also this land must  
provide its bit  
of public grain and public cotton.

Yes, I must take care of this land,  
in its service go to bed late, rise early;  
not caring whether sun shines or rain falls;  
finding good manure for it; to spread over it  
and when June comes round, won't it be beautiful?

Kaoliang as high as the eaves of a house, and  
each leaf like a great knife blade,  
sun ripening the grain; the cotton  
looking like a great quilt lying over the ground;  
maize bursting its sheath, yellow and red whiskers  
dropping from its head;  
and I shall stay in  
the fields all day  
to care for these  
save the grain from locusts,  
cleaning pests from the cotton,  
weeding then  
hoeing around them after rain.

When did my family last have land?  
In the old feudal society it was all in landlords' hands,  
landlords who knew not  
what was kaoliang, what was maize,  
who grabbed our land  
using the whip of livelihood to force us  
to put out all our strength to till it  
for them; sucking up our blood,  
always sucking, sucking harder.  
Now the old feudal system has lost its hold,  
the oppressions of those old days we throw out;  
the proverb, "Each man ploughs his own ground,"  
this is the hymn of heaven, the chant of earth.

Now have I land of my own;  
this is really something!  
The day they divided up the land was August 21;  
how could one forget that happy day?  
yet up on the wall of my house  
I mark it.



A peasant family receives new title-deeds after land reform  
*Color and ink by Chiang Chao-ho*

NOW

*Post-Liberation Chant*

This year  
why are our crops looking so good?  
This year  
why are the heads of our kaoliang  
so heavy a red?

It's not that heaven has looked  
down on us with compassion; it's  
because this year the poor  
have entered into the new life.

No wonder that this year  
the farmers have worked  
so hard; it's not that  
there are too many people  
with too little land,  
the change  
has come

because the land has changed  
masters; if we, the new  
owners, do not love it enough  
to treat it well, then  
who does?

## PEASANT GRATITUDE

### *Post-Liberation Chant*

Wheat, wheat  
grow slowly and well  
change to gold to welcome  
those who come to save us.

Little stream, little stream,  
day and night you flow onward  
and now there comes an end to old troubles,

with the water of the stream  
getting clearer  
and clearer;  
how grateful we are for  
the Communist Party, our saving star!

## ON THE WISH FOR GRAIN STACKED HIGH

### *Chang Ming-chuan*

Dawn approaches and the cocks  
beneath the window start to crow;  
I go on dreaming of grain stacked  
as high as a hill; then, after a while,  
the donkey in the stable brays  
so up I jump, pulling on my clothes  
quickly.



Bumper harvest

*New Year picture by Teng Shu*

My eldest son has just taken a wife  
so has barred the door, sleeping sweetly;  
my second, aged fourteen, sleeps on  
despite my call;

but then, very soon, all in the house  
are up. I fix the plough and hang it on the ox,  
then through the bracing wind  
of early morning, leave the village  
for where the crumbling black earth  
awaits me. There I look over the fields  
seeing many others already working, each  
better than the rest, it seems to me.

From earliest dawn, throughout the day  
and into the evening, when the sun slips  
down to the west, you will see tools  
and implements, glinting like lightning,  
hear the sound of shouting at the farm animals  
all around; from the horizon on one side  
right across to the other, they work,  
the body sweat of each dampening his clothes,  
sweat from faces falling on the moving tools;

working till sundown, working  
with the whole sky full of stars;  
the wife hails me to return for supper  
but I say, "With this bit of moon  
I'll finish the job tonight." She says  
"You seem younger now by thirty years,"  
and I reply, "If we don't do our best now  
when will we do it?"

For today the world is ours! And for  
what is all this putting out  
of strength and sweat?

Just wait until this autumn and  
you'll see a prosperous year, with  
big bins overflowing, small bins  
heaped up high; big jars, cupboards  
all stuffed to capacity; wheat,  
barley, millet, beans, kaoliang, corn,  
cotton and sweet potatoes—all these  
we want  
heaped up  
heaped up like a mountain.

## BUSY IN THE NEW VILLAGE

*Ching Tien*

The wild wind blows away the apricot blossom  
and in the new village all are busy  
making mud brick, stirring up mud plaster  
with the figures of people  
reflected in the pools of water;

“Heng ya! Ai ya!”

chant the earth beaters, lifting their tampers  
and singing; then up go the frames of buildings,  
come directions for straightening—  
“A little further this way, not so far  
that”; the great beams are placed, so  
do new villagers see new light; down  
come the old bark homes, up go the new.

The big yellow ox  
so fat, plodding down the road



hauling manure once, twice, three times;  
one cartload, two cartloads, more and more,  
putting it in heaps along the roadside;  
the second son's whip twanging like a  
banjo string; there goes  
my little girl holding the leading rein  
and around the pond the carts  
lumber on; sounds of talking  
and laughing arise: "Second young brother,  
you and your ox are so slow, everyone  
is anxious about you." Replies he  
"Don't boast, little girl, my cart is bigger  
than yours; it takes more in one load  
than you do in three; all the manure  
will be carried by this cart alone,  
it seems; then later it will be I  
who scatter it all on the fields also!"

Wheat in rows, so clean and green,  
the little donkey that pulls  
in the lead so well, with ears up  
and tugging so quickly; the boy  
looking after the animals while his sister  
leads water out from the irrigation ditches,  
while from all over the fields rise  
sounds of laughter and the boy shouts  
"Elder sister, elder sister, take care,  
the big water is coming down and will  
break through your little dams!" "Young brother,"  
she replies, "you get along and mind  
your animals! The water flows and I'll  
look after it all right."

The water pump makes a noise,  
ding da, ding da, as it hauls  
the water up; and to the music

of this sound I sing  
"Tung fang hung"—  
"The East is Red."

The grandson leads the ox  
and grandfather holds the plough  
firmly; the cotton land they plough  
deeply and carefully, the ploughshare  
turning the soft, damp earth in pattern.

"Kiddie, kiddie!" the old man shouts,  
"get along quickly, ploughing finished  
we must plant the grain; then  
there will be autumn cotton  
as big as a hill, to make you  
new clothes."

"Grand-dad, do not think me young,"  
comes back the fresh young voice,  
"when the cotton comes up, I can weed  
and hoe, always weeding, moulding,  
adding manure; so with the cotton  
coming out and laughing back at the wind  
and us picking it to send to the factory  
to make cloth, we shall all wear  
new clothes. Isn't that good?"

## DIFFERENT TIMES

*Chang Hung-tao*

Threshing the grain, the ears  
seem so big; surely this year  
is different from all others past;  
before, I rented from the landlord  
two *mou*, borrowing grain against the harvest;  
and when we harvested,  
we called the fruit of our labours  
“empty grain”; toiling with the stars  
and under the moon, to pay back  
what we had been forced to borrow,  
and with interest, while our grain  
filled the granaries of landlords  
and our people, with empty stomachs,  
knew famine; seeing our own blood and sweat  
going to make landlords fatter  
and fatter.

But this year it is different!  
The land has returned to the tiller  
and now we work  
our own land;  
in high spirits we have harvested,  
the golden grain we carry into  
our own homes; in our own grain bins  
we store what we have threshed; and  
never again shall we reap “empty grain”;  
and now with this thought in our minds—  
“Eating melons, forget not the farmer who  
planted them”—turning over to the new life—  
we will not forget the Communist Party.

# THE HARVEST COMES TO THE THRESHING FLOOR

*Hsi Chien*

On the threshing floor,  
a bit like an army practice ground,  
men, women, old and young, all come  
to throw themselves into the job  
in hand.

Elder uncle, elder brother,  
one cart, and then another,  
come into the yard, all hands  
working silently, intent; in come  
the sheaves, back go  
the carts for more.

Small girls  
singing quietly to themselves,  
the July sun shining down  
on them; good work is this  
and from it happiness comes.

Small donkeys, placidly,  
a bell hanging from each neck,  
pull the crushing stones; round  
and round they go, then hearing  
shouts from the edge, take on  
new life and pull their hardest.

Old men  
beating with flails  
up and down; each stroke  
with measured sameness,

the wind blowing away  
the husks, showing up the grain  
beneath.

The elder sister-in-law  
sending food to the scene of work—  
tea in a jar, food in a great basket—  
our first meal with the new grain, so  
bright a golden colour, so fragrant  
a smell; come quickly all, come  
and taste!

Kids bringing in  
the kaoliang ears,  
half a foot long; holding  
on their hips and swaggering  
in; crying, "Mother, mother,  
I cannot carry this heavy grain,  
come quickly and help me  
to carry!"

Grandmother, also  
comes to stand by the yard  
fearing the chickens will eat  
the kaoliang; waving her stick  
to drive them off,  
watching all.

There he is,  
our old leader  
for mutual aid;  
"Come," he says, "come  
and we shall fix  
today's account."  
So then all is bustle and  
excitement, each  
giving his account.

The kids and girls crowd round  
shouting to each other, "Give me  
a four plus!" "I'm better  
than that girl!", cheerfully;

looking at the autumn  
harvest and listening  
to all these words together,  
we know that here is now  
a breath of new air; these are really  
liberated areas, making  
a new way for all.

## THE MUTUAL-AID TEAM

*Anonymous*

Now this aid team  
which means  
that all together  
we shall work the land;

no one exploiting the other,  
no one for himself alone,  
produce going to him  
who best deserves it,  
no one getting the worst of the deal,  
all with equal profit; just look  
amongst all of us and see who  
would be unwilling to take part  
in such a thing!

## RETURN OF THE LABOUR HERO

*Chang Ming-chuan*

Drums beat,  
cymbals clash;  
old and young foregather  
outside our village,  
welcoming nineteen-year-old  
Mo Pao-lien.

She is now  
as a lovely pearl  
held in a thousand hands.

Her friends, so many  
deep, crowd round  
embracing her; there too  
are her kid brothers,  
sisters.

Her model worker's  
certificate is gay  
and red; by it are stacked  
the gifts made her, for  
all to see.

There they go,  
right through the village,  
friends behind  
and friends in front.

And all feel this glory  
is for all, as well as  
for one; that the village of Sangyuan

now has honour; so there are smiles  
and much showing of  
bits of red.

And people look and say  
“Before, how could a girl  
receive such honours? In  
the old society, we poor folk  
were doomed to struggle, as though  
in pits of the fires of hell; ever  
angry with oppression; tears  
always falling; working like  
brute animals.

Why,  
the poor called their daughters roots of  
‘calamity,’  
they were so unwanted; and so  
many in those days ended all  
hanging themselves from the beams  
of their miserable homes;

today  
all is changed;  
our sisters have  
a place of honour.

Here we were born,  
brought up; here have we  
struggled through all; here to us came  
new-found strength, power to surmount  
troubles, go forward in spite of all;  
dear mother, dear mother,  
the Communist Party,  
without your guiding hand how could we have won  
this day of days?”



Green leaves of spring  
and from their midst  
a scarlet blossom;  
our hero of today gets up  
and speaks to all; the clapping hands  
are like flashing of lightning, the great shouts  
like claps of thunder;

she says, "Glory belongs to  
the whole village; each one of us  
shares in it; this year, to hold  
our glory, we must raise production  
double."

## THE MARRIAGE

*Chang Ming-chuan*

The moon seemed to hang  
between the twigs of the willows and poplars  
and under their shadows, two sisters  
sat shoulder to shoulder, weaving straw  
hats, softly exchanging confidences;

"The heavens above have swallows  
that always fly in pairs; over  
the plains come wild geese in  
their groups. Sister, you and  
your future husband have already  
been engaged for too long; time  
lengthens out, yet still no marriage.  
Of him, the people's militia speak  
well; our youth group, the same of you;

of all people here you two are  
the best fitted to join together and  
in your deep love, each for the other,  
you know it well. Your two families  
are in agreement. After your engagement  
the work of both of you shone out  
so well—your chosen, as head of the  
mutual-aid team, always busy, even at  
times of rest; you, in leading us to make  
straw hats, so busy you forgot to eat,  
even. Now all are waiting to drink  
your health at the marriage feast;  
too many times you have postponed—  
the sweet melon is now before you and  
you do not eat—what kind of thing  
is this?”

“This year there will start  
the great production drive;  
after autumn the model workers  
will be chosen; water runs underground,  
men walk on top; and who is there  
who would not walk with honour?  
Youth groups lead, and so have I  
sent my boy friend a challenge, to see  
who works better in the coming contest;  
I am determined to win glory as model  
worker, in the harvest time approaching;  
if, after autumn, he and I  
should be labour models for the village,  
then the district and then on  
right up to the county! Labour heroes who stand  
in places of honour, big red decorations\*”

---

\* Each labour hero is decorated with a red flower in New China. She hopes she and her lover will be so decorated, and then will exchange, during the wedding.

pinned on their breasts, shadows from the leaves  
flitting to and fro, red flowers and streamers  
in front of all eyes; all youth  
taking them as models, each one  
wanting to be one day like this:  
then the feast that honours labour heroes  
shall be our wedding feast; the glory  
of being labour heroes making for fuller  
glory in marriage; county magistrate and  
county Party secretary, leading the marriage  
ceremony; so shall we exchange our red  
flowers of honour, in front of all."

## MONGOL LIBERATION

### *Songs of Minority Peoples*

Freedom comes to our Mongol peoples  
through the liberation that stands  
face to face with all Chinese; the  
brightness of this new and happy day  
urges one to speak out the joy  
that is in our hearts:

working Chinese people  
loving with such fire  
the great country of  
their ancestors; all  
their hopes in the hopes  
of their land; certain to  
enhance its beauty with new  
construction.

Already  
we have cleaned out the enemy,  
become the masters of our own  
country; never again shall we  
permit the enemy to fell our  
forests, burn out our pasture;

the Mongolian people  
surely love peace and  
are ever determined to  
strengthen their victory;  
for now both Mongol  
and Han come under the  
sunshine of great  
Chairman Mao.\*

## MONGOL WOMEN

### *Songs of Minority Peoples*

On the banks of the Hao Erh River  
drift the light blue clouds and  
we think of Mongol women, going  
from generation to generation, in  
bitterness.

In that other day were they told  
their lot was the will of heaven;  
so they could be sold as oxen or  
horses, regardless of their wishes;

---

\* The many banners of Inner Mongolia have now been organized into autonomous governments and new ways have entered with the new day, to the great satisfaction of the minority peoples.

just as easily as that — sold to  
anyone.

Never with any limit to work  
nor any time granted for rest;  
but when the people's government  
came, our women began to see  
the spring.

The sparrows who fly and dance,  
how much freedom have they in  
the heavens! So think our women  
now turned to the new way, now  
walking down the road of liberation,  
never stopping.

The old eagle that sits  
on the mountain top lifts  
his wings so gladly to fly;  
as we, the Mongol women, may now  
lift ourselves to enter freedom  
and happiness.

## THE BAREFOOTED\*

### *Songs of Minority Peoples*

The sun rises and the sun sets;  
for how many years have we suffered?  
we have forgotten; suffered until  
in this day we, the barefooted,  
may come in honour to the capital;

---

\* From the Lisu minority of Southwest China.

i — yao!

in our wildest dreams we would  
not even have dreamt of such a thing!

i — yao!

no, not even in a dream!  
Biloh Shan, the snowy mountain,  
is so high, the Lan Chiang River  
so deep;  
you  
the Communist Party

i — yao!

you are the light of the poor peoples  
on all our borders  
you,  
Chairman Mao

i — yao!

you are the saving star  
of all our minority peoples.

## ON RIVERS\*

### *Songs of Minority Peoples*

There are five mountains  
and five rivers; in which  
rivers runs the most water?  
In those which run to the sea  
or in those which spread out  
over our welcoming country?

Five mountains, five  
rivers; in those to  
the east flows the most water;  
in those to the sea is our  
defeated enemy; the waters  
that bear our protectors  
flow amongst us fruitfully.

## LIBERATED!\*\*

### *Songs of Minority Peoples*

They have come, huh!  
They have come, huh!

---

\* From the Li minority on Hainan Island. As with many folk chants, this one is in the form of a riddle, giving its answers in the second verse.

\*\* From the Li minority on Hainan Island.

Our liberation army  
has truly come; let us dance and sing  
welcome our heroic  
brothers, we have  
thrown out our enemy;  
from now on shall we go  
from joy to joy.

## ON SIGNING THE PEACE PETITION

*Su Fan*

We sign the peace petition  
in our signatures are all  
our meaning, our determination  
showing that we are against

increased armaments,  
the making of atomic weapons,  
aggressive pacts in the Atlantic  
and in the Pacific; the release  
of German and Japanese war  
criminals; the killing the arrest  
of peace fighters of  
common people.



## ON JAPANESE RE-ARMAMENT

*Sa Chin*

Those eight years\* — a sea of blood  
deep with enmity; those years which  
stood as a knife in our hearts; the killed,  
the misery brought to so many; sights that will never  
fade from our eyes;

who has not heard  
all those wild cries from Nanking,  
bitter cries that rose to heaven?  
more than three hundred thousand  
people's lives the sport of the  
Japanese Imperial Army; killing the defenceless  
in ghoulish competition.

Those who resisted Japan  
lived even on grasses and the bark  
of trees; yet never  
did they allow the enemy  
breathing space; dealing him  
deadly blows;

the red Yenan  
was as a beacon light,  
so high, so bright that  
all the peoples of China  
looked towards it; just as  
in the full moonlight,  
the light of stars  
in their distant clusters  
joins.

---

\*The period of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression.

Those twelve years\*  
of intense struggle that  
made us capable enough to  
whittle down the enemy strength  
as though from a great steel beam  
to a tiny embroidery needle;  
Japanese imperialism defeated  
then the clearing out  
of Chiang Kai-shek;

the people sing  
"The East is Red"  
and under the leadership  
of Mao Tse-tung the new  
springs up while the old  
slowly melts away.

Millions of motors humming  
their joyful song of construction,  
and like army men caring for their  
cavalry mounts, so did our workers  
protect their machines;

then came land reform and our farmers  
rejoiced to work their land, to open up  
new fields; and floating over all the land  
there came a breath of fragrance.

Now we build truly  
bringing in the happy life; but  
the sunken ships of the Imperial  
Japanese Navy are being raised  
ready for use again;

---

\* The period of the total war against Japanese aggression and the Kuomintang up to liberation of the mainland.

we think of all the tragedy  
of those eight years of war;  
then we wonder: could it be  
that all which went into those  
long years was wasted? The many  
lives we  
lost, have they been lost  
in vain?

No  
never can we agree  
to the arming of that  
Japan  
again.

WELCOME TO 1953

*Ai Ching*

The New Era comes riding in  
on wind and snow; from  
the highway rises the sound  
of laughter; over the front line  
lies a pall of smoke; and from there and the rock tunnels  
come our men, eyes a little bloodshot,  
cheeks a bit wrinkled; the enemy has thrown in  
so many tons of metal; yet our line  
has never budged; strong with defences  
a hundred *li* deep; strong in the knowledge  
that in our rear is the country  
of our ancestors.

Gone now  
is one more year of struggle;  
the year 1953 has come in  
swiftly, an express train  
of time for us to ride on,  
bearing us over a new road.

Limitless seems our land  
covered with white snow,  
quietly, so quietly awaiting  
the spring; awaiting the plough  
to turn the earth loose so that  
it will change to a great, green  
ocean.

How broad are our roads  
that lead so directly  
to new cities, new villages,  
through a country where nature  
is being transformed; everywhere  
new construction; thickly rises  
steel reinforcing; soon will there be  
numberless new factories.

This New Year brings  
a gift for new men,  
the gift of hope; and  
as we construct on each new  
front we shall protect it  
even as the heroes  
of Sangkum Ridge;  
our determination  
becoming as the strength  
of granite; dealing a blow  
of such weight that our enemy  
will be brought to his knees.

Never shall we let ourselves  
be ungrateful to the age  
we have entered; this age  
that breeds heroes; nor shall we be  
unworthy of our country  
whose glorious people we are;  
let us go on from victory  
to victory; and in the midst  
of triumph, ever advance.

## RETURN TO MY COUNTRY

*Wei Yang\**

The truck goes over the Yalu River  
as though it were flying;  
my country, I have returned  
to you as a child to its mother;  
really, lying ahead, there you are!  
beckoning to your child  
away for so long;

over the Yalu River we go flying,  
yet not fast enough for me; and  
I say, why do you go so slowly?  
Can't you understand the feelings  
of a child returning?

On that truck going over the Yalu  
I see east and west banks  
are not the same; though both

---

\*Wei Yang is a fighter of the Chinese People's Volunteers.

have good land, good people,  
people work, people plant;

I will tell you the difference;  
on the eastern bank the ground  
is damp with blood, while on  
the west, grain stacks stand  
and in every house  
bins are filled with grain;  
I mean that on the eastern side  
people live through the light of day  
as though it were night, down underground;  
on the western bank, markets are  
selling in day and night, all bright  
with light; but, my mother country!  
when I tell about the east bank  
in my heart I am already back  
in Korea again!

On that truck that bore me  
over the Yalu River, the others said  
“Look well at our country, comrade, at  
the newly-built factories, at the  
start of 1953, the first year  
of our five-year plan, and soon  
the bamboo shoots will rise —  
factory chimneys, just like  
bamboo shoots, will spring up  
as fast;

old men have said that it's hard for children  
to leave their mother;  
mother my country, at the front  
I think of you so much, yet remembering  
that Soviet song which says, if my mother asks  
me where I go, then I reply that



Thank you, Uncle Volunteer

Poster by Wu Pi-tuan

I go to struggle for my country  
and to protect her, my best loved;

in the trenches I have often  
hummed this song and it took me  
back beside you; in the middle  
of the battle I hummed it and it  
gave me strength;

now has the truck passed over  
the Yalu as though it flew;  
and my country, I have come back  
to you; mother country, now  
my tears of happiness fall  
on your breast; yet the heart of  
your child has flown  
back to the front in Korea again!



