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EDITOR: Mao Tun

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Yeh Chun-chien

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Study Comrade Mao Tse-tung's Most Firm, Most Thorough-going Revolutionary Spirit

The fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* has been published. It brings together important writings of Comrade Mao Tse-tung in the period from the Japanese surrender in 1945 to shortly before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, i.e. the period of the Chinese people's War of Liberation. This book is a great record of the victory of the Chinese people; it crystallizes to a high degree the experience of the Chinese revolution. Literary and art circles of our country, together with the people in other fields, warmly greet its publication and are plunging vigorously into the ideological movement to study the works of Mao Tse-tung, and regard such study as of primary importance in raising their revolutionary consciousness and ideological level.

The firmest and most thorough-going revolutionary spirit of the proletariat and the communist runs through all the works of Comrade Mao Tse-tung from beginning to end. The integration of revolutionary thoroughness with scientific foresight turns into a great spiritual strength to defeat enemies and overcome difficulties. This great spiritual strength, which based on the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism also finds outstanding expression in the new volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. Following the surrender of Japan, the Chinese people faced two extremely

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This is a translation of an editorial published in *Wenyi Bao* (Literary Gazette) No. 19, 1960, hailing the publication of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Chinese Edition).

ferocious enemies. One was U.S. imperialism – the strongest imperialist country in the world, brandishing atomic bombs and bent on turning China into its colony. The other was the traitorous Chiang Kai-shek clique – deadly enemy of the Chinese people – which then had 4,300,000 troops and received all-embracing political, economic and military assistance from U.S. imperialism. Coordinating political plots with military suppression, these enemies vainly hoped to wipe out the revolutionary strength of the people by "peaceful" means, or alternatively to eliminate at one stroke, by military attack, the People's Liberation Army which was then in an extremely inferior position, numerically and in equipment. Quite a few of our intellectuals, at that time, still cherished illusions about U.S. imperialism. The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung saw through and exposed the true nature of U.S. imperialism and the domestic reactionaries; they did not believe the "good words" of imperialism, and had no fear of imperialist intimidation. Under complex circumstances, they remained sober-minded at all times, applying revolutionary two-tactics to cope with counter-revolutionary two-tactics of the enemy. Chiang Kai-shek, assisted by U.S. imperialism, finally tore up the truce agreement and launched a large-scale offensive against the liberated areas. It was precisely when the reactionary forces were rampant that Comrade Mao Tse-tung formulated his famous thesis: "All reactionaries are paper tigers," and concluded: "No matter how rampant Chinese and foreign reaction may be (such rampancy is historically inevitable and there is nothing strange about it), we can defeat it." ("A Three-Month Summary") Several months later, at the very time when Chiang Kai-shek had assembled 230,000 troops and was frantically attacking the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region then defended only by 20,000-odd troops, when the Central Committee of the Party was preparing temporarily to withdraw from Yenan and short-sighted people in the revolutionary ranks were full of worries as well as indignation, Comrade Mao Tse-tung wrote *Greet the New Upsurge of the Chinese Revolution* with optimistic confidence in victory. On the basis of a scientific analysis of the situation at home and abroad, he pointed out in this inner-Party directive drafted for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, that our country was on the eve of a new upsurge

of the great people's revolution and called on the whole Party "to work for this upsurge and win victory." What revolutionary boldness and great wisdom and courage! It was precisely this integration of the most fearless revolutionary spirit with scientific foresight that inspired the whole Party, the whole army and all the people of the country with courage and confidence and finally in the part of the world which is China "turned round the wheel of counter-revolution of U.S. imperialism and its lackey, the Chiang Kai-shek bandit gang, and sent it down the road to destruction, . . . pushing forward its own chariot of revolution along the road to victory."

From the very first day when the Chiang Kai-shek bandit gang started the civil war, the Central Committee of the Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung foresaw that this gang was doomed. The brilliant theses they made that imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers, that a new upsurge of the great people's revolution would inevitably come, and many others were all later proved correct by the facts. The operational principles for the Liaosi-Shenyang, the Huai-Hai and Peiping-Tientsin Campaigns, personally formulated by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, were completely carried out one after the other. Even the timetable, calculated in accordance with the changes of situation, as to when the Chiang Kai-shek dynasty would come to an end and the people's revolution would win victory, also proved accurate. Such precision of scientific foresight was, of course, the result of detailed analysis and estimation – of the balance of forces, the changes and trends in various fields in the international and domestic situation, and among the enemy, ourselves and our friends – made after careful investigation and study in accordance with Marxist-Leninist viewpoints and the method of class analysis. Here we see the integration of revolutionary thoroughness and scientific foresight: it was precisely because the inevitable victory of the revolutionary cause was foreseen that it was possible to dare to slight the enemy strategically and maintain consistently the utmost soberness of mind and the firmest and most thorough-going revolutionary spirit in the face of a powerful-appearing enemy; and it was precisely because of the firmest and most thorough-going revolutionary spirit and the revolutionary boldness to slight the enemy strategically, that it was possible to dare to look forward to the future with full

enthusiasm, dare to overcome countless difficulties in order to create all the necessary conditions for the victorious tomorrow, dare to struggle, dare to engage in revolution, dare to snatch revolutionary victory when the time was ripe, dare to carry through the revolution to the end and dare to make the transition from one revolution to another.

Here, too, we see to a high degree the integration of the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat with the down-to-earth practical spirit. To slight the enemy strategically and at the same time take full account of him tactically is an outstanding expression of such integration. To engage in revolution, one must have no fear of enemies. No matter how powerful the enemies may be, and how great the difficulties, we should dare to slight them strategically and struggle against them. All counter-revolutionary forces invariably appear strong, while all revolutionary forces are invariably relatively weak and small at the start. But eventually the revolutionary forces always triumph over the counter-revolutionary forces. Fear of enemies and lack of courage to struggle are the characteristics of all right opportunists, while submission to imperialist pressures and knuckling under to the influence of the bourgeoisie are the sources that breed modern revisionism. If we are cowed into submission by the enemy's threats, then we will not dare seize the victory for the revolution when the time is ripe, or will surrender the fruit of that victory to the enemy. Such situations are not without precedent in the past. By contrast with all opportunists, Comrade Mao Tse-tung, in his works has time and again pointed out: revolutionaries must slight the enemy strategically and in regard to the situation as a whole; while at the same time, in deciding how battles are to be fought, in tactics, in every specific situation and on the questions of each concrete struggle, they must take full account of the enemy, take a cautious attitude, pay full attention to the art of struggle and adopt appropriate forms of struggle according to the time, the place and the conditions so as to isolate the enemy and wipe him out step by step. We have seen that Comrade Mao Tse-tung has always, invariably, and in all times and places, made a concrete analysis of the concrete situation in accordance with the requirements of revolutionary strategy, and on this basis worked out concrete tactics, principles and policies, and also that he has examined

from time to time how these principles and policies are implemented, and educated the cadres in the most meticulous method of work and the most flexible art of struggle. It is precisely this high degree of integration of the revolutionary spirit with the spirit of down-to-earth practicality, the exercise of the utmost fortitude to overcome the countless difficulties lying ahead that has constituted the mightiest strength of the people's revolution and defeated the strongest enemies at home and abroad.

The writings of Comrade Mao Tse-tung are imbued with a thorough-going revolutionary critical spirit all along the line. The thought of Mao Tse-tung is incompatible with all types and forms of bourgeois opportunist and other reactionary ideas. It is precisely in the course of sharp criticism levelled against the reactionary and erroneous ideas that Comrade Mao Tse-tung has developed the brilliant theories of Marxism-Leninism. Great revolutionary practice necessarily gives rise to great revolutionary theory. Many important articles in the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* have effectively pushed forward the theoretical work of Marxism-Leninism. In this volume, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has dealt penetratingly with the question of the nature of the present era, the question of war and peace, the question of smashing the old state machine and eliminating the counter-revolutionary armed forces, the nature of imperialism and the reactionaries and the question of using the revolutionary two-tactics against the counter-revolutionary two-tactics, the question of slighting the enemy strategically and taking full account of him tactically, the question of mobilizing the masses with a free hand and uniting with over 90 per cent of the people to overthrow the reactionaries and the question of carrying the revolution through to the end and transforming the democratic revolution into the socialist revolution. These important theses, which have creatively developed Marxism-Leninism, merit our particular attention today. The theses of Comrade Mao Tse-tung on these questions have an important timely significance for our present-day struggle against imperialism and its lackey, modern revisionism.

The fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* is extremely rich in content. We should study the important development of the thought of Mao Tse-tung during the period of the People's War of Liberation in conjunction with the three previous

volumes. Revolutionary writers and artists should be firm fighters of the proletariat. From the writings of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, we should learn to have the most steadfast and thoroughgoing revolutionary spirit of proletarian revolutionaries, standing firm without showing the least wavering in the face of any and all enemies, all difficulties, and all evil trends and manifestations. Revolutionary writers and artists should learn from Comrade Mao Tse-tung to arm themselves with the Marxist-Leninist world outlook and methodology, combine the spirit of revolutionary thoroughness with scientific foresight, know well how to look forward to the future and at the same time keep a firm grasp on present reality with an eye to the trend of its development. Our writers and artists should learn how to integrate the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat with the spirit of down-to-earth practicality. It is precisely this integration of the revolutionary spirit and the spirit of down-to-earth practicality that is the foundation of the artistic method which integrates revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. We must also learn from Comrade Mao Tse-tung's writings the thorough-going revolutionary critical spirit of the proletariat, and struggle uncompromisingly against revisionism in politics, philosophy, literature and art in order to push forward the cause of Marxism-Leninism in our country and the cause of our socialist literature and art to a still more brilliant new stage!

Chairman Mao Travels Through the Whole Country by Li Chi →

Li Chi, born in a revolutionary family in Shansi in 1928, took part in anti-imperialism patriotic propaganda activities in his youth. He studied in the North China Union University of the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region and then worked as assistant in the art department of the North China University. After Peking was liberated, he began teaching in the Central Institute of Fine Arts. He is at present lecturer on Chinese painting in the institute. For detailed introduction to the painting *Chairman Mao Travels Through the Whole Country*, see *The Chinese Style in Art* on p. [illegible] of *Chinese Literature* No. 10, 1960.

Chairman Mao Travels Through the Whole Country

The following is the poem inscribed on the painting reproduced on the preceding page. It is a folk song originating in Hopei Province, now well known throughout the country.

Chairman Mao travels through the whole country,
The mountains are happy and the rivers too;
Mount Omei raises its heads to present its treasures,
The Yellow River wags its tail and sings.
Chairman Mao travels through the whole country,
The workers are happy and the peasants too;
Mountains of grain and cotton soar to the sky,
Molten iron and steel flow like rivers.

MAO TUN

Reflect the Age of the Socialist Leap Forward, Promote the Leap Forward of the Socialist Age!

(*concluded*)

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The Integration of Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism

The slogan of integrating revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism put forward by Chairman Mao is a great revelation for us and we are much encouraged; we have been inspired with infinite enthusiasm. Literary and art workers throughout the country have held long and heated discussions. They all believe that this slogan scientifically summarizes the total experience of the history of literature and art and enables our literature and art to better express the age of the socialist leap forward and impel it forward more forcefully, in view of the special characteristics and needs of this period.

The poems of Chairman Mao are splendid examples of the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. From Chairman Mao's poems we understand that the basic conditions for the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism are the Marxist-Leninist world outlook, far-

sighted ideals, rich fighting experience, the spirit of uninterrupted revolution, and the noble qualities of the resolute proletarian fighter. From the poems of Chairman Mao we learn various artistic techniques and modes of expression integrating revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism.

Earlier than this, there appeared some works of revolutionary realism which also sparkle with the splendour of revolutionary romanticism. The best example is *The White-Haired Girl,* that glorious forerunner of our new opera. The essence of the revolutionary romanticist spirit of *The White-Haired Girl* is not due to a romantic story and romantic background, but to strong revolutionary optimism, the fact that its theme is "the old society changed men into ghosts, the new society changes ghosts into men." The appearance of *The White-Haired Girl* was no accident, but the result of the fact that after the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature, writers with a proletarian world outlook, armed with Mao Tse-tung's thought on literature and art were plunging into the heat of the struggle and settling down to live in the midst of the bravely fighting people. After thirty years of arduous struggle, the Chinese people, led by the Chinese Communist Party, gained the final victory. Thirty years are not a short time; and the cruelty and difficulty of the struggle were unprecedented in history, unprecedented in the world. But those tens of thousands of brave Communists and the broad masses led by the Chinese Communist Party who, after burying their fallen comrades advanced in their bloodstained footsteps, have always had a strong fighting spirit and lofty ideals. Even in the darkest days, the bright vision in their hearts illumined their forward path so that between battles their joyful songs resounded far and wide. It is only natural that the writers living and working in the ranks of such brave, optimistic and resolute fighters should reveal in their works the spirit of revolutionary romanticism.

Before this slogan was put forward, we may say the writers themselves were not conscious of the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism which shone through their works, and did not introduce this deliberately; but after the slogan was put forward the writers living and working in the two years of the big leap forward, when a succession of earth-shaking miracles stranger than legends are appearing one after another, not

only intellectually understand the principle of the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism, but emotionally gained a perceptual knowledge of it through the magnificent, splendid reality. The unprecedented output in literary circles during the two years since the big leap forward proves the profound influence and powerful inspiration of this slogan. And naturally the writing of these two years gives promise of even better things to come.

The literature of our country has its romanticist tradition. But the romanticism of our classical literature is different from that of nineteenth-century Europe. We never had a romanticist movement which was the fashion of the period, carrying all before it, as in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century; but since very ancient times there have been romanticist works or works with strongly romanticist tendencies in every period. There are also positive as well as negative romanticism in Chinese literature, but these again differ from their counterparts in Europe.

Romanticist literature in Europe appeared in the period when the bourgeoisie had entered the political arena, and it reflected the rising bourgeoisie's ideas against feudalism and divine power; in this respect, positive romanticism was in greater evidence, and so this literature also reflected the demands of the people of that period and played a progressive role in its day. However, those positive romanticists were influenced by the ideas of Utopian socialism of that time; they revealed their passionate longing for an absolutely free "Utopia" through the characterization of individual heroes who were their ideal. The negative romanticists, on the other hand, idealized the idyllic life of the Middle Ages (though this was already a thing of the past), and, through the unworldly hermit figures who were their ideal, created for themselves and those sharing their tastes an escapist, self-contained "land of ideal perfection." The positive romanticists at least induced men to look ahead, rousing them to fight, whereas the negative romanticists induced men to look back, paralysing their will to fight. I should point out here that this is just a general description of the basic situation of the two schools of European romanticism; the situation of certain great positive romanticist writers is more complex. Their works sometimes contained a

strong element of realism, and to a certain degree reflected the true nature of reality; though the idealism in their works may not necessarily correspond to the laws of social development, it nevertheless reflected the aspirations of the broad masses of people and gave a splendid picture of an ideal society; it inspired the men of that day with the will to fight and can stir readers even today. When it came to the ideal characters created, however, most writers showed subjective idealism and the more idealized the characters, the greater the subjectivity of the writer. Those positive romanticists' method of creating idealized characters is clearly not the same as that which we advocate — the method of idealizing characters through a process of synthesis and generalization on the basis of reality, to raise them to a higher level.

Our romanticist literature was produced in different periods of our long history of feudal society (at times when the feudal dynasty was fairly stable politically, and handicrafts, trade and commerce were flourishing, or during transitional periods, when the dynasty appeared prosperous, but the conflict within the ruling class and the class struggle were growing ever sharper). Our positive school of romanticism and the positive romanticism in Europe showed the same contempt for the high and mighty and admiration for rebels, and both attacked vulgarity and pursued an ideal; but our positive trends gave a better reflection of the revolt of the labouring people and their dream of the future, for such works were written mostly by anonymous writers from the people. On the other hand, the negative trend in our romanticism was rather similar to that in Europe; the writers were mostly from noble and illustrious families, but not having succeeded in winning fame or wealth themselves they appeared to have some pride and self respect. The positive romanticist literature in our history shows a fundamental difference from that of Europe, however, because of different historical conditions. In the first place, there was no place for idealized individual hero of the type of the "saviour of mankind" in our literature. Our best works of positive romanticism also created idealized heroic characters such as Mu Kuei-ying, an idealized character who never existed in life yet was the synthesis of the good qualities of real heroines in history but further idealized. Our classical writers

also used fantasy, creating goddesses, fairies and spirits, to present countless gentle, brave and wise heroines, who dared to break the taboos of feudalism, both institutional and ideological, to bring happiness to the good who were injured and despised. It is inspiring in the best romanticist tradition that in a feudal society where women were doubly oppressed our literature should present so many idealized heroines. However, these idealized figures, whether men or women, in our romanticist works, had nothing in common with bourgeois individualism. In the second place, our best works of positive romanticism were not so eager to portray some "Utopia" as to emphasize the positive idea that man can conquer nature; this is the clearest idealism in the romanticist literature produced by anonymous folk writers or scholars who shared the feelings of the masses. (This concept that man can conquer nature is utterly opposed to fatalism. There are of course quite a number of works advocating fatalism in our classical literature, and even great writers sometimes adopted a pessimistic, negative attitude, attributing everything to "heaven" and "fate," but such works advocating fatalism or revealing strongly fatalistic ideas are the feudal dregs of our classical literature. I shall not go into this point further here.) The concept of man's triumph over nature and the romantic method of expressing it appeared early in the history of our literature. Its forerunners were the myths about mending heaven, shooting the suns and moving mountains. Because myths were produced in primitive society, this idea of man's conquest of nature reflected only the struggle between man and nature and men's noble aspirations to transform nature. In the class society of feudalism such ideas were reflected in the class struggle, becoming the most pervading theme of our positive romanticist literature. These ideas were not reflected in a simple, direct manner but through intricate fantasy. For example, the play *Snow in Midsummer* uses the fantasy of "snow in midsummer and three years of drought" as a focal point to bring out the revolt, indomitable spirit and final victory of the oppressed. The play *The Butterfly Dream* uses a dream to open the eyes of Prefect Pao, who then, from the spirit of self sacrifice displayed by the injured mother and her sons, is able to see the injustice of their case so that the play is brought to a satisfactory ending in a romantic, legendary manner

(though it may not accord entirely with what we demand of the logic of reality). The poetic drama *The Peony Pavilion* and the Szechuan opera *Her Ghost Seeks Revenge* from different angles depict the true and false in love, and their characters are rewarded as they deserve. *The Peony Pavilion* shows how true love not only spurns feudal morality but can make even the dead come back to life; for the strength of life, represented by love in this play, can change the course of nature. *Her Ghost Seeks Revenge* describes how Wang Kuei forsakes Kuei-ying, who after sueing him unsuccessfully in a human court takes her complaint to the gods; and when the gods give no answer she smashes their effigies and becomes a ghost herself to take Wang Kuei to hell. The wrath and longing for revenge in this drama are so powerful that instead of making us feel a sense of sorrow and despair, it stirs and exhilarates us. The plots which are derived from such imaginations are designed to express one theme: Man can conquer nature or heaven. We do not feel these stories are unreal because they are fantastic and out of the normal. On the contrary, though our reason knows quite well that these are fantasies, emotionally we accept them completely. And after reading such works we feel moved and inspired. That man will triumph over nature is a great ideal, and it is a great reality too, not like the empty dreams of "Utopia." In a feudal society, however, our predecessors could only praise and advocate this ideal through fantasy in literature.

The realism in our classical literature is not entirely like the critical realism of late nineteenth-century Europe either. Individualism in our works of realism was often an object of censure. We praised heroes who kept faith, who would sacrifice their life and go calmly to their death for a cause, for truth, justice and the collective interest; some such heroes opposed feudal oppression and would sacrifice themselves for their beliefs, taking a brave stand and hastening to the rescue when they saw injustice done (like the heroes of Liangshan in *Water Margin*). Others who also gave their lives to keep faith or for some belief, did so in order to uphold the moral standards of the feudal society of that time (examples are some filial sons, loyal family servants, or loyal ministers and retainers who laid down their lives in some internal conflict of the ruling class). The actions of the first type were consistent

with the people's interest, those of the second with the interest of one family, clan or at most one ruling group. Hence we should make a clear distinction between the two and also between the fine qualities of the second type – their good faith and self-sacrifice – and the causes of their actions, I mean the specific moral standards by which they acted. We are moved by their actions not because of those moral standards which they upheld (those standards today are reactionary or worthless), but because of their educational effect. For if those men acting on the narrow and one-sided principles of behaviour as reflected by the relationships of production in that society could sacrifice themselves for others, we today should be much braver and more self-sacrificing for the noble ideal of communism and communist morality. We should also see that such characters were not sullied by individualist ideas; on the contrary, they fought against different types of selfish individualists.

I have advanced these views to explain certain points. First, what good things there are in the realist and romanticist traditions of our literature, and in what way we should critically inherit and develop these past traditions. Secondly, since our realism and romanticism were literary schools produced on our own soil and have national characteristics, the European concepts and interpretations of realism and romanticism may be used as reference but cannot be taken over and applied mechanically. Thirdly, we must use scientific revolutionary ideals as a guide for actual struggles, and from these struggles develop revolutionary ideals. This integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism (not realism and romanticism merely) is truly possible only when the writer has acquired the proletarian world outlook and has armed himself with historical materialism and dialectical materialism.

Since there is a fundamental difference between the realism and romanticism guided by the principles of historical materialism and dialectical materialism on the one hand and those of the past on the other, to give them their correct name we call the former revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanitcism.

At the same time we must point out emphatically that the call for the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism is also based on the special characteristics and need

of our age. What are the special characteristics of our present age? If we look at the chief events in our country during the last ten years we can see this clearly. In these ten years, under the correct and wise leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao, we have passed through the socialist transformation of our national economy and tremendous socialist construction, through the high tide of agricultural co-operation and the socialist transformation of private industry and commerce, through the profound and intense struggles between the two roads – *Sanfan** and *Wufan* movements, the Rectification Campaign, the Anti-Rightist Campaign – and our writers and artists have been through a whole series of ideological struggles starting with the criticism of the film *The Life of Wu Hsun.* In this manner, one revolution followed another, one victory followed another. When in 1958 the Chinese Communist Party put forward the general line for building socialism – go all out, aim high and achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results – it was like the pointing of a magic wand and the whole country instantly went into action. At once news of victories came thick and fast from all fronts, and so occurred the miracle of the continuous big leap forward of 1958 and 1959. Our ancestors dreamed that a man who attained immortality and returned to earth in the form of a crane found the mountains and rivers the same but the cities and suburbs changed. Yet in these two years, even our mountains and rivers have been transformed. Not only has the landscape changed, the spiritual outlook of our six hundred and fifty million and the relationship of man to man have also been completely transformed. We need only think: How many workers and peasants who were still semi-illiterate yesterday are writing books and expounding theories today? How many locally-trained experts have refuted doctors trained abroad? How many unknown Chuko Liangs** today have invented new machines? How many advanced characters like Huang Chi-kuang, Hsiang Hsiu-li and Liu Wen-hsueh have by their actions educated the broad masses with their communist

*The movement against corruption, waste and bureaucratism.

**Famous military strategist of the Three Kingdoms period who was believed to have invented mechanized horses for transport in warfare.

ideology and moral qualities? How many stirring new events are taking place in workshops, mines, villages, army units, government offices, schools, streets and families to show how the new relationships of production have changed the spirit of society, have changed the old human relationships and produced new human relationships of a communist type? Furthermore, as a result of all this, we have witnessed this year a high tide of cultural revolution and technical revolution. This high tide is now sweeping the whole country, and will within a short time radically change our country's "poverty and blankness." Such are the characteristics of our age. Since life itself is so splendid and magnificent, so full of the spirit of revolutionary romanticism, if our literary workers have no lofty revolutionary ideas, no fervent political passion, no belief in uninterrupted revolution — in other words, no spirit of revolutionary romanticism — how can they fulfill their task of reflecting reality? This is one side of the question. On the other side, we should fully recognize that the victory of the general line, the miracle of the big leap forward and the development of the people's communes were not gained peacefully but through struggles. We fight as we make our way forward. There has been the struggle between two paths, the struggle between two lines, the struggle between the advanced and the backward, between the mass-line on the one hand and bureaucracy and commandism on the other. This shows the complexity of our tremendous social changes. This is another characteristic of our age. If our writers cannot master dialectical materialism or acquire the method of revolutionary realism, how can they correctly recognize and analyse this reality? It is very clear, then, that the call for the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism does not arise out of our subjective wishes but is a demand made on us by the objective reality. We all know that it is the function and mission of the superstructure to consolidate, strengthen and develop the economic base. In our present society, literature and art as part of the superstructure should on the ideological front carry out on the one hand the fighting task of eliminating bourgeois political and ideological influences and modern revisionist ideas, and on the other praise the advanced new people and new things, educate the people with noble communist ideas and communist morality, and make the wheels of the age move forward faster. In other

words, our literary and art workers should not be satisfied with simply reflecting life, but should impel it forward. Only by grasping this new principle in creative work, is there possibility for us to fully express our age of the socialist leap forward and effectively promote the leap forward of our socialist age. This is the demand of the times. If our writers and artists want to be progressives, they must, through literature and art, open a way on the ideological front for the ushering in of a communist society, and aim high so as to carry out the tasks given us by the Chinese Communist Party in the period of building socialism by achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results.

Let us turn, now, to a few problems.

The development of revolutionary literature has its historical roots. The early works of Gorky started out from the basis of nineteenth-century Russian realism and absorbed elements of positive romanticism which enriched that realism to some extent; but the new artistic method had not yet been evolved. Not till the appearance of *Mother* did we see a new artistic method. This new method, later continued and developed by Soviet writers, is that of socialist realism. All authoritative expositions on socialist realism emphasize that revolutionary romanticism is an integral part of it. Under the guidance of this principle for creative work, Soviet literature has glorious achievements to its credit. Now time is marching on. Absorbing the fighting experience of world proletarian literature and inheriting the historical tradition of our own literature, in accordance with the needs of the age of the big leap forward, we have put forward the slogan for integrating revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. This, as already said, is in order the better to express the age of the socialist leap forward and powerfully impel it forward.

As methods of writing, realism and romanticism of the past age were different. But as I have said, we are not limited by old definitions of romanticism and realism when it comes to understanding the revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism of today and their integration. At the same time we do not cut ourselves off from the past or throw away the features of these two former schools, the features which are still useful to us. We want to critically inherit these old traditions and further develop them, standing on the higher plane of the communist world outlook,

taking a historical view to inherit them critically, to carry them forward in the spirit of uninterrupted revolution. The old romanticism ignored the fact that history is created by the people, giving praise to individual heroism. Revolutionary romanticism, however, takes the scientific Marxist-Leninist farsight about social development as its basis, fully develops the subjective activity to give a brave and farsighted picture of the splendid vistas of communism, praising those heroes and heroines of the people in our generation who are making history and transforming nature. We should absorb all that is still useful today in the old romanticism, such as its aspiring spirit, buoyant passion and élan, bold imagination and scorn of all difficulties; and we should raise it yet higher with our communist style. The old realism, including critical realism, does not criticize the reality of capitalist society from the proletarian stand; it takes the bourgeois stand to criticize the reality of capitalist society on the one hand, and on the other hand ignores or even distorts the struggle to change this reality waged by the proletariat, in its historic mission. We affirm the positive role of the old romanticism and realism in advocating the emancipation of the individual under the historical conditions of that time (in opposition to feudalism and the idea of divine right), but we must seriously point out that the emancipation of the individual advocated by the old romanticism and realism has been and always will be unable to foster the socialist individuality. We must use the viewpoint and method of historical materialism and dialectical materialism to criticize the romanticism and realism of the past, take over their good essence and abandon the dregs. Guided by the Marxist-Leninist world outlook, combining the realistic spirit of scientific analysis with the proud aspirations of uninterrupted revolution, we must stand on the higher level of communism to reflect the reality of today and, with infinite passion, heroic optimism and verve, sing the praises of the budding tomorrow which is being born from the reality of today, of all the vigorous new things. We believe in reflecting reality, not in any passive, negative way but by vigorously using communist ideology to make the tomorrow in embryo brighter and more distinct, to exert a positive influence on reality, to speed today forward faster towards tomorrow. It is by this we mean the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism! This also explains why we can

achieve things beyond the reach of great writers of the past; for once we are remoulded into Marxist-Leninists possessing the proletarian world outlook, we shall be quite able to stand on a high level to look further and penetrate more deeply; guided by the noble ideals of communism, we shall use the spirit of continuous revolution to make our works fully reflect the present reality as well as light up the future, accelerating the development of reality. Our reality today is permeated as never before with the romanticist spirit, a reality that integrates the noble ideals of communism, and the fearless spirit of revolutionary optimism and revolutionary heroism!

On the basis of these arguments, we can clarify certain points in regard to the meaning of the method of writing — the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. First, we must not understand this method in terms of form. The use of the method of science fiction to depict the future communist paradise on earth can result in nothing more than science fiction (of course such fancies must have a scientific basis), but cannot be considered as integration. Secondly, we must differentiate between methods of writing and style. A romantic mode of expression can give a work a romantic style, but that does not mean implementing this method of writing; for this method is on a higher plane than a merely romantic style, much higher, especially in ideology. Thirdly, it is not an integration of revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary realism if we simply crudely use fine heroic phrases about the wonderful life of the future which have no connection with the development of the story and the characters, or let the characters make general, empty statements about their faith in communism and their longing for a communist society. Of course, this method of writing does not exclude the use of the romantic mode of expression (not only so, it is necessary), and it is not against people making heroic statements; but if we concentrate solely on these things, it will vulgarize this method. The integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism is expressed primarily in the ideological content of a writing. Only when the writer has a much greater farsight and stands on a much higher plane, together with scientific analysis, far-reaching ideals and revolutionary optimism, can he give accurate, vivid and clear expression on a higher level than reality to the heroic, dynamic characters

of our age with their world-transforming energy, their soaring spirit. Such ideological content requires an artistic form that measures up to it. To use a stock phrase, it should be like "a giant in stature, with a mighty, reverberating voice." If the ideological content of a work surpasses that of previous ages, its artistic form must also have absorbed the best features of the past and brought into full play the writer's own creative ability.

Let us look now at the initial successes scored by our writers in the practice of their art. Here two approaches are possible. One is to lay down strict rules and standards; another is to take a realistic approach based on the actual situation. The first aims at preventing a lowering of standards which would vulgarize this method of writing; but although the motive is good, this will not assist the development of the new phenomena, if too much is negated. I believe we should adopt the second approach, encouraging all new buds and giving credit to all initial achievements.

To my mind, in the last two years not a few works have in different degrees carried out the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. Cases are by no means as "rare" as some claim. Most of the folk songs in *Red Flag Folk Songs* can be said to have achieved this, and a few have combined revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism remarkably well. Since this is generally recognized, I need not quote examples here. Let us look at literature of other forms and other subjects.

Examples of works on revolutionary history and present-day themes which have to varying degrees embodied this method of writing are the novel *Keep the Red Flag Flying,* the plays *Taming the Dragon and the Tiger* and *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire,* the new opera *Red Guards of Hunghu,* the poems of Yuan Chang-ching and Ho Ching-chih, and the short stories of Liu Pai-yu. These works either emphasize the revolutionary optimism shown in arduous, complex struggles with a buoyant, fresh tone, or give a magnificently spirited reflection of the new people and new phenomena in the big leap forward. Though some are more profound than others, the spirit is the same. It is joyful to know, I think, that so much have been achieved in such a short period.

We have other outstanding works which judging by their artistic conception belong to the category of revolutionary realism, but

which have also created ideal characters with lofty communist qualities. When we describe these characters as ideal, we do not mean that no such people exist in real life but that they are a step higher than living people; the communist qualities of many living men and women are generalized and concentrated in one character, making him at once realistic and idealized. This method of characterization is in the spirit of integrating revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. There are many such novels and short stories, like the novels *The Builders* and *Steeled and Tempered,* and various short stories by Ma Feng, Li Chun, Sun Tsun-ching, Wang Wen-shih and others.

4

Some Problems in Writing

In these years we have carried out many great debates throughout the country on certain important problems in creative writing. During the last few months we have had big debates to criticize modern revisionist ideas in literature and art; we have also linked theory with reality by touching on some of the chief problems in writing. Comrade Chou Yang in his report* has already refuted the main arguments of modern revisionism in literature. In order to avoid repetition, let me just say something here about "truthfulness in writing" — a subject about which the revisionists love to boast and point out their trick of "selling dog's meat in the name of mutton" in connection with four problems in creative writing. These four problems are: 1. How to create heroic characters? 2. How to reflect contradictions among the people? 3. What subjects to choose? 4. Whether or not we want "human interest" and if so, what sort of "human interest" we want? In connection with these four problems, the revisionists when selling their contemptible "dog's meat" usually hang up the signboard of "mutton" in the name of "truthfulness in writing," as if they sincerely want to depict

*See *Chinese Literature* No. 10, 1960.

the truth and oppose fabricated works which prettify reality; while we, their critics, do not want the truth but like the fabrications. Facts prove just the opposite. We have always urged that literature should reflect the intrinsic truthfulness of life; we have always opposed fabrications which prettify reality. However, what we call the intrinsic truthfulness of life is not the same as the revisionists' vaunted "truth." Since ancient times, men have often held different views on truth because they serve different people and have different stands. Precisely because of this, the modern revisionists who claim to be Marxists are showing their true colours over the problem of "truth."

How should we present heroes? This is actually not a too complex theoretical problem, although the revisionists are making it out into something very mysterious (successful characterization is not so simple in practice; but that is another matter). Since the beginning of the history of literature there have been two main methods of creating heroes, positive characters whom the writer approves and praises. One is the method of objective generalization, the other the method of subjective idealization. Since both methods have their limitations, we are for eschewing their shortcomings and adopting their good points. That means that, on the basis of summing up reality we must elevate it. We must sum up the qualities of living men in real life; and, in accordance with the inevitable development of reality, we must emphasize certain tendencies in the qualities of living men which will become more prevalent in the society of tomorrow. This is our view on the idealization of characters. We consider that this method does not detract from the truthfulness of these characters but gives them a higher educational significance in accordance with the special laws of art. In some cases such characters are splendid, shining examples as soon as they appear, like Shen Chen-hsin and Liang Po in *Red Sun,* Liang Sheng-pao in *The Builders,* Chin Teh-kuei in *Steeled and Tempered,* the old soldier in *New Story of a Veteran Soldier,* Master Pu-kao and Master Chuan-keng in Hu Wan-chun's stories, and Old Buffalo and Old Communication in Sun Tsun-ching's stories. Actually we believe these heroic characters could probably be even more idealized, for this is demanded by the principle of creative writing — the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. The revisionists, however, insist that there are no heroes without moral blemishes (please note that they do not mean flaws in character but in moral qualities); they insist that heroes must have white noses like clowns* if they are to be true to life. Evidently, when the stand is different, the views on truth differ too! The revisionists appreciate characters torn by mental conflicts, suffering from schizophrenia, emotionally unstable, unfirm in their stand. They appreciate "heroes" who are individualist "heroes." We cannot say there are no people of this kind left in our society, but these are the targets of criticism and ought to be the negative characters in our works. The revisionists believe that drawing detailed portraits of these negative characters and praising them is truthfulness in writing. We believe that although of course these negative characters can be described as negative examples, we should adopt a serious, critical attitude towards them, not appreciating them, much less allowing them to clutter up our works and become the chief characters. This is because in our society these negative characters are not the majority but a small minority. If we let them clutter up our writing, that would be a distortion of the truth.

There are other heroic characters who go through stages of development, from inexperience to maturity, from having many defects to having none, from lacking political consciousness to acquiring it. Examples are Regiment Commander Liu Sheng and Platoon Leader Chin Shou-pen in *Red Sun,* Batjargal in *Beacon on the Steppes* and Bahar in *Tumultuous Years* (this character has not yet finished developing; but this poem is not finished yet, and Bahar will certainly go the full length of his development ultimately). We consider that this accords with the actual facts. We believe that defects in heroes may be described in order to show their development, for herein lies the educational meaning of these characters. However, the revisionists want these characters to retain their defects to the end of their life; they do not like them to overcome one shortcoming after another under the guidance of the Party and helped by their comrades, to become perfect in the end. They accuse this as writing according to

*On the traditional Chinese stage bad characters always appear in the form of clowns with painted white nose.

formula, when this is precisely the way in which real life progresses. The revisionists do not like reality to progress according to its own laws, but want it to develop according to their "law," slandering everything which does not fit in with their subjective wishes. This is the true essence of their loud clamour for "truthfulness in writing," of what they describe as the problem of truthfulness in creating heroes.

In the last few years there have appeared in our works more and more splendid heroes of all walks of life, and our writers' skill in characterization is much greater than before 1956, especially when it comes to creating workers, peasants and soldiers. The workers, peasants and soldiers in recent successful works are no longer petty-bourgeois intellectuals in the garb of workers, peasants and soldiers but real workers, peasants and soldiers in thoughts, feelings and behaviour. These characters may be boldly sketched or outlined or portrayed in meticulous detail; the author may emphasize certain salient features or give detailed descriptions of appearance and behaviour; the technique varies, producing different styles. These successes have been achieved mainly because the writers have gone deep into real life, plunged into the thick of the struggle, steeled themselves in physical labour and identifying themselves with the masses. In this way, on the one hand they have changed their world outlook, on the other they have found a rich source of inspiration for writing. These indisputable facts refute the fallacious arguments of the revisionists, who claim that ideological remoulding stifles a writer's inspiration and makes all writing stereotyped.

On the problem of presenting the heroes in literature, they have another fallacious argument, which is that so-called "small men" or "superfluous people" should be the main heroes. What is exactly meant by small men and superfluous people? These are literary terms introduced from Europe. The so-called "small man" is quite different from what we describe today as an "ordinary labourer." In European literature, the "small man" is contrasted to the leading characters of classical literature, the great personages (historical figures, legendary figures, outstanding individualist heroes, cynical, impoverished nobles etc.). As for the "superfluous people," we may call them "insignificant individuals." In short, whether "small men" or "superfluous people," they are not glorious

characters by any means, but may be clowns, cowards, or muddle-headed fools that we do not know whether to pity or to laugh at. We may pity them because they are pathetic, but be irritated by their lack of courage; more often, though, they are people who live a meaningless existence, lamenting the emptiness of the life without the will power to change it. In the old society such people existed. The literature of the May the Fourth period has characters like this too. But even at that time, the portrayal of these small men and superfluous people had not become a literary fashion, let alone a school of writing. Today the torrent of real life has already carried forward the majority of those small men and superfluous people, while the tiny fraction who are unwilling to improve themselves will be consigned to the dust-bin of history. We are not against mentioning the change and remoulding of these small men and superfluous people as one aspect of the great transformation of social morality, to be reflected suitably in literature; but to think that this should be given a prominent place and made into one school of writing would be a mistake and contrary to the principle that literature should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. Though this mistaken view has not had a great influence here among our writers, we occasionally see works which consciously or unconsciously embody this idea, and the revisionists like to make much of it by advocating the portrayal of "small men" to oppose the creation of heroic characters; hence this has become a reactionary trend. We must draw a clear dividing line here. We must thoroughly refute the theory of "small men" which the revisionists propagate, while if some comrades have taken the wrong path we should criticize them and help them to correct themselves.

Heroes do not develop in easy circumstances, when all is plain sailing. Without severe tests, how could they reveal their heroic qualities? A hero can only come to life when the writer places him in a situation with complex and sharp contradictions and describes the difficulties he surmounts and the roundabout way he takes to solve these contradictions, showing how good he is at accepting the masses' opinions, at summarizing experience and learning from failure. Thus the problem of creating heroes is inextricably bound up with the problem of reflecting contradictions

among the people. In connection with this problem, just as in the case of creating heroes, the revisionists again hang up their trade-sign of "truthfulness in writing" to peddle their line of "exposing the seamy side of life." We do not deny that our society still has certain defects and backward features, nor do we believe that these should be allowed to go their own way and not eliminated, sometimes by the flames of satire. But we differ from the modern revisionists on this: We believe that in a capitalist society the seamy side is the product of the capitalist system, while in our new society the seamy side is something left over by the old society. To get rid of it, we are adopting various measures. Writers have the task of remoulding men, changing old trends and creating new social trends through ideological struggle. But the revisionists make it a point to mix up reflecting the contradictions among the people and exposing the seamy side of life as one and the same thing. Because the ideological root of this confusion is the bourgeois world outlook which is hostile to socialism, the revisionists insist that our contradictions are mainly "the contradiction between the masses' individual interests and the collective interests of the state, the contradiction between the bureaucratic working style of the leading cadres and the masses' interests, the contradiction between the cadres' commandism and the masses' initiative in production and their creativeness in labour." In short, they close their eyes to the fact that the main contradiction inside our country today is the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the socialist road and the capitalist road; they have fictitiously invented the theory that class struggle has come to an end; ignoring the facts, they insist that our main internal contradiction is "the contradiction between the leadership and the led," they urge writers to write works exposing life today, just as the critical realists exposed capitalist society; they slander works that do not suit their taste as untruthful, as prettifying society. Their tone is really not very different from the slander about us in the periodicals of capitalist countries.

But our writers and literary critics, armed with the thought of Mao Tse-tung, have not merely exposed the true ideological nature of the revisionists' fallacious arguments from the theoretical angle, but have refuted them through achievements in writing. We need only mention a few recent examples. Both the novels *The*

Builders and *Riding on the Wind* describe contradictions among the people, but the internal contradiction in the first book is mainly that between the poor peasants and some well-off middle peasants as they advance on the path of co-operation; the internal contradiction in the second concerns the struggle between the two ways to build socialism, "with greater, faster, better and more economical results" or "with fewer, slower, worse and more expensive results." The clash in these two works comes between the higher and lower ranks, between the leadership and the masses, but this does not mean, as the revisionists claim so loudly, that such contradictions are due to the leadership's commandism or bureaucracy. Other contradictions reflected in these two novels are those between the advanced and the backward, between individualism and the collective interest, as well as contradictions between ourselves and the enemy. However, the two authors depict such contradictions not in order to expose the so-called seamy side. On the contrary, it is in order to reflect the brightness of the great reality of our socialist revolution and socialist construction, to show how advanced characters are steeled in the struggles arising out of these contradictions, how the backward change their outlook, how rightist conservative ideas are annihilated in the flames of the struggle. This is the truth of life, reflected through art, which helps people to recognize reality and at the same time give them a communist ideological education. Thus the fallacious argument of the revisionists that contradictions among the people should be reflected in order to expose the seamy side is refuted by actual practice in our creative writing. Practically every good work of literature we have reflects to a greater or lesser extent the contradictions among the people. In addition to these two novels, outstanding examples are the short novel *In Time of Peace* and the play *Men Who Dare to Think and Act.* Only very few works describe contradictions among the people for the purpose of "exposure," and in the recent movement to criticize revisionism the ideological nature of such writings was clearly exposed.

We should admit that some works reflecting contradictions among the people may still have the weakness of over-simplification; while some lacking the viewpoint of uninterrupted revolution after showing and solving the contradictions give the wrong im-

pression that in future there will be no more contradictions, for now all is well. However, we believe that the study of Mao Tse-tung's thought on literature and art and the refutation of revisionism will raise our level of Marxism-Leninism, while going deep into life and steeling ourselves better through physical labour will help us to see things more correctly, to analyse reality better and more accurately reflect the contradictions among the people. Then step by step these shortcomings can be completely overcome.

When revisionists produce their fallacious arguments about the subjects of works of literature, first they attack the line of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, and then they try to peddle their own goods. Ignoring the facts they assert such nonsense as that works reflecting the class struggle and social movements are all alike, monotonous and dry, that whether a work is good or not has nothing to do with its subject; that ordinary readers (this is an infamous slander on the reader) find ordinary, day-to-day personal trivialities more appealing and interesting than all kinds of struggles and movements. They also claim that there is no need to differentiate between the major subjects and the minor subjects. The essence of this theory is very similar to the fallacious contention of Hu Feng and his followers that "there is life everywhere," which was thoroughly debunked. We have met these fallacious arguments many times, though each time they may appear in a different guise. Their aim, however, is one: to attack the line of serving workers, peasants and soldiers. Here the revisionists also use "truthfulness in writing" as their shield while they chant their tune: "Works on minor themes have the flavour of real life and possess true feeling." The implication is naturally that works on great themes are not truthful. Such sophistry is the same as the old game of grabbing fish in muddy water. It is not worth refuting. However, it may trap some muddle-headed people, especially when it drags in talk of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend so that hearers may think "there may be something in it." But since the facts themselves are most eloquent, let us see what the real situation is.

It is true that there have been a small number of works which describe the class struggle and social movements in a dry, monotonous manner, while some early writings on industrial construction are "full of machines but no men," and deserve the satirical label of "production stories." Nevertheless, if we study the way in which each of these works was written, we can see that it was not the subject that spoiled the book but the author who failed to make proper use of the subject. He lacked genuine knowledge of the subject (it is not a question of whether he was familiar with it or not, he simply did not have this type of experience). If a writer relies solely on enthusiasm and imagination, the result will naturally be a skeleton without flesh. It is easy to understand how such a situation came about, since just after liberation some writers were not yet familiar with life in a socialist society. Later, responding to the Party's call, we went deep among the masses and took part in struggles; so the situation improved. In recent years writers have gone down to factories and villages, while steeling through physical labour has become a general practice; thus the situation now is vastly better. By and large, the error of writing according to formula and fixed concepts has been overcome and a large number of good works have been produced. Though all this is fresh in our memory, there are still people who hark back to the past and talk foolishly, ignoring the true facts. This is not because they don't know what happened, but because ideologically they are against the line of serving workers, peasants and soldiers.

In these ten years, we have carried out a tremendous socialist revolution and socialist construction; this is the reality of our age. Every stage in the socialist revolution and socialist construction has involved sharp and complex class struggles, which were expressed in a concentrated manner in several great movements. Since our literature must reflect the age, can we ignore these great movements? Of course not. This means that all important social events must have the most prominent position in the themes of our literary works. To use a familiar phrase, this means praising the three red banners of the general line, the big leap forward and the people's communes. I think now we should also use various forms of literature to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in reflecting the high tide of the cultural revolution and the technical revolution. Without those three red banners, the high tide of the cultural revolution and the technical revolution could not have arrived so rapidly with such depth and breadth and

on such a scale. If a writer wants his works to be appreciated not by a small group of people but by the broad masses, how can he turn his back on important events which involve the welfare of six hundred and fifty million? This is impossible. Hence we can see that some themes are more important than others; this is not determined by anyone's subjective wish but by the objective reality, and it is the demand made on us by the broad masses. If we further take into consideration the function of literature as a means of ideological education, nobody can deny that works reflecting important social events (specific happenings during the socialist revolution and socialist construction) have a much greater and deeper effect in ideological education than those with less significant themes.

Of course, we must not look at this mechanically and think mass struggles and movements are the only important themes. Some works which do not deal with mass struggles and movements have nevertheless truly distilled the significant elements from daily life on the basis of reflecting the spirit of great changes in the socialist revolution and socialist construction, using artistic skill to give an accurate reflection of the spirit of the age. We are all familiar with such works as Ma Feng's story *I Knew All Along,* Ai Wu's collection of stories *Return at Night* and others by Sha Ting and Wang Wen-shih; Sun Yu-tien's *The Coal-Miner's Song* and *Drums and Cymbals at the Mine* and works by other poets; and the screen play *Five Golden Flowers* by Chi Kang and Kung Pu. The educational value of these works is not less than in works which describe mass struggles and movements. We also estimate such works very highly. However, we have nothing in common with those who claim that all themes are equally important, for they put themes lacking in social significance on a par with themes having great or fairly great significance, while we emphasize that they are essentially different.

From this we can see that the difference between more important and less important themes depends on whether the subject has social significance or not, whether it can reflect the spirit of the age; it is not determined by whether or not the content deals with major events in society or daily life. At the same time we must observe that if we make a list of themes which can reflect the spirit of the age and have social significance, we must

nevertheless put first the important events in society. Here I should explain that we do not look down on the themes of ordinary life which can reflect the spirit of the age; we make the statement simply in order not to give the revisionists any chance to distort our meaning out of context. Ordinary daily life which has no social significance and cannot reflect the spirit of the age we call trivial personal affairs; the revisionists are specially interested in such trivial affairs and want to raise them to a high position. What we resolutely oppose is this attempt to detract from the ideological character and fighting function of literature.

At the same time we also oppose over-simplification in dealing with the problem of themes. We are not against works which are politically harmless and beneficial to life. Flowers and butterflies please the eye and help us to relax, which is beneficial to life and not politically harmful; so we are not against allowing them a place in the garden of literature. This is in accordance with the spirit of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend. However, if someone makes a great commotion about such things, exaggerating and glorifying the role of these "knick-knacks" or cloaking them in mystery (for example by claiming that their "ideological nature" is something subtle and delicate and that "from a grain of rice we can see the whole universe"), and advocating this as one "line," we must say to him seriously: Friend, this won't do. That is mystical talk. You are out of step with the spirit of the age. Your "line" is the very reverse of the line of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers.

Now there are quite a few people who believe that such subjects as the wind and the moon, the flowers, herbs, birds and beasts, have no connection with ideology; but I question this. Whether or not such themes from natural scenery have an ideological connotation depends on how the writer treats them. Of course butterflies flitting charmingly round the flowers can please the eye and make you relax, but eagles soaring in space are superior; not only do they please the eye and make you relax, but they give you a sense of open space so that your spirit soars. The setting sun, an ancient road or autumn crows may induce a feeling of despondency and despair, while the rising sun, great billows or a stormy petrel arouse our proud, aspiring spirit. Has this nothing to do with ideology? Why should some writers like one kind of natural

scenery and fail to be moved by another? Has that no connection with their ideology? In the last analysis, even artists who specialize in "knick-knacks" or natural scenery must have a progressive world outlook too. Without a progressive world outlook, even within the sphere of "knick-knacks" and natural scenery they may slip up.

There was a time when what was called "human interest" aroused exaggerated interest and attention among some people. This term kept appearing in certain essays and reviews, as if the great success, minor success or failure of a work all have something to do with this "human interest," as if whether a character was drawn in a schematic manner or not depended on the extent of "human interest" in the writing. But if we want to understand the feeling meant by "human interest," we must first look at some of the views expressed.

To insert a few jokes into a serious argument or a love affair into war is the most superficial description of human interest. In life, of course, men do not just argue heatedly but chat and laugh too, while during a lull in a war they may have a love affair. What exists in life can of course be described in literature; the problem is to give it the right place without pandering to low tastes or distorting the image of the hero. This involves only a question of a sense of proportion, not a matter of principle. Some other views, however, are different, as when stress is laid on the so-called "wounds of spiritual servitude," to relish the festering wounds on a fighter's body, to insist, for some ulterior motive, that a hero facing death must show a weak longing for life, that there must be mental conflict or hesitation when a man has to sacrifice his family for a just cause, or that a man may set free an enemy for the sake of "humanity." The revisionists like this kind of "human interest," but we are against it. To us, this smacks of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, not the human interest of the proletariat. In particular, the signs of weakness in a hero going to his death are intolerable distortions of a hero's character and not a matter of human interest at all.

The revisionists also link "human interest" with their theory of "human nature." In their view, the sentiments of self pity or nostalgia conveyed in lines like "The curtain flutters in the autumn

breeze, and the woman pines away like the yellow chrysanthemum,"* or "It cannot be severed or disentangled . . . the indescribable longing in my heart,"** belong to all men irrespective of class, and to all time irrespective of the age. They have the highest appreciation of such "human interest." However, these are simply the decadent sentiments of some individualist; the heroic people who are building socialism cannot enter into such feelings or appreciate "human interest" of this sort.

We are not against human interest in literature, what we are against is the kind of human interest advocated by the revisionists and the artificial addition of human interest to a work — "human interest for human interest's sake." We believe that human interest is subordinate to men's thoughts and feelings; and since different classes have different thoughts and feelings, they will like or dislike, sympathize with or feel averse to different kinds of human interest. In works of literature, all well-portrayed flesh-and-blood living characters abound in human interest, but this is not the human interest cut off from class and age which the revisionists advocate. Only such characters alone are typical of real, living men, whereas the characters transcending class or age advocated by the revisionists do not exist in real life. Our best works of literature abound in the human interest of the labouring people. Such cases are too numerous to cite. As for passages describing the love between parents and children, the friendship of class brothers, the love between men and women, all with vivid class characteristics and the spirit of the age, these are even more numerous in our best works. These are the human interest which the labouring people like. No wonder that the Yugoslav revisionists and foreign bourgeois periodicals dislike or even revile these works.

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*Lines from a poem by Li Ching-chao, a poetess of the twelfth century.

**Lines from a poem by Li Yu, last ruler of the kingdom of Southern Tang at the end of the tenth century.

5

Get Ready to Welcome New Struggles

The sixties of this century will be an unprecedentedly great age in the history of mankind. The imperialist bloc headed by the U.S. imperialists will meet with a sorry fate in these ten years. Its blood-thirsty, vicious nature will be more thoroughly exposed every day, and the people of the whole world will see more clearly that U.S. imperialism is the fiercest public enemy of mankind and is rotting away from day to day. Only half of the first year of the sixties has passed, but the people's angry opposition to imperialism, colonialism and fascist rule and their fight for national independence, democracy and freedom have already overthrown Syngman Rhee, Menderes and Kishi, the puppets set up by the U.S. imperialists. The courageous Japanese people are carrying on their just, patriotic struggle against U.S. imperialism to smash the Japan-U.S. military alliance and win national independence, democracy and neutrality; the flames of the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of Africa and Latin America are blazing brighter and brighter; all dictators relying on "U.S. aid" to bolster up their rule are liable to fall at any minute; all the double-faced are finding life increasingly difficult. U.S. imperialism and its lackeys who act counter to justice are indeed approaching their end.

However, we must not harbour the illusion that imperialism will voluntarily leave the arena of history. We must see clearly that only by strengthening the power and unity of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union, increasing the vigilance of the peoples of all countries in the socialist camp against imperialism and the warmongers, exerting our utmost efforts to form an anti-imperialist united front to oppose U.S. imperialism, the most vicious enemy of all the peoples of the world, and supporting the anti-imperialist struggles of the colonial countries — only so can we finally smash the war plots of the international aggressive bloc, only so can we completely eliminate the source of war — imperialism, only so can we win lasting peace.

Our writers and artists must take a firm stand on the question of war and peace, using literature and art as a weapon to make a thorough exposure of the true nature of the bourgeois pacifism which helps the enemy. We resolutely oppose the aggressive wars of imperialism and colonialism, and resolutely support all just wars opposing imperialism, colonialism and fascist rule. We must carry out ideological education through literature and art among the broad masses, to sweep away bourgeois pacifist thought, thoroughly expose the vile tricks of U.S. imperialism which under a mask of peace is speeding up its war preparations, thoroughly expose the true nature of the modern revisionists who are the henchmen and obedient tools of imperialism, and who use such fallacious catch-words as "peaceful evolution" and "the conciliation of classes" in an attempt to paralyse the people's will to fight. We have already done something along these lines; but we must redouble our efforts, enlarge our range of subjects and use a greater variety of literary forms. One of our tasks from now on should be to pay more attention to international affairs.

Regarding the situation inside China, the sixties will also prove an unprecedentedly great decade.

The three red banners of the general line, the big leap forward and the people's communes have worked one miracle after another. The high tide of cultural revolution and technical revolution which appeared this year will before very long completely transform the "poverty and blankness" of our country, making it a strong socialist state with a modern industry, modern agriculture, modern science and culture. The sixties will be the decisive decade for completing our socialist construction and paving the way for the transition to communism. Throughout the cities, people's communes have been set up, everywhere street service stations and other welfare undertakings can be found, intellectuals are going to villages and factories to steel themselves through labour and remould their ideology, while the workers and peasants are raising their cultural level, learning philosophy and storming the strongholds of science. All these new phenomena in our society are the first sprouts of communism. Under the leadership of the Party, and with its encouragement and help, they will grow rapidly and irresistibly. At this moment in our country an army of proletarian intellectuals has been formed and

is expanding. Bourgeois intellectuals through ceaseless ideological remoulding have also made great progress. An enthusiastic movement to study the works of Chairman Mao is sweeping the country like a rising wind or racing clouds. This is a great movement in the communist ideological revolution. The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party has taught us that before the establishment of a communist society the main content of the cultural revolution is the struggle for supremacy between socialism and capitalism in the ideological field. In these ten years, through incessant struggles, the proletarian ideology has occupied the dominant position in our country, and among the labouring people have appeared hosts upon hosts of advanced men and women with a communist ideology and character. However, the political and ideological influence of the bourgeoisie will remain for a long period, and only by means of a protracted and arduous struggle can the remnants of bourgeois ideology be completely wiped out from the mind of the whole people, enabling the communist consciousness and moral qualities of all to be raised to a much higher level. We literary and art workers should stand at the forefront of this ideological struggle. Our task is a glorious but difficult one. To accomplish it, we must make serious and redoubled efforts to study Marxism-Leninism and the works of Chairman Mao, thoroughly refute modern revisionism, go deep into life, go all out to steel ourselves through labour, remould our ideology, making ourselves intellectuals with a genuinely proletarian world outlook. We must raise our accomplishment in literature and art by critically taking over the heritage of the past, we must creatively develop our own skill in artistic expression by linking ourselves closely with the masses, absorbing their wisdom and learning from their treasury of art.

We should have full confidence that we can accomplish the glorious task given us by the Chinese Communist Party and the people, so that our work can fully reflect the age of the socialist leap forward, and also promote the leap forward of the socialist age. We can do things beyond the powers of our predecessors because we possess all the favourable conditions. The most important of these is the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and its great care for literature and art. We must abide firmly by the correct policy for literature and art, let a hundred flowers

blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend and develop the new from the old, which has great power to stimulate the vigorous development of socialist literature and art. We must strengthen the unity of literary and art circles and fully develop criticism and self-criticism to raise our level of political ideology and artistic level.

We should advocate the communist style of daring to think, speak and act, rid ourselves of superstition, be boldly creative and strive to surpass all the pinnacles of the literature of the past. Now there are still a number of people who believe that ideologically we can surpass the men of the past and have already done so, but that in artistic technique we must bow before them. Such a view is erroneous. The old masters' artistic technique is not too high to reach and can certainly be surpassed. The point is that we should not set them up as idols, but neither should we shut ourselves off from them and resist them; we must critically absorb all that is of use to us, then boldly create a completely new technique of artistic expression which accords with the spirit of our age. Well have our worker brothers said: "If we want to storm the strongholds of technique, we must first storm the ideological fort." We should learn this advanced experience from the workers.

We must continue to learn from the best traditions of the progressive and revolutionary literature of all countries of the world, especially the advanced experience of the socialist realist literature of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. After the October Revolution, Soviet literature opened up a new era in world literature. In the last forty years and more Soviet literature with its rich variety of styles and rich experience has made great contributions to the development to socialist and communist literature, and in future it will make even greater contributions.

We must strengthen the friendship and solidarity between writers of the various countries of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union; at the same time we must strengthen our friendship and solidarity with all progressive writers throughout the world on the anti-imperialist, anti-colonial front.

Comrades! Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the six hundred and fifty million people of our country are step by step realizing our predecessors' beautiful dream to conquer

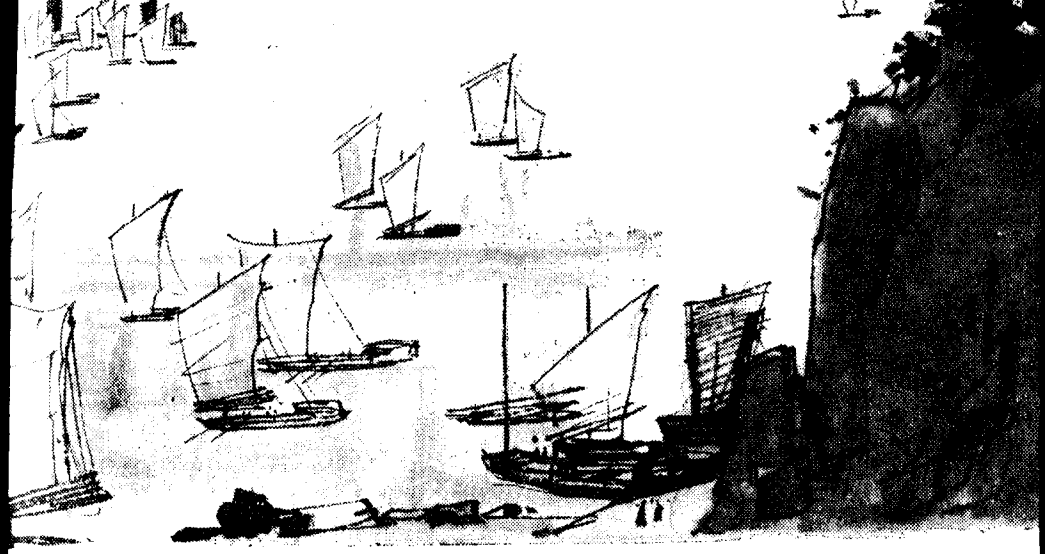
nature, to construct a Communist paradise on earth. As engineers of the human soul we should stride forward with full confidence to create more and better works worthy of our age, to contribute our share to the world treasury of socialist and communist literature.

Folk Songs and Dances from Bulgaria

On the eve of the 16th anniversary of the founding of the Bulgarian People's Repulic, enthusiastic Peking audiences attended the spirited performances of the Bulgarian Folk Song and Dance Ensemble known all over the world. This ensemble has been outstandingly successful in collecting, revising and refining folk songs and dances to make them more polished, more powerful and vivid in style. The members of the ensemble are all experienced and talented folk artists.

The highly accomplished women's choir presented the rare art of an unaccompanied polyphonic chorus sung in the manner of folk songs. Even more stirring was the folk chorus sung without accompaniment composed by Filip Kudev, head of the ensemble. The folk dances had a strong country flavour as well, while the colourful folk costumes increased the ensemble's national character.

After its performances in Peking the ensemble went on a tour of other cities in China.



YANG SHUO

Mirages and Sea-Markets

Penglai, my native place, is an old town on the sea with mountains behind it. Though not large, it has a distinctive charm of its own. Especially impressive is Penglai Pavilion on sheer Mount Tanyai north of the town, which reaching towards the sky seems poised for flight. When you lean on its balustrade to look at the

Yang Shuo, born in 1913 in Penglai County, Shantung Province, is a novelist and writer of stories and sketches. His major works include the *Northern Black Line,* a collection of short stories and the novels: *Red Rock Hill, Looking Towards the Southern Hills, The Northern Line, Beautiful Mountains and Rivers, A Thousand Miles of Lovely Land* and *Let Men and Horses Rest,* the last two reflecting the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea. He is at present head of the Foreign Literature Commission of the Chinese Writers' Union.

immensity of the ocean, the blue translucence of the sky, you literally feel, as the ancients said, that your five viscera have been washed and cleaned. Nor is this all. Even more wonderful is the mirage that appears occasionally out at sea, which we call the "sea-market." I saw this once when I was a boy. It was a misty day in spring, I remember. I was behind the pavilion collecting those pebbles rubbed perfectly smooth and round by countless waves, when I heard someone call: "The sea-market! Look!" Then I saw that the islands at the far horizon had strangely disappeared, while from the sea had risen a range of mountains I had never set eyes on before, misty and dark like a painting in Chinese ink. These islands were covered with hoary pines and cedars; but in clearings between the trees you could just make out fishing villages. The mountains kept shifting and changing. Now a pagoda would sprout from the top of a hill, then a town would spring up in the valley, and a multitude of black dots moving to and fro seemed to be men, horses and carriages coming and going at the fair. After a while, little by little, the mountains and town faded, growing fainter and fainter till in a flash nothing could be seen in the blue sky and emerald sea but the islands which had reappeared in the ocean.

The men of letters of old who witnessed this miracle were often moved to write poems. If you look at the many verses inscribed on stone by the men of old at Penglai Pavilion, the subject of most of them is this mirage, which they took to be the fairy isles of ancient legends. The most famous of these poems is Su Tung-po's *The Mirage,* which starts with these lines:

> In the east, clouds and sea, emptiness upon emptiness;
> Troops of fairies appear and vanish in that bright void;
> A myriad forms rise from that swirling, floating world,
> Are shell arches and mansions of pearl truly hidden there?

This gives some idea of the enchantment of those mirages.

The pity is that such visions appear so seldom. I stayed in my home town till I was in my teens, yet saw it only once. After I left home, in rain and snow, wind and frost, more than twenty years passed in the twinkling of an eye. This summer I went back to Penglai Pavilion, hoping that the shimmering, enchanted scene would appear on the sea again. But I had come at the

wrong season. There is usually a mirage only in spring, after rain, when the east wind is blowing. Since this was midsummer, my wish seemed a forlorn hope. Still, if the mirage refused to materialize, I could at least go and have a look at the place where it generally appeared. I might still catch a glimpse of it.

So I took a boat and made straight for the distant horizon. The sea was smooth as a mirror. The turquoise water was so intoxicatingly lovely that I longed to change into a fish to cleave through the waves. Fish surely lead a carefree life! There on the surface of the sea appeared the back of a fish as big as a small hill — it must have been more than a hundred feet long. I was watching it fascinated when there came a splash and another fish flew out of the water, spreading its fins and skimming far over the waves before falling back again.

Amazed and delighted, I cried, "A flying fish!"

The helmsman answered, "That's a swallow-fish. See how like a swallow it looks? In foggy weather they sometimes fall on board." The speaker was tall and sturdy, an old salt who had weathered every kind of storm. He asked me: "Are you out to watch them catch fish?"

I told him, "No. I'm looking for the 'sea-market.' "

The helmsman cast a sidelong glance at me. "You expect to find a 'sea-market?' "

With a chuckle I answered, "Sure. . . . Look, isn't that one?" I pointed into the distance, where through a light mist a row of islands was just discernible.

The helmsman smiled quietly and said, "So it is. You ought to go there and have a look around."

As soon as the boat reached the islands, I went ashore and strolled through that sea-market.

This place certainly deserves the name "the fairy isles of the ocean." The islands here, wrapped in mist, stretch one after another like a chain across the Bay of Pohai. The Bay of Pohai has always been called the gate of Peking, and with this long chain on it the gate is firmly locked. It is a mistake to imagine all islands in the sea as wild and desolate. These hills and foothills, high slopes as well as valleys, are a luxuriant green on every side, overgrown with oak, ash, willows and pines, not to mention countless ilexes, grapes and peaches, apricots, pears, apples and other

fruit and flowering trees. Through gaps in the branches you can often glimpse fishing villages with grey tiled roofs just like those I saw in the mirage when I was a boy. That sea-market of my childhood had been visible from afar, but unattainable; while now I could walk into the fisherfolks' homes and chat with them. The islands are intersected by roads with shady avenues everywhere. When you walk down these roads, you can see bright clothes flashing in fields as green as the sea itself. Those are the colour-loving women of the fishing villages who are weeding their crops. I noticed one young woman with a wild flower in her hair leaning on her hoe in the cool shade of an ash tree. What was she doing? Listening to the good news of a record wheat harvest throughout the country which was being broadcast by the people's commune microphone.

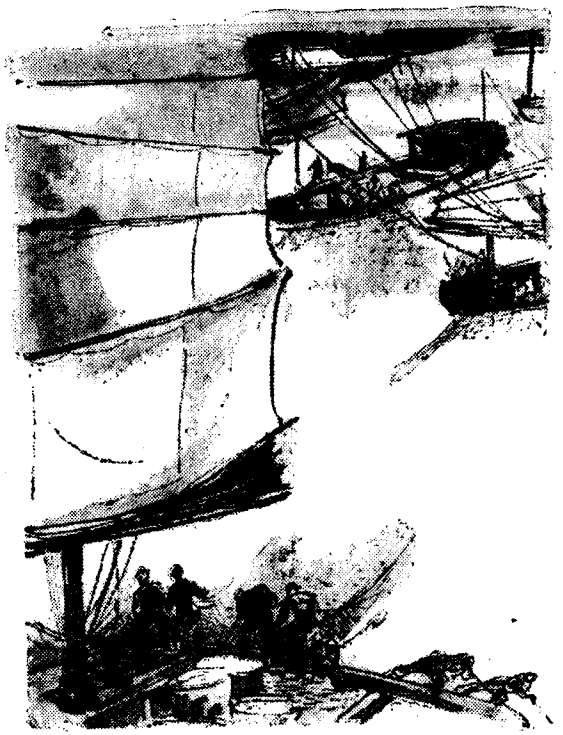
Wild flowers are a special feature of these islands. In the spring there is wild yellow jasmine; in summer when the sun sinks west, a riot of golden blooms over all the hills and slopes gives out a fresh scent, and sometimes from among those golden blooms rises a flame-bright wild lily. When the wind grows cool and crickets start chirping, you smell the pungent medicinal fragrance of wild chrysanthemums. In winter the grass turns yellow and flowers fade, but the sky rains down white petals and covers the hills with a mantle of dazzling snow.

November, the start of winter and of the snow, is the time when the fishermen go out to catch scallops. All the fishing vessels hoist white sails and ply to and fro to cast their nets like groups of fluttering white butterflies. To us, scallops, abalones and sea-cucumbers are rare delicacies; but if you visit a fishing team and they keep you for a meal, if, in addition to globe-fish roe and meat balls made of swallow-fish, they serve succulent, fresh white scallops or newly caught abalones, you need not feel surprised or imagine that they have prepared a big feast – this is common fare for them.

Catching these sea products, though, is strenuous work. Scallops and abalones abound only where there are sheer cliffs and the water is deep. I once watched men catching abalones. The fishermen given this job are usually men in their prime, good swimmers with plenty of experience. Each equips himself with a trowel and a gourd, to which a small net is fastened. At ebb-tide

when the water is relatively low, the fishermen put on goggles and swim under water to examine the sea-bed. As soon as they discover an abalone, they let go of the gourd and swim down. Now an abalone is an odd-looking creature; it has only half a shell and attaches itself to rocks. If you fail to scoop it off with your trowel you will never succeed in detaching it, even if you smash the shell. When a fisherman catches an abalone, he comes up to drop it into his net and take a breath while holding on to the gourd, before going down again. These men laughed and joked together like boys as they tossed into our boat abalones with shells gleaming like pearl, live sea-cucumbers about a foot long, scallops with shells resembling palm fans, as well as the strange-looking sea-urchin which they call the "prickly pan." This is round, covered with long black spikes rather like a hedgehog, and it can crawl about.

The busiest fishing season is naturally in April, the third month in the lunar calendar. There is a beautiful glen in this island called the Flowering Vale, which has peach trees everywhere, and each year when the peach is in bloom it is as if thousands of rosy clouds had come down to earth. The peach blossom season is also the season when all things grow. Seagulls like



balls of snow in nests on the rock concentrate so hard on hatching their eggs that when mischievous children climb up to steal the eggs, the mother bird simply rolls her eyes, too lazy to move. This is the time, too, when shoals of whiting come to the surface and cry as they flee from the large sharks pursuing them. When the fisherfolk hear whiting crying, they know that huge shoals of fish are near at hand. Sometimes one net can catch more than two hundred thousand; and when the fish are poured out in the boat they leap up over a foot into the air. As the proverb says: "After the 'rain for grain' season (i.e. towards the end of April), all fish make for the shore." Big prawns also rush towards the shore like gathering clouds, tightly packed, jostling each other so that they jump over the surface. These peach-flower prawns are plump and full of roe. The fishermen catch them with a net which has pitchers fastened to it and they call this a "pitcher-net." They empty net after net into their boats and carry these to the shore till prawns are piled up on the beach like hills. They call these prawn-hills "mountains of silver and gold." This is the busiest season for fishing, when the sea-market is at its most brisk and animated.

We might have a look now at some homes in the sea-market. Sung Hsueh-an is a strong, active man in his prime, as spry as a walrus. After half a life-time spent in the wind and the waves, fighting against the boat-owners, fighting for the revolution, he is now the Communist Party secretary of a production brigade. He took me to several families, all of whom lived in neat stone houses with tiled roofs. The interiors were even finer. There were soft, thick quilts and rugs on the beds, lacquered tables, big wardrobes and mirrors on the wall, while on the tables stood clocks, cups and saucers and large vases. I thought the first room was a bridal chamber. Actually it was nothing unusual: every house was like that.

I could not help exclaiming, "You are really living like immortals! What comfort!"

Sung Hsueh-an smiled but did not answer directly. Pointing to a hill in the distance he asked, "What do you think those are?"

They were graves, some high and some low, overgrown with brambles.

He said, "Those are graves from before the liberation; not real graves but sham ones. In each we buried clothes and a piece of brick, inscribed with the dead man's name. The bodies were at the bottom of the sea. In those days the fishingfolk often said, 'We would rather be donkeys on the south hill than catch fish in the ocean.' You see, the fishermen were out at sea the whole year round, and whenever the weather broke suddenly and a big storm blew up even a man with a hundred lives went to the bottom. What we dreaded most was the water-spout, which could carry men bodily up into the sky. Whenever a gale blew up, the women and children would go to the hills to burn incense and kowtow to the gods, weeping and wailing as they watched the boats their men were in. It wrung your heart to see them. And then there were the boat-owners, who killed men without shedding blood, by sheer, cruel pressure."

Sung Hsueh-an lowered his eyes as he recalled the past and continued, "Everyone knows that scorpions are deadly, but the boat-owners were more deadly than scorpions. Because my people were poor, I started doing odd jobs for one when I was a lad of twelve. In the third month, when the peach was blossoming, I baled the boat out for him in the rain till my feet were red with cold; but if I was slow, he bashed me over the head with the lead weight from the net. When I grew older, the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression broke out, and the guerrillas led by the Communist Party near Penglai had to buy steel from Talien, I suppose to make arms. The boat-owner often went to Talien in those days to ship maize flour back and forth, and I cooked for the crew. In Talien there was a man named Pao who used to get the steel out from a Japanese plant first and hide it in a shop. Our boat-owner was interested in this business because he could make a profit out of it, and so he told me to fetch the steel to the boat. Just think! The streets were full of Japanese agents; if ever they caught you that was the end of you. Since I was just a lad and had a sister still younger (she used to stay with my elder sister in Talien), the two of us used to sneak into that shop. My small sister would tie some steel to her legs, while I carried some wrapped in paper from a confectioner's; and all the way back we would be scared stiff imagining that spies were following us. When we took the steel back to Penglai and handed it over to the

guerrillas, they would give us two boatloads of wheat in return; but the boat-owner kept the lot, not giving me a single grain. At home we had nothing but bitter ground acorns to eat. We were looking forward to some proper grain. So my dad went angrily to see the owner, but the fellow rounded on him and started roaring: 'I bought that flour. You can't blackmail me! Your son eats my food without working; you're in my debt. Count yourself lucky that I don't ask you for payment.' The injustice of that rankled with me for years, till after Japan surrendered and the Communists came, when I became platoon leader of the militia and we struggled against the boat-owner, started the movement to reduce rents and interest and became active in the revolution." Then with a smile Sung Hsueh-an answered my earlier question. "You say we are living like immortals. If we hadn't made the revolution, even a place with real immortals in it could become a living hell."

"You're right," said I with a nod. "One thing still puzzles me, though. We've thrown out the boat-owner with the revolution, but we can't change the ocean. Whenever the sea turns against us, it can still stir up storms to kill men."

Sung Hsueh-an smiled again and said with complete confidence: "Tomorrow you should have a look at the fishing boats yourself. All our fishing vessels are organized now, and a pilot boat keeps up a regular broadcast on the spot about fishing and weather conditions. The larger boats have receiving sets, the smaller are fitted with earphones. A storm is always announced well in advance so that the boats can take shelter in the harbour. How can the ocean hurt us? Of course, sometimes we do get caught by surprise and find ourselves in trouble. Once it was touch and go with us. The weather forecast that day did not predict wind, and when the fishermen looked at the morning sky, the sun was red and there was not a speck of cloud or sign of a storm in the offing. So a few fishing boats put out to sea. Just after noon a sudden squall broke, however. The waves leapt up as high as small hills. The frantic fishermen lowered their masts, but all to no avail. Great billows were buffeting the boats, smashing the hulks till it seemed the vessels must capsize any minute. And just then, a warship loomed up ahead! You know, we are not far here from south Korea and occasionally we meet an enemy boat.

So the fishermen in a panic wanted to get away but found they could not. That ship came nearer and nearer, directly towards them, and some men on it stripped off their clothes and leapt into the sea to swim towards our fishing boats. When the fishermen saw this, they cried out: 'It's our men coming to rescue us!' In no time, all the fishermen were taken aboard the warship and their boats were tugged home. Our folk said, 'If Chairman Mao hadn't sent that big ship this time, we'd have been done for.' "

Apparently the people's navy, which guards this gateway to the capital, had come specially to rescue the fishermen.

At this point some readers may be asking impatiently: What sort of mirage on the sea is this? A mirage is unsubstantial as in those lines inscribed on one of the tablets at Penglai Pavilion:

> I long to find the fairy isles in the ocean,
> But though visible they cannot be approached.

How can you walk into a sea-market? This is carrying a joke too far. Forgive me, friends. What I have recorded is not the fictitious sea-market but a genuine one. If you go to my home town to look for the mirage out at sea, and fail to find it because this is not the right season, you need not be disappointed. Take my advice and have a look instead at the real sea-market, which is far more strange and interesting than any hallucination or vision. This real sea-market is the Changshan Islands.

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
Illustrations by Shu Lan

JU CHIH-CHUAN

A Promise Is Kept

That night, Mother Ho had many dreams one after another. As they say, spring dreams never come singly and are filled with the joy and sorrow of partings and reunions. But the last stayed most clearly in her mind. A small round-faced velvet dog had a string in its mouth to which was tied a little ball. The dog chased the ball and the ball rolled after the dog. The dog turned round and round till it made you dizzy, still it went on turning with a clickety click, funny, silly little thing! . . . Why, it was the little velvet dog they produced in their toy-making group which had intruded into her dreams.

Mother Ho was wakened by her own laughter. White light showed faintly through the sheer gauze curtain. It was dawn. She sat up abruptly and threw a jacket around her shoulders. Putting her hand under the pillow, she pulled out a red envelope folded in the middle. Carefully and solemnly, she smoothed it out to examine it again. "Labour is glorious" was written there in big characters in black Chinese ink, while the smaller characters read "Comrade Ho Yung-chen, leader of the toy-making group."

The morning breeze ruffled the curtain as slowly the things in the room began to take shape. Another beautiful day was starting. A thousand thoughts filled Mother Ho's mind as she sat up in bed, looking at the red, red envelope.

The previous day her heart had throbbed very fast when, beating gongs and drums, the comrades from the production committee brought them their wages. Although she was smiling, tears welled

up in her eyes. She had never dreamed that nearing fifty, her hair turning grey, she would be earning a wage for the first time. And tears streamed down her face at the thought of wages.

Twenty-five years previously she had been left a widow when her son, Ah-yung, was only five. Mother Ho — young Ho Yung-chen then — had a hard time bringing up her son. She begged many people to help her find a job, till finally she entered a silk filature. She should have been glad to have found a livelihood at last but instead with her son in her arms she cried bitterly. There was no one else in the family: she would have to leave him all by himself when she went to work. Before dawn the next morning when the sharp cry of the siren was still echoing above the city, Ho Yung-chen stroked her son's little round head lightly, locked the door and went to work. In the factory, she seemed to hear him crying and calling for her all the time. She bit her lips, swallowed her tears and thought of the money she would be getting at the end of the month when Ah-yung wouldn't have to go hungry any more. When her hands bled from picking silk out of the boiling water, she thought again of the wages which would buy Ah-yung a padded coat for winter so that his lips would no longer turn purple with cold. The wages! The wages! For the wages at the end of the month, she was willing to lock Ah-yung up in the room, to let him fall asleep on the floor from sheer loneliness. Day after day, she thought of the money and swallowed her tears. There were only two more days now to the end of the month. But suddenly from the high window of the factory she saw black smoke and flames rising from the street where her home was. For a few seconds she stood stock-still. Then she rushed like one possessed out of the workshop to the factory gate. When the guard there stopped her she stamped her foot, shook him off and raced towards her home, murmuring to herself, "Ah-yung, my sweet, mother is coming!" As she darted into their room which was surrounded by smoke and fire, her hair was dishevelled, her face pale as death and her clothes were soaked with sweat. She picked up Ah-yung who was sitting woodenly on the floor. When she came out to the street again, her legs gave way and she sat down on the curb unable to speak or cry. She could only hold Ah-yung tightly.

The next day she was fired. It was the twenty-ninth day of her work, just one day before pay day. But she was fired for ignoring the guard and leaving the factory without permission. Even the pay for the twenty-eight days she had worked was confiscated. Twenty-eight days! How could she ever forget those twenty-eight days and the unpaid wages?

With shaking hands Mother Ho received her first wages to the sound of gongs and drums. She was laughing aloud, but tears were streaming down her face.

She wanted to run home at once to show Ah-yung. What mattered of course was not the wages, the money. She wanted to talk to her son, to talk about the present and the past. But when she went home in high spirits and displayed the red envelope, Ah-yung just said "ma!" in his usual tone of mild exasperation. He went on, "We're not hard up now and you're getting on. You don't have to work. . . ." Lan-ying, who was usually a good daughter-in-law and worked in a factory too, showed no more enthusiasm. The reaction of Mother Ho's four-year-old granddaughter was much warmer. Skipping and jumping, she begged granny to buy her a steamboat and a doll that could shut its eyes. This made things more lively. But Mother Ho felt lonely and disappointed. Her son didn't understand her, neither did her daughter-in-law. Was it for money that she had joined the toy-making group they had organized in her lane? No. There was something very significant about it she felt, if only she could put it into words.

She sat up in bed thinking hard till the daylight streaming in aroused her.

"Ah, I must hurry. I have to go to the factory to get the materials." She threw off her quilt and got up to dress hurriedly, then took up the fountain pen and notebook she had prepared the night before, examined them and thrust them into her pocket. But her pocket wasn't big enough. If only I had a bag like my daughter-in-law to hold all the things I need to take to work, thought Mother Ho. Since she was working, naturally she should have a bag.

"Right. I'll buy one today. But I'll borrow one for now." She took her daughter-in-law's bag, emptied out its contents and put in her notebook and pen. She tried it in her hands and found

it too light and empty. "I might as well put in my spectacle case." Having added a handkerchief, she was satisfied.

"Are you busy on Sunday too, ma?" Ah-yung asked from his room.

"Mm." Mother Ho went on with her own business. She was still annoyed with her son. As a matter of fact, Ah-yung knew his mother's temperament, but he wanted her to have an easy time since she had toiled most of her life. That was why he didn't quite approve of her going out to work and had tried to dissuade her several times. But each time, she gave him a stern look instead of an answer, and when that happened Ah-yung could only say "ma!" in a helpless tone. He regretted it too because of little Ah-ying who had to go to the nursery since her grandmother was working. She was not used to it the first few days, and every morning would cry a bit clinging to her grandmother. Mother Ho was not used to it either, and every morning she would carry Ah-ying for a while and call her all kinds of pet names before they separated to go to the nursery and the toy-making group. At sight of them Ah-yung could do nothing but say helplessly, "ma!" Now that he saw she was going out even on Sundays, he sighed with another exasperated "ma!" This made Mother Ho even more annoyed.

"Stop ma-ing me all the time. Are you against my going out to work?"

"Of course not. But must you get up so early on Sunday? Why don't you stay in bed a bit longer?" Not wanting to spoil the Sunday by making everybody unhappy, Ah-yung changed the subject when he heard his mother's tone. When anyone mentioned how busy Mother Ho was she was always glad. Now she felt much better.

"I'll say we're busy even though our group is small. 'A sparrow may be small, but it has a heart, liver and all the other organs.' We have to get materials, send in the products, check up on the quality, hold meetings and so on. And everything takes time. Do you think you people in big factories are the only busy ones?"

"Certainly not. The smaller the workshop the busier its workers, particularly the group leader who has even more responsibility." What Ah-yung said was true. Still, he couldn't help pull-

ing his quilt over his mouth to chuckle. He knew his mother liked to hear this sort of thing.

And sure enough, Mother Ho liked it. Smilingly, she gave a sigh. "Ah! A group leader indeed. But I don't have as much energy as you young people." In spite of what she was saying, at heart she was extremely proud. For the first time in her fifty years she now felt she was a person of some importance. Whether she did well or badly would affect the people and even the country.

In the past when her son and daughter-in-law were enjoying their Sundays at home, colleagues sometimes cycled over from the factory to fetch her son in order to consult him on some urgent work or someone would knock at their door at midnight to ask her daughter-in-law to help out the night shift. At such times when the young folk were gone she always felt proud, but mingled with her pride was a sense of emptiness. No one ever came hurrying to her or consulted her on anything important. She seemed to be forgotten by all. One May Day when she came back from shopping, she stopped at the entrance of her lane to watch the parade for International Labour Day. There were workers holding all kinds of posters with charts showing how they had fulfilled their production targets, and peasants carrying specimens of their bumper harvest. As they went past in colourful groups, Mother Ho had watched happily and intently with a feeling which she found hard to define. Suddenly little Ah-ying came running out from the house calling, "Quick, granny, come quickly!" Mother Ho ran in and found that the rice on the stove was scorched. She took down the pot and sat musing in the kitchen. This was the responsibility she had – a task which could never amount to much but was a nuisance if she forgot about it. Later when the lane organized a production group she was the first to join. Now what made her most happy was that people often came to her back gate or up the stairs to fetch her. And several times she had been stopped in the lane by someone who wanted to discuss various problems: So-and-so should be commended for her efficiency; A and B were at loggerheads, something must be done about it. There was also the question of the quality of their products and their wall newspaper. . . . In a word, there were plenty of problems. Some pleased her and some worried her. But all in all they made her very happy. They had awoken her

to the fact that she still had some ability, something of which she had not been aware before.

She washed her face and combed her hair in excellent spirits. When she was ready she looked at the alarm clock. It was only seven! She was surprised to find how much more quickly she was doing things recently. No wonder people claimed that she was becoming younger.

"It's probably too early. The material won't have reached the factory yet." She picked up the bag, hesitated for a moment and put it down again.

"What shall I do now? . . ." She opened the cupboard and looked in. Clean bowls and chopsticks were stacked in neat order. She went into the kitchen which looked somewhat desolate. Some washing had been hung there to dry overnight. The kitchen seemed more spacious now. In the past, a few months ago as a matter of fact, this was the busiest time of the day for Mother Ho, when she bought vegetables, lit the fire, got breakfast and boiled water . . . bustling about with dishevelled hair. But now when they were hungry they could go to the canteen where hot gruel would be waiting. After walking around she came back to sit in her room. From the bag she took her spectacles and the red envelope, intending to look at the latter carefully again when suddenly little Ah-ying sat up abruptly in bed.

"You promised me yesterday, granny, to take me to buy a toy."

"Yes, I will, certainly." Mother Ho had something to do now. As she was dressing little Ah-ying, she began to talk her round.

"Ah-ying is a good girl. Granny has work to do. I'll take you out to buy a toy later, all right?" Her big dark eyes opened wide, Ah-ying began to fidget. "Don't go to work!" she said decidedly.

"That won't do. Work is very, very important. Do you understand? Don't try to hold me back." Unconsciously she laid emphasis on the last sentence. She wanted her son and daughter-in-law to hear too.

"Hold you back? What do you mean, granny?"

"Holding someone back means. . . . Well, it's like this. Suppose granny wants to go ahead to a lovely big garden and you tug me back to keep me from going in."

"Just take me with you into the garden. Will you?"

While Mother Ho was searching for an answer, from the inner room came the sound of her son and daughter-in-law laughing. In order to get her to rest, her son said, "Why don't you take her with you, ma? Lan-ying and I have some business this morning." If he hadn't said this, Mother Ho would have taken Ah-ying with her. But this remark displeased her again.

"Why don't you take her along? Do you think my business is less important than yours so that I can take a child with me?" But despite her irritation, she did not have the heart to disappoint little Ah-ying when she saw her bright expectant eyes. Besides, she was only going to the factory to fill up a form and fetch materials. It wouldn't matter taking her along. So she began getting her little granddaughter ready while grumbling about her son. Hand in hand, grandmother and daughter left the house, but then Ah-ying withdrew her hand suddenly and flew back inside. In a minute she came out, panting, to hand a basket to grandmother saying, "Granny, we forgot our shopping basket."

"My dear child, granny isn't going out for vegetables. Granny is going out to do some work. Work! You understand?"

Ah-ying blinked and nodded and looked as if she understood. Mother Ho wanted to say more to her but thought better of it. She was again feeling heavy at heart and a little lonely. Ah-ying didn't understand and neither did her son. She could talk to no one at home about her work and that made her unhappy. As far as Ah-yung was concerned, she could tell from a twist of his eyebrows what he was thinking. But when such an important event had occurred in her life, when she had begun to work, when many things were decided by her signature and her seal, when what she did, no matter what you called it, was like one of the beads of the big abacus of the country, her son seemed to be quite unaware of all this. Every now and then he said "ma!" in that helpless tone. Or he laughed at her as if she were a child. Just now, he was laughing aloud and it hurt her feelings.

With Ah-ying's hand tight in hers she walked on hurriedly. Soon the factory to which her production group was attached came in sight.

"Granny, buy me a steamboat!" Ah-ying, having finally made up her mind, tugged at her granny's hand.

"All right. Don't shout, granny has work to attend to." Mother Ho was sorry she had brought the child along. It didn't look right. So she told Ah-ying to wait at the gate while she went in alone. But the gate-keeper stopped her. Unhurriedly, she took the letter of introduction from her bag and said, "I have come on business."

"Please come tomorrow. It's Sunday. There's no one in the factory."

Of course! Mother Ho remembered that she had been told to come the day after. Carefully she put the letter in her bag and left, annoyed with herself. She also lamented that her brains weren't what they had been. She would have to put everything down in a special notebook from now on.

"Yes, I'll have to buy a little notebook. But. . . ." Writing wasn't easy for her. She regretted that she hadn't worked harder in the literacy class in her lane last year.

When they reached the streets again the shops were just opening and the day's business was starting. She bought herself a bamboo bag and the notebook she wanted, then took Ah-ying to the toy shop. The first thing that caught her eyes were those silly little dogs in the window, the same little velvet dogs that had dashed around in her dreams the night before. She asked for one, and put on her spectacles to examine it carefully.

"I want a steamboat, granny." Ah-ying, growing impatient, tugged at her sleeve.

"Just a minute, Ah-ying. Look at this little dog." She smoothed the little dog's whiskers and it looked very smart. The stitches marking its paws were neatly done. She wound it and it started to turn round and round on the counter.

"Shall we buy this, Ah-ying? This is nice." It was Mother Ho's turn to plead with her granddaughter. Raising her little head, Ah-ying looked in bewilderment from her granny to the dog. She nodded her head finally.

These purchases completed, Mother Ho relaxed as she led Ah-ying along slowly, feeling as if she had paid her debts.

"Granny, I want an apple." The little girl had stopped at the door of a fruit shop.

"I want an apple!" This startled Mother Ho. She seemed to have heard the same request before, but she couldn't remember

when. She stared at her granddaughter, struck suddenly by her resemblance to her father. Ah-ying had the same small round head, and eyes which were even brighter because there were no anxious tears in them. "That's it." It had also happened twenty-five years ago, Mother Ho remembered. When she came back from the silk filature and picked up her sleeping son from the floor, if the freshly wakened child cried in her arms, she would comfort him by saying "mother will buy you a big apple when she gets her pay." So in the morning when she set out for the factory Ah-yung would say like a good boy, "I want an apple when mother gets her pay." But since she got no wages in the end the apple was never bought. It was time she bought him a big red apple now. Taking out the red envelope with slightly trembling hands she extracted a banknote from her first wages and bought two big red apples. One she gave to Ah-ying. The other was for her son, for her Ah-yung. The promise she had made twenty-five years ago would be kept at last. Mother Ho felt a surge of excitement tinged with the old bitterness that left her a little sad. Quickly she took Ah-ying home.

When Mother Ho and her granddaughter arrived home, the little girl's mother was out. Ah-yung was still there busily polishing his shoes. Mother Ho handed the second apple to Ah-ying and said, "Give it to your father." She then sat down at one side. There was so much that she wanted to say to her son, but she sat there mutely to look contentedly at father and daughter. With

the toy box and her own apple in one hand, Ah-ying flew to her father's side holding the second apple high in her other hand. "Father, the apple granny promised to give you." She thrust the apple into her father's hand.

An apple? The apple she promised? Ah-yung didn't understand. Why was his mother treating him like a child suddenly? Why had she specially bought him an apple?

"Didn't you want an apple? Granny's bought it now." Seeing that he didn't understand, Ah-ying explained again. Ah-yung, apple in hand, was still puzzled. He looked at his mother. "Remember?" she asked, nodding and smiling. "Didn't you often ask me for an apple when you were small?"

A tremor went through Ah-yung. He held the apple in a daze. All the bitterness and sorrow of the past came back to his mind....

An apple! Yes, an apple. A big red apple. Many times the thought of the apple had comforted him and his mother when she was working in the silk filature. Every day he had walked around or crept about in their dark room waiting for his mother to come home. When he was hungry, he ate lumps of cold cooked rice. As dusk descended and the room grew dark, he would cry with fright and impatience till he dozed off exhausted. Sometimes he fell asleep on the straw mattress and sometimes curled up on the floor till night came and it was time to go to bed. It was only then that he heard his mother's voice, felt the warm caress of her hands. In her presence he cried bitterly again till his mother broke down too. But through her tears, she would pat him and say, "Don't cry, there's a good boy. When mother gets her pay, she'll buy Ah-yung a big red apple." Then he lay comforted in her warm embrace and fell asleep smiling at the thought of the apple. But soon that wretched siren sounded again and his mother disappeared. Ah-yung was again left by himself in the dark room to eat cold rice, walk around or creep about, crying and calling out as he waited for his mother till finally he dozed off....

The days went by. Ah-yung cried so much for fright that his voice became hoarse. He was getting thinner and thinner. But the apple which mother talked about every evening was becoming nearer and more attainable. Then his mother lost her job. After that she worked as a servant for no wages since she took Ah-

yung to live in her master's house. So the apple she had promised him, evening after evening, appeared only in his dreams.

By now, Ah-yung had eaten many apples, but his mother had bought this one for him with her first earnings.

"Mother! . . ." cried Ah-yung, so stirred that he wanted to say much more but didn't know where to start. After a while he picked up his daughter abruptly and went over to his mother. Little Ah-ying, holding the big apple in both hands, was biting into its juicy flesh which gave out an enticing fragrance.

"Mother, take us with you as you forge ahead. We'll build up the big garden of our country together." Ah-yung touched his mother's hand as he had done when a child. He reproached himself for not understanding her sooner. He had thought that since they had enough to eat and wear now, all was well. He had bought a radio especially for his mother in case she should feel lonely at home, yet still she went out to work. He wondered why he hadn't understood all this.

Ah-ying, enjoying her apple, didn't know why her father suddenly clasped her so tightly. She struggled out of his arms and jumped down on the floor. Mother Ho watched her. How like her father's were the child's bright blinking eyes. She picked up her granddaughter to kiss and hug her. Her eyes somewhat wet, she smiled, feeling so intensely happy that she was aware of nothing else but this happiness.

Ah-yung took the big red apple with both hands and put it carefully beside his pillow.

The red apple shone brightly. This was a gift his mother had bought with her own money. This was the fulfilment of a promise made twenty-five years ago. This was a warm mother's heart. . . .

"Look, father, at this little dog granny bought. She made it herself too." Ah-ying pulled her father to the table excitedly. The small round-faced velvet dog had a string in its mouth with one end tied to a ball. It was turning round and round chasing the ball, turning with a clickety click, funny, silly little thing. . . .

Ah-ying and her father laughed. Mother Ho was laughing too.

Translated by Yu Fan-chin
Illustration by Yao Yu-to

The Brazilian Samba Orchestra and Chorus

The Brazilian Samba Orchestra and Chorus arrived in Peking for a tour of China at the invitation of the China-Latin America Friendship Association on October 1, the 11th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. All twelve members of the Brazilian Samba Orchestra and Chorus are outstanding musicians, singers and dancers well known to the peoples of Latin America.

Originating in Africa and popular in South America, the Samba has been highly developed on the soil of Brazil. Samba performances are accompanied by folk instruments and consist of singing and dancing.

The items performed by the Samba Orchestra and Chorus gave a strong impression of the life of the Brazilian people and fully conveyed the rhythm and tunefulness of Brazilian national music. *Coastal Song* composed and performed by Victor Simon, leader of the Brazilian musicians, reflected present-day conditions in Brazil and Victor Simon's deep voice brought out the sorrow of the unemployed fisherfolk. *Greetings, Coffee!* performed by the whole orchestra and chorus gave a vivid picture of the hard work of the coffee planters. The dance *Carnival of Rio de Janeiro* showed the beginning and conclusion of this popular Brazilian carnival. The artists sang and danced to a strong tempo while playing folk instruments of every variety. Some of them, in their enthusiasm, danced down to the auditorium to distribute bouquets of friendship to the audience, linking the performers with the audience amidst a tumult of applause.

The visit of the Brazilian Samba Orchestra and Chorus has increased the understanding between the peoples of China and Brazil and promoted the cultural exchange between our peoples. After their performances in Peking, the Brazilian artists made a tour of Shanghai, Canton and other cities.

Poems of Revolutionary Martyrs

The six poems published below come from *Poems of Revolutionary Martyrs*, edited by the poet Emi Siao and published in 1959. None of the authors were professional poets, but their poems express a passionate love of their motherland and people, the greatness of revolutionaries, their unshakable revolutionary will and their faith in the victory of the revolutionary cause. These poems were written at different times, in different circumstances and places, some in lulls between struggles, some in prison.

In Prison

YUN TAI-YING

My friends of old roamed lakes and streams with me,
Now some are dead, yet their names live for ever;
All cares and dangers I brush aside as trifles,
And keep a stout heart in my prison cell.

Yun Tai-ying (1895-1931) came from Wuchin County, Kiangsu. In his student days he started to propagate ideas against imperialism and for national independence. During the May the Fourth Movement in 1919, he was one of the leaders and organizers of the student movement in Wuhan. In 1921, he joined the Chinese Communist Party and was responsible for the work of the youth league. He was the leader of revolutionary youths at that time. In 1927, after Chiang Kai-shek betrayed the revolution, in order to carry on the revolutionary cause against imperialism and the feudal forces, the Chinese Communist Party on August 1 launched the famous Nanchang Uprising in Kiangsi. Yun Tai-ying was one of the chief organizers of this uprising. In December 1927, the workers and revolutionary soldiers in Canton joined in an uprising which struck back at the counter-revolutionary forces of Chiang Kai-shek; this was the celebrated Canton Uprising, and again Yun Tai-ying was one of the leaders. He was arrested in 1930 when leading workers in a strike. He died heroically the following year.

Crossing Lake Tungting

TENG CHUNG-HSIA

Vast, boundless Lake Tungting
Twice in five days I crossed;
Snowy waves buffet the sky,
Louring like angry ghosts.
What is this world today?
Jackals and tigers prowl.
We shall wipe out these beasts,
I'm striving for my ideal.

Vast, boundless Lake Tungting
Twice in five days I crossed;
The sinking sun suffuses autumn waves,
Its reflections flame like brands above.
What is the world we seek?
Communism for all men.
For this we work with all our strength,
I'm striving for my ideal.

Teng Chung-hsia (1894-1933) from Yichang County, Hunan, was one of the early leaders of the Chinese workers' movement. He was an active organizer and leader of two strikes famed in the history of the Chinese workers' movement: the February the Seventh Strike of workers of the Peking-Hankow Railway in 1923 to demand the right to organize a general trade union, and the Canton-Hongkong Strike of June 19, 1925 to October 1926 to oppose the butchering of Chinese workers by British imperialism. In 1933, when organizing the struggle to resist Japanese fascist aggressors in Shanghai, Teng was arrested. He died a hero's death in Nanking in October that year.

The Prisoner's Song

YEH TING

Locked fast, the gate for men;
Wide open, the hole for dogs.
A voice shouts:
"Crawl out and have your freedom!"
I long for freedom, but one thing I know —
Men must not crawl like curs.
And I await that day
When the fire now underground shall burst through the earth
To burn my body with this living coffin;
For in those blazing flames, that reeking blood,
Shall I win through to immortality.

Yeh Ting of Hueiyang County, Kwangtung, was a bold fighter of the Northern Expeditionary Army during the First Great Revolution of 1925-1927. He was one of the leaders of the August the First Uprising in Nanchang and the Canton Uprising. In 1937, after the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression he commanded the New Fourth Army led by the Chinese Communist Party, and kept up resistance in the enemy's rear in the central part of China. In 1941, the Kuomintang reactionaries plotting to eliminate the New Fourth Army ordered it to move north, and then attacked it suddenly without warning — this was known as the Southern Anhwei Incident. Yeh Ting was unlawfully arrested by the Kuomintang and not released till 1946 after repeated demands from the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. In April that year, on his way back to Yenan from Chungking, he died in a plane crash.

To My Mother

LI SHAO-SHIH

Devoted to a just cause, how can I take care of my mother?
I cannot in these straits be a good son and patriot both;
Keep today's tears for me, mother,
For those who tomorrow shall have no homeland left.

Li Shao-shih (1906-1945) came from Hsinhuei County, Kwangtung. While in university he joined the Communist Youth League, and later the Chinese Communist Party. He worked consistently for the revolution. In 1945 he was assassinated in the streets of Chungking by Chiang Kai-shek agents.

Poem

HUANG CHENG

The night is long, our path ahead is hidden;
The stars hang low, the dawn seems rather late;
With shame I brood alone on tasks unfinished,
Yet firm in faith desire no better fate.
No more I cling to self or think of safety,
Here in the fight shall all my blood be shed;
Say not the way is long, dawn slow in coming;
Cocks crow, the sun is rising just ahead!

Huang Cheng while in school took an active and leading part in the students' patriotic movement in Peking. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in 1937, he joined the New Fourth Army. In 1941 the Chiang Kai-shek reactionaries staged the Southern Anhwei Incident. Huang Cheng put up a brave resistance but was captured and killed shortly after. He was not more than twenty-eight when he died.

My Confession

CHEN JAN

Though heavy chains clank on my feet,
You swing your whips like men possessed;
But I have nothing to confess,
Though blood-stained bayonets point at my breast.

For no true man will bow his head,
And none but cowards your "freedom" seek;
You beat and torture me in vain,
Not death itself can make me speak.

I laugh aloud in face of death,
My laughter shakes the halls of the devils;
The confession, this, of a Communist,
Which rings the funeral knell of Chiang's regime.

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi

Chen Jan, a member of the Chinese Communist Party, was arrested in 1948 in Chungking by Kuomintang agents. In prison he firmly refused to write a confession, but in his anger wrote this poem. On the eve of the liberation of Chungking he was killed by Chiang Kai-shek's butchers.

Cultural Circles in the Capital Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Death of Mark Twain

On September 5, the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace and cultural circles in Peking gathered to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Mark Twain, great figure in world culture and progressive American writer of the 19th century. Present at the meeting were Lao Sheh, member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace and vice-chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers and such noted personages of Peking cultural circles as Tsai Chu-sheng, Emi Siao and Yang Shuo.

Lao Sheh gave a report entitled *Mark Twain: The Exposer of the "Dollar Empire,"* introducing the historical background of Mark Twain's work. He also pointed out that from the time when the United States became an imperialist power in the nineties of the 19th century, Mark Twain never ceased to use his trenchant pen to expose through prose, short stories and especially political essays, the U.S. imperialists' savage aggression against the under-developed countries of Asia and Africa; in addition he debunked the false civilization of U.S. capitalism, holding up to ridicule the so-called democracy, freedom and equality of which the U.S. bourgeoisie was wont to boast. Mark Twain also expressed deep sympathy for the anti-colonial struggle of the peoples of Asia and Africa. Therefore today, when the imperialist forces of war headed by the United States are attempting vainly to put up a last-ditch fight and the flames of the national liberation movement are blazing throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, to honour the memory of Mark Twain has important topical significance.

At the meeting other noted writers and scholars who study American literature analysed and introduced Mark Twain's works in detail.

WEI CHIN-CHIH

A Short Introduction to Old Chinese Fables

There have been two golden ages for the fable in China. The first was from approximately the fifth to the second century B.C.; the second roughly covered the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Though both periods saw a high development of old Chinese fables, the causes of this were different, as was the character of the writing. I shall deal here mainly with these two periods and with their special features in mind, give the following examples from which our friends who love Chinese fables will be able to grasp a basic conception about them.

We may say that the first golden age of Chinese fables was the time when fables first appeared in China. At that period, the authority of the Chou dynasty was growing weak and the feudal barons of different states who had formerly acknowledged Chou suzerainty were becoming independent. No longer controlled by the Chou dynasty, they fought each other fiercely for towns and territory, annexing one another. In these years of war and confusion, the city states large and small needed more men and materials to gain victories; in particular, they needed men who could advise on government or assist them in their rule. And

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Wei Chin-chih, a writer of stories and sketches, is also known for his research work in ancient Chinese fables. His story *Wet Nurse* was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 7, 1960.

during this period the culture which had been monopolized by the nobles gradually came into the hands of common citizens, so that these citizens who mastered culture could rank as the equals of the intellectuals among the nobility. These men with education but no political position saw that the world was in tumult: families were ruined and states overthrown in the incessant fighting, and troubles within the states and without followed one after the other. Therefore they tried hard to find some way out, some turning to philosophy to solve the riddle of life, some delving into the art of government to discover ways to enrich the state and strengthen the army. Since these men had different interests and outlooks, there were soon a hundred schools of thought contending.

In such a situation, in order to win arguments and induce the barons in power to take their advice, philosophers and politicians not only had to make a serious study of their theories but also had to pay special attention to the art of rhetoric and oratory. Often state affairs and philosophic problems were so complex and involved that it was not merely hard for ordinary citizens to grasp them quickly — even the princes in power were sometimes at a loss. So the orators made frequent use of similes, putting profound arguments in a simple way and relying on fables and parables. These fables usually dealt with popular folk legends and myths as well as stories from real life having typical significance, all of which were easy for ordinary men to understand. And these fables could say much in a short space, using homely anecdotes to explain distant happenings. Most important of all, they used lively, vivid images to shed light on abstruse ideas. In this way they could arouse the listeners' interest and also make understanding easy for them. So the philosophers of various schools of thought at that time not only used fables and parables fairly frequently in their writings, but sometimes even took the trouble of adding fables at the end. They used them also in conversation, argument, memoranda and reports. There is a story about that time as follows:

Someone slandered the philosopher Huei Shih to the Prince of Liang, accusing him of being an orator who was so fond of parables that if he was forbidden to use them he could not make his meaning clear. So the next day when the prince saw Huei Shih,

he said to him, "In future please come to the point at once, without using parables."

Huei Shih replied, "Suppose a man does not know what a catapult is. If he asks you what it looks like and you tell him that a catapult looks like a catapult, will he understand?"

The prince said, "Of course not."

Huei Shih continued, "But if I tell him that a catapult looks like a bow except that instead of a string it has a piece of bamboo, and it is used for shooting, will he understand better?"

The prince said, "Certainly."

Then Huei Shih said, "We use something known to explain something unknown in order to help the man to understand. What's wrong with that? But now you tell me not to use parables in explaining an argument. Why?"

The prince was convinced.

The case of Huei Shih, who was a famous sophist and brilliant speaker yet could not explain his views without using parables, shows what importance the orators attached to their use. In fact, these fables could clinch the point they wanted to make. Thus the fable about the rats in the altar alluded to those bad officials, protected by princes, who were guilty of every crime. These evil men deserved to be eliminated for the harm they did to the people, yet any attempt to eliminate them might offend the prince; hence they were a menace within the government which was difficult to cope with and it was very apt to compare them to rats in an altar. The fable about the snipe and the mussel was told by Su Tai, who had in mind the fight between the two states Chao and Yen. This quarrel could not benefit either of these states, but only the powerful state of Chin which was looking on. Indeed, Chin later conquered Chao and Yen because they had been fighting among themselves. The fable about the chicken thief was told by Mencius to ridicule the state of Sung which levied heavy taxes. Tai Ying-chih, minister of the state of Sung, knew the harm caused by heavy taxation yet would not abolish it immediately, preferring to delay the issue. So the parable Mencius used was very much to the point. Fables about the fool who moved mountains and the lord who was fond of dragons poked fun at those who considered wise men as fools and who dared not face up to the truth, and these were apt attacks on the abuses

of the age. In short, the fables of this period, though not yet recognized as a distinctive literary genre but only appended to philosophical and theoretical writings or used in conversation, nevertheless played an extremely important role. And since most of these writers lived among the people and travelled from one state to another, they not only had a rich experience of life but also high powers of expression. Thus these fables usually have the vivid colours and lively images of real life. These gems have not lost their lustre although the main subject-matter, the argument, is out of date; for they have been widely known down the centuries and much quoted by later generations.

The second golden age of Chinese fables was nearly two thousand years after the first. This does not mean that in those two thousand years there were no fables in China or that there was not much development. Such was not the case. Since fables attacked bad practices of their day, during periods of extremely harsh feudal rule it is highly possible that obstacles were put in their path. But if we look at Chinese history, even during the most severe rule of the Chin dynasty fables and parables of a satiric nature still appeared sometimes, while there were even more during other dynasties. Special mention should be made of the Sung dynasty story-tellers in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Though they served as jesters to entertain the imperial court, among them were many brave and resolute men who disregarded their own danger and dared to use parables to ridicule the emperor and his chief ministers. This shows clearly that, since their first golden age, Chinese fables had not only become an independent genre of literature but also a weapon which the people could use to oppose reactionary rule. Famous writers in the Tang and Sung dynasties like Liu Tsung-yuan and Su Shih produced fables as such, setting a new fashion in writing.

By the Ming dynasty, Liu Chi, one of the chief ministers who helped to found the dynasty, wrote a book entitled *Yu-Li-Tzu* which consists mainly of satires upon the government and it was mostly written at the end of the Mongolian rule. This was the first collection of fables printed as a book. After the middle period of the Ming dynasty, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when evil ministers were in power and the government was corrupt, men who told the truth were liable to lose their

lives. Under such conditions, well-nigh dozens of collections of fables appeared. The most famous were Tu Pen-tsun's *Anecdotes of Ai Tzu,* Chao Nan-hsing's *Jokes with Commendations,* and the *Treasury of Jokes, Forest of Jokes* and *Cultured Jokes* attributed to Feng Meng-lung. Chao Nan-hsing was a well-known statesman; the details of Tu Pen-tsun's life are not known, but judging by the fact that he dared oppose the eunuchs he was probably a man with a sense of justice; while Feng Meng-lung was a scholar who achieved much in the compilation of folk literature. These men wrote mainly with definite satiric intent. For example, in *Going to His Death,* the ghost who walks to meet death stands for those stooges who injure their own fellows but cannot escape being eaten themselves in the end. This slave who is eaten thinks because he is working for the king of the ghosts he has nothing to fear. Their master is a devil, however, who keeps ghosts just to eat them, with no love for them at all. *The Gate and the Mouth* gives a lively picture of a rogue and bully who after he has vomited on someone's gate still holds forth in a self-righteous way, blaming the gate for being there. This attitude is thoroughly contemptible. Then there is the cook in *Habit* who is so accustomed to stealing to the point of incorrigibility that he steals his own family's meat without realizing it. Though these fables or parables appear like sketches of social customs of the time with no relation to politics, many of them were actually directed against specific individuals. For instance, *The Wolf of Chungshan* was a story written by Hsieh Liang of the Sung dynasty; Kang Hai of the Ming dynasty based a play on it to satirize a certain official; and when Ma Chung-hsi wrote this version he probably had in mind some definite person too. But from these versions we can see one moral in common. That is one must never give any cheap sympathy to those reactionary rulers, whatever may be their condition; for by nature they are like the wolves; as soon as there is a chance to attack you, they would not have any pity for you, but would fatten themselves on your flesh. When we compare the writings of this period with the early fables, we can see that apart from becoming a definite genre they have their distinctive subjects and modes of expression. The early fables and parables use legends or animals who represent men; there are very few later fables of this type;

most subjects are taken from the real life of that day, which is more vividly and richly depicted, to say nothing of the large quantity of such writing.

To conclude, despite the distinctive features of the fables and parables of these two periods, in one respect they are the same: they are writings serving politics. It seems that once fables and parables are cut off from politics and treated merely as jokes for leisure moments, they lose their profundity, lose their wide popular appeal and their power to live on. This truth is strongly evident when we review the history of the development of fables and parables in China.

Winter Sowing by Chen Tien-jan→

Chen Tien-jan was born and brought up in the village of Honan Province. He had only junior middle school education in his childhood. After he joined the revolution he did art work among the masses. He started wood-engraving in 1954 and was mainly self-taught. The article *Recent Developments in Graphic Art* published in *Chinese Literature* No. 3, 1958, mentioned specifically one of his works *Catching the Boat*. He is at present a teacher in the Hupeh Art College.

Selections from Old Chinese Fables

The Rats in the Altar

An altar is enclosed in wooden palisades and painted over; then rats move in to live in it. If men try to smoke the rats out, they risk burning the wood. If they try to drown them with water, they risk spoiling the paint.

Thus the rats cannot be destroyed on account of the altar.

from *Yen-Tzu-Chun-Chiu**

How the Fool Moved Mountains

The Taihang and Wangwu Mountains are seven hundred *li* around and hundreds of thousands of feet high.

The Fool who lived north of the mountains was nearly ninety. His house faced the mountains, and finding it most inconvenient to have his entrance blocked by them so that he had to go round each time he went out or came back, he summoned his family to discuss the matter.

"Suppose we work together to level the mountains?" he suggested. "Then we can open a road through Yunan to Hanying. How about it?"

They all agreed.

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*The authorship of this book is dubious, though it has been attributed to Yen [illegible] of the 6th century B.C.

Only his wife was dubious and said, "You haven't the strength to raze a small hill like Kueifu. How can you move the Taihang and Wangwu Mountains? Besides, where will you dump all the earth and rocks?"

They answered, "We'll dump them in the sea."

Then the Fool set out with his son and grandson, the three of them carrying poles. They dug up stones and earth and carried them in baskets to the tip of Pohai. A neighbour of theirs named Chingcheng left a widow with a son of seven or eight, and this boy came bounding over to help them. It took them from winter to summer to make one trip.

The Wise Man living at the river bend laughed at them and tried to stop them.

"Enough of this folly!" he cried. "How stupid you are! A man as old and weak as you won't be able to move a fraction of these mountains. How can you dispose of so much earth and rocks?"

The Fool from north of the mountains heaved a long sigh.

"How dull and dense you are," he said. "You haven't as much sense as the widow's young son. Though I die, I shall leave behind my son and my son's sons, and so on from generation to generation without end. Since the mountains can't grow any larger, why shouldn't we be able to level them?"

Then the Wise Man had nothing to say.

from *Lieh Tzu**

The Lord Who Loved Dragons

Tzu-kao the Lord of Yeh** was so fond of dragons that he had them painted and carved all over his house. The dragon in heaven, hearing of this, came down to thrust its head through the lord's door and put its tail through the window. At this sight, the Lord of Yeh fled, frightened nearly out of his wits.

This shows that the Lord of Yeh was not truly fond of dragons. He liked what looked like a dragon, not the real things.

from *Shen Tzu**

*Attributed to Lieh Yu-kou, who lived during the 4th and 5th centuries B.C. at the end of the Spring and Autumn period and beginning of the Warring States period. This book has also been ascribed to his disciples. Large sections at least are not by him.

**Pronounced "sheh" in ancient times.

The Chicken Thief

There was a man who used to steal a chicken from his neighbours every day.

"A superior man does not steal," someone told him.

"I'll cut down on it," he said. "I shall steal one chicken a month from now on and stop altogether next year."

Since he knew he was wrong, he ought to have stopped at once. Why wait for another year?

from *Mencius***

Waiting for a Hare to Turn Up

There was a peasant in the land of Sung who had a tree in his field. One day a hare dashed up, knocked against the tree and fell dead with its neck broken. Then the peasant put down his hoe and waited by the tree for another hare to turn up. No more hares appeared, however, but he became the laughing-stock of the land.

from *Han Fei Tzu****

*A book, no longer extant, attributed to Shen Pu-hai of the 4th century B.C. All that is left is quotations in other books.

**A work of Meng Ko (390–305 B.C.) which was compiled by his pupils.

***The writings of Han Fei (c. 280–233 B.C.). Part of this work was probably compiled by his pupils.

Taking a Stone for a Jewel

A fool of the land of Sung found a *yen* stone east of the Plane Tower. He took this home and kept it as a great jewel.

A traveller from the land of Chou heard of this and came to see the jewel. The host put on a hat and dark robe to display his treasure. But when the visitor saw it, he laughed and said, "This is a *yen* stone, as worthless as a tile."

The other was very angry and kept the stone with even greater care.

from *Kan Tzu**

The Man Who Lost His Jacket

There was a man called Cheng Tzu in the land of Sung. Having lost his black jacket, he went out to search the road for it. When he saw a woman wearing a black jacket, he seized her and would not let go, wanting her garment.

*This book is no longer extant and its author is unknown. He probably lived in the 3rd or 4th century B.C.

"I lost my black jacket today," he said.

"What if you did?" she retorted. "This black jacket is one I made with my own hands."

But Cheng Tzu said, "You had better give it me quickly. What I lost was a lined jacket, while this of yours is unlined. Isn't it to your advantage to exchange an unlined jacket for a lined one?"

from *The Discourses of Lu Pu-wei**

The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might

A tiger, looking for some prey, caught a fox.

"Don't you dare eat me!" said the fox. "The Emperor of Heaven has appointed me king of the beasts. If you eat me, you will be disobeying his orders. If you don't believe me, let me walk ahead while you follow close behind. You'll see whether the other beasts run away at the sight of me or not."

Agreeing to this, the tiger accompanied him, and all other beasts who saw them coming dashed away. Not realizing that it was him they feared, the tiger thought they were afraid of the fox.

from *Anecdotes of the Warring States***

The Snipe and the Mussel

A mussel was opening its shell to bask in the sun when a snipe took a peck at it. The mussel clamped down on the bird's beak and held it fast.

"If it doesn't rain today or tomorrow," said the snipe, "there will be a dead mussel lying here."

*The work of a number of protegés of Lu Pu-wei (circa 290–235 B.C.), prime minister of Chin in the Warring States period.

**This consists mainly of the arguments and speeches of orators in the Warring States period. Some scholars believe that it was edited by Liu Hsiang (78–6 B.C.). Another theory is that it was compiled by Kuai Tung who lived between the 3rd and 2nd century B.C.

"If I don't set you free today or tomorrow," retorted the mussel, "there will be a dead snipe here too."

As neither would give way, a fisherman came and caught them both.

from *Anecdotes of the Warring States*

The Owl Moves House

The owl met the turtle-dove, who asked, "Where are you going?"

"I am moving east," said the owl.

"Why is that?" inquired the dove.

"All the folk here dislike my hoot," replied the owl. "That is why I want to move east."

"If you can change your voice, well and good," said the dove. "But if you can't, even if you move east the folk there will dislike you just the same."

from *The Garden of Anecdotes** *(Shuo Yuan)*

Entering the City Gate with a Long Pole

In the land of Lu a man with a long pole wanted to pass through the city gate. First he held the pole vertically but could not pass; then he held it horizontally but could not get through either. He was at a loss.

*By Liu Hsiang of the Han dynasty.

Then an old man turned up and said, "I am not a sage, but I've had plenty of experience. Why not cut your pole into two to enter the city?"

So the fellow cut the pole as he was told.

from *The Forest of Jokes of Hantan Chun** *(Hsiao Lin)*

*By Hantan Chun of the kingdom of Wei in the 3rd century. The whole book is no longer extant, but the parts left have been compiled in one volume.

The Wolf of Chungshan

(abridged)

Lord Chao Chien-tzu held a great hunt at Chungshan. A wolf was sighted on the road and he pursued it in his chariot. Meanwhile Master Tungkuo, travelling north to Chungshan to find an official post, rode up on a poor donkey with a sack of books, and having set out early lost his way. The wolf appeared suddenly and accosted him.

"Will you help an unfortunate creature, sir?" asked the wolf. "Will you let me hide in your sack to spin out my precarious life? If I can get away, sir, I shall be grateful to you for giving me a second life, making the flesh grow on my bones again."

Then Master Tungkuo took his books out of the sack and helped the wolf slowly into it.

Presently Lord Chao Chien-tzu came up. When he could not find the wolf, he turned his chariot and left.

When the wolf reckoned that the lord was a long way away, he spoke up from the sack: "Sir, let me out!"

Then with his own hands Master Tungkuo helped the wolf out.

But the wolf snarled at him, "Just now I was chased by the hunters, who were hot on my heels. It was good of you to save my life. But I am famished. Unless I get food, I shall perish just the same. Why should you begrudge me your body to serve as food to save my wretched life?" With gaping jaws and raised claws, the wolf leapt at him.

Master Tungkuo defended himself desperately with his hands till he saw an old man approaching with a cane. Surprised and pleased, he left the wolf and went forward. Kneeling, he said with tears, "Please decide between us and save my life!"

When the old man asked what was amiss, he told him, "This wolf, which was being chased by hunters, asked my help and I saved its life. Now it has turned on me and wants to eat me. So I'm asking you to save my life by deciding between us."

But the wolf said, "When he saved me, he bound my feet and stuffed me into his sack, piling books on top of me. I crouched there not daring to breathe while he went on talking interminably with Lord Chao Chien-tzu. He meant to kill me in the sack and get the credit for it. Of course I must eat him."

The old man said, "I don't know which of you to believe. Suppose we put the wolf back in the sack so that I can see just how bad his position really was."

To this the wolf agreed gladly.

Then the old man whispered to Master Tungkuo, "Have you a dagger?"

The Master replied that he had and took it out. The old man signed to him to stab the wolf.

"Won't that kill the wolf?" asked Master Tungkuo.

The old man laughed and said, "The beast is so ungrateful yet you can't bear to kill it. You are certainly kind-hearted, but how foolish too."

He lent Master Tungkuo a helping hand, and between them they killed the wolf with the dagger. They abandoned its body on the road and left.

Written by Ma Chung-hsi of the
Ming dynasty (1368-1644)

Relatives and Friends

One day, when Ai Tzu was in Pinglu, he was walking on the road with a friend. A man rode up in a carriage and Ai Tzu's friend warned him, "That's a close kinsman of mine; we must get out of his way." Then a man with an awning held above him passed, and the friend said, "That's my best friend. Let's get out of his way." And this happened more than ten times on the road.

Then a snake-charmer turned up, then a witch-doctor. And Ai Tzu, acting like his friend, warned the latter. His friend said very sympathetically, "How is it that all your relatives and friends are so poor?"

Ai Tzu answered, "All the rich and noble have been grabbed by you."

from *Anecdotes of Ai Tzu**

*By Tu Pen-tsun of the Ming dynasty.

Falling Down

A certain man accidentally fell to the ground. He got up only to fall down again. Then he said, "If I'd known I should fall again, I needn't have got up."

from *The Forest of Jokes** *(Hsiao Lin)*

The Gate and the Mouth

Once the bore who was drunk passed the house of Adviser Lu and was sick at the gate.

The gateman shouted at him, "What drunken fool are you to vomit on another man's gate?"

The bore, glaring, retorted, "Your gate is to blame. It shouldn't face my mouth."

The gateman burst out laughing and said, "The gate of our house is an old one. It wasn't built today to face your mouth."

The bore, pointing to his mouth, replied, "I have had this mouth for a long time too."

from *Cultured Jokes*** *(Ya Nueh)*

*Compiled by Fu-po-chai-chu-jen (supposed to be Feng Meng-lung) of the Ming dynasty.

**Attributed to Fu-po-chai-chu-jen, which was supposed to be a pen-name of Feng Meng-lung. It has also been attributed to Hsu Chih-chang of the same dynasty.

Habit

A cook who was cutting up meat at home stole a piece and hid it in his clothes.

His wife seeing this scolded him, "Why do that? This is our own meat."

He answered, "I forgot."

from *The Treasury of Jokes** *(Hsiao Fu)*

Going to His Death

Since the god Chung Kuei was fond of eating ghosts, to celebrate his birthday his sister sent him this card with her gifts:

Two ghosts to go with wine,
Here's food for when you dine;
If it's not enough for you,
You can eat the carrier too.

Then Chung Kuei gave orders that all three ghosts go to the kitchen to be cooked. The two ghosts who were carried there looked at the ghost carrying them and said, "For us to die is only natural, but why should *you* take on this job?"

from *Jokes with Commendations*** *(Hsiao Tsan)*

*Compiled by Feng Meng-lung (?-1645) of the Ming dynasty.

**By Chao Nan-hsing (1550-1627) of the Ming dynasty.

Two Brothers Buy a Pair of Boots

Two brothers saved up to buy a pair of boots which were always worn by the elder. The younger, unwilling to get nothing for his money, would put on the boots and walk around when his elder brother was asleep at night. And so the boots were worn out.

"Let's both contribute some money to buy boots," suggested the elder brother.

The younger answered, "I shall never get any sleep if we buy more boots."

from *Jokes with Commendations*
(Hsiao Tsan)

Killing Rats

A man who hated rats because they were spoiling his property found a good cat which he fed on fish and meat and gave a rug to sleep on. Since the cat was well-fed and comfortable, far from catching rats it even played with them, thus the rats became more rampant. The man was angry and stopped keeping cats, imagining that all the cats in the world were worthless. He laid traps, but the rats would not go near. He poisoned food, but they would not eat it. Every day the rats made him angry but he could do nothing. One day his house caught fire. His granary and kitchen were burning, yet he rushed outside and laughed as if he could not stop. When the neighbours came to put out the fire, he said indignantly, "This fire is destroying the rats. Why rescue them?"

from *Hearsay Tales* (Erh Shih Lu)*

*Compiled by Lo Chun in the 18th century, during the reign of Chien Lung and Chia Ching of the Ching dynasty.

High Hats

A common description for a man who is fond of flattery is that he likes wearing high hats.

An official in the capital who was transferred to the provinces went to say goodbye to his tutor.

His tutor said, "It is difficult to be a provincial official. You must take good care."

He said, "I have ready with me a hundred high hats. I shall give one to each man I meet, and in this way I shall quarrel with no one."

His tutor protested indignantly, "We should treat others according to what is right. Why need you do that?"

The official said, "But how many men are there in this world, sir, who share your dislike of high hats?"

The tutor nodded and said, "There is something in that."

When he left, the official told someone, "I started off with a hundred high hats. Now I have only ninety-nine."

from *The New Forest of Jokes**
(Hsiao-Lin-Hsin-Ya)

*This anonymous work was probably compiled at the end of the 19th century.

LIU CHING

The Builders (*cont'd*)

THE STORY SO FAR:

After the liberation in 1949, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the poor peasants of Frog Flat carry out a tempestuous land reform. Liang the Third receives about a dozen *mou* of land. In the old society he had always dreamed in vain of "building up his family fortunes." Now he puts all of his efforts into his newly acquired private land. This old capitalist concept conflicts with the new ideas of his step-son, Sheng-pao, who is a Communist and stands for the socialist approach of co-operation in agriculture. He whole-heartedly responds to the Party's call to develop mutual aid in agriculture so that by collective effort production can be increased and the general livelihood improved. The poor peasants resolutely support him. But in the spring of scarcity they are temporarily short of food grain. The well-to-do middle peasant Shih-fu and the rich peasant Yao, who have considerable surplus grain, refuse to help them. To prove the superiority of co-operation and mutual aid and to defeat the sabotage of the rich peasant, Sheng-pao goes to a neighbouring county to buy a strain of quick-growing rice seeds, which would also allow time for planting an additional crop. He has fallen in love with Kai-hsia, a young girl of his village, and hopes to persuade her to become his wife when he returns to Frog Flat.

Having distributed the seed among the members of his team, Sheng-pao organizes an expedition into the mountains to cut bamboo for brooms. With the earnings they can get from the sale of the brooms, the team members can tide themselves and their families over the slack months of spring.

Chen-shan, a Communist and chairman of the village deputies to the township council, is highly respected by the villagers for his fearless stand against the landlords and rich peasants during the land reform. But he has little interest in mutual aid and co-operation, and devotes most of his time to improving his own farm. Secretary Lu of the Communist Party township branch criticizes him for not paying enough attention to his work and says he has heard that Chen-shan has become a partner in a privately owned brick and tile kiln. Although this is true, Chen-shan hotly denies it. It is under these circumstances that he calls a village meeting to discuss loans of grain to needy peasants at low rates of interest, intending to get the rich peasants and well-to-do middle peasants to lend some of their surplus grain. But the prosperous peasants all stay away, and the meeting produces no result. Rich peasant Yao and well-to-do middle peasant Shih-fu, feeling secure now that land reform is over and their property still in their hands intact, and aware of the weaknesses of the village chairman, are confident that with their wealth and experience in farming, they can defeat the newly formed mutual-aid teams. They also buy quick-growing rice seed, intending to discredit the teams by getting a better harvest. Yao also starts lending grain secretly, at usurious rates, to needy peasants, including Tseng-jung, brother of Tseng-fu, a village deputy who is one of the staunchest supporters of mutual aid.

Sheng-pao fights back. Refusing to leave the needy peasants at the mercy of the usurers, he agrees to take any peasant who wants to go with him into the mountains, so that all the poor families will have enough to eat until the next harvest. Tseng-fu is put in charge of organizing the needy peasants from Kuan Creek Hamlet.

XII

Dark red circles marked his broad lined forehead where the cautery cups had been, breaths hot as flame came from his big hairy nostrils. His lips were dry and cracked, there were blisters in the corners of his bristly mouth. His large flashing eyes had lost their brilliance, his thunderous voice had been reduced to a hoarse whisper. For the past two days our friend Chen-shan had been lying on the small brick bed in his thatched hut.

An ordinary cold or flu never could have felled this brawny peasant. A powerful fellow, in the past whenever he ran a fever, instead of taking medicine or lying down, he went out and worked like blazes. Invariably, the next day he was cured. But this time

his illness was serious. He neither ate nor drank. He only covered his head with the quilt and slept heavily.

The mother of the village deputies' chairman kept tiptoeing up to his bed and asking:

"Chen-shan, how about some fine noodles?"

"Don't want any . . ." the chairman muttered nasally from beneath the bedding.

"How about a couple of eggs? . . ."

"Can't eat a thing."

"*Ai*! Chen-shan!" the old woman cried with a worried frown. "You're the one who's always teaching others! You ought to know — man is iron, food is steel. When a person is ill even if he doesn't feel like eating, he ought to force himself to take a little. You're the one who's always teaching others. . . ."

"Go away, go away! . . ." The voice in the bedding was impatient.

But no mother in the world can be angry with her son for long. After a little while, the old woman again tiptoed to the bed.

"Chen-shan, how do you feel now?"

"Mm. . . ." He didn't want to talk.

"Chen-shan," his mother said anxiously, "this illness of yours doesn't look so good. Hadn't I better send Chen-hai into Huangpao to get a doctor at the health centre?"

"Don't need any. . . ."

"Then how about Dr. Kao in Hsiapao?"

"Please, ma!"

"What is it?"

"Just let me sleep here quietly. . . ." The nasal voice inside the quilt trailed away.

Ancient superstition convinced the old woman that her son's ailment was not merely due to the chill he had caught while talking too long with Secretary Lu on the bank of the stream, the night of the low-interest grain loan meeting. She suspected that during the course of their conversation some demon had taken possession of Chen-shan's body. After privately consulting with his wife and the wife of his younger brother Chen-hai, she and the two wives, unknown to the sick Communist, went to the path along the stream bank to "send off" the demon. The old woman knelt on the path, heaped together a pile of earth,

inserted a couple of incense sticks and burned simulated paper money. Kowtowing, she pleaded with the demon to wait at a crossroad for another victim. . . .

But the next day the chairman of the village deputies still was unable to raise himself from his bed, although his forehead felt cooler to his mother's touch. . . .

Wrapped in his quilt, Chen-shan was miserable. When a man was down on his luck, he thought, he'd tumble even on a perfectly level road. Last winter, just as he was about to buy two *mou* of paddy, Sheng-pao had found out and told the Party branch. Chen-shan had to criticize himself three times at Party rectification branch meetings. Recently, he had taken the grain he had originally set aside for the purchase of the land and invested it in the private brick and tile kiln outside Huangpao's north gate — so as to "aid national construction." Who would have thought that Secretary Lu would hear about it so quickly? That night he had followed the secretary to the stream and jawed with him for a long time, but Lu had refused to drop even a hint of who had informed him. Chen-shan had staunchly denied that he had done any such thing. "If it's not true," Lu had retorted, "what do you care who told me?"

Chen-shan had repeated that he hadn't invested in the kiln. He suggested tentatively that even if he had, you couldn't compare it with buying land or with shameful acts of exploitation like practising usury. It would merely be a form of supporting national construction.

"Hah, comrade!" Secretary Lu had said. "You're a smart talker! If you're so eager to support national construction, why don't you do the same as Comrade Sheng-pao? — Whole-heartedly organize a mutual-aid team and help the poor peasants increase output. You call investing your grain in a private kiln 'supporting national construction'? Comrade, you're in business! You needn't think that you're so clever and everyone else is stupid! You've got seventy-two holes in your heart; others can see right through you — even though they may not say so!"

Chen-shan had flushed. What could he say? The secretary hadn't left him a leg to stand on.

Muffled in his bedding, he thought hard: How did Secretary Lu know? When and where had the news leaked out? Chen-

shan had kept it secret from even his mother, his wife, his brother and his sister-in-law. When they asked him why he was giving grain to the kiln owner, he had cautioned them: "Not a word! It's the food grain we've saved. I'm having him make some bricks and tiles for us over a period of time. If you want a tile-roofed house, keep your mouths shut!"

The whole family was very thankful to the head of the house for his long-range planning, and they knew he had been "rectified" during the Party rectification meetings the previous winter. They would never betray him.

As to the kiln owner, he had needed the grain badly to pay his workmen. He had nearly prostrated himself when he pleaded with Chen-shan to invest. "Don't worry about a thing, chairman," he had assured Chen-shan. "I know that you Communists aren't allowed to buy land, or lend money, or hire farm hands, or do business. This is a secret between you and me and the earth and the sky! If I leak a single word, you can spit in my face! You can call me a baby and make me wear split pants!" Of the few sharpers in the Huangpao market the kiln owner was one of the sharpest. Would he do anything to hurt his own interests?

Ah! Chen-shan finally dug it out of his memory. He seemed to recall that on two of the occasions when he and the kiln owner had met and talked in the Huangpao market, Sheng-pao had seen them. . . .

"Him again!" Chen-shan fretted beneath his quilt. "Him again! He's got a keen eye and a sensitive nose for this kind of business!"

Unhappily he remembered those days in the first lunar month when District Party Secretary Wang came to Frog Flat to help strengthen the mutual-aid teams. He, Chen-shan, had felt pretty uncomfortable then. Knowing that he was in the wrong, he had kept his voice very low. Even his body had seemed too large — a big target attracts attention. What's more, Secretary Wang and Sheng-pao had been so warm and friendly. At night, the two of them had shared the same brick bed. It had made Chen-shan feel even worse. His heart had warned him: "Be careful. He's liable to whisper a lot of nasty things about you in Secretary

Wang's ear! You'd better be careful!" Now, in his sweat-smelly bedding, Chen-shan angrily muttered:

"Use your own ability to climb, Comrade Sheng-pao! Don't dirty my name before our leader to raise yourself!"

He wouldn't give Sheng-pao any credit. How much ability did that young fellow have after all?

"If I were the same as you — no wife, no kids — my mutual-aid team would be ten times better than yours! And I'm not bragging!" Chen-shan thought truculently inside his quilt.

Now that his imagination was heated, he wondered why he shouldn't work to build up the country's enterprises instead of his own family fortunes. He'd show Sheng-pao how a mutual-aid team could flourish! But as he rolled over in the bedding, Chen-shan again changed his mind: You couldn't toss away your personal livelihood just to let off steam! Socialism was something people were only now beginning to talk about. Everywhere folk were concernedly asking: When will we have socialism in our China? But no one could say exactly. Obviously the road lying ahead of the peasants was a long one and vague. Maybe this generation wouldn't reach socialism, maybe the next generation would have to finish the journey!

Thanks to land reform, Chen-shan was lucky enough to get a solid basis for building up his family fortunes. He and his brother Chen-hai had strength that would make an ox die of envy. The way they worked, there was no doubt they'd overtake the well-to-do Shih-fu! This wasn't even counting the income they'd get from their youngest brother, Chen-chiang, whom Chen-shan had sent to Sian the first time the city put out a call to the countryside for workers. He was working as an apprentice in a power plant. When he became a regular worker, he'd be able to send money home!

1953, the first year of our country's First Five-Year Plan, was the third year of Chen-shan's first five-year plan to build up his family fortunes. He had started in 1951. The goal of his first five-year plan was: to catch up with Shih-fu on an average land ownership per family member. That was as far as he wanted to go, not a step further. He absolutely wouldn't permit his family holdings to approach the size of those of his enemy, the

rich peasant Yao. That would be as incompatible with his "political nature" as fire is to water.

Rafter by rafter and beam by beam, he stealthily prepared the materials for his tile-roofed house, to be built during his second five-year plan — beginning in 1956. First, he would erect the main building. Then, in the third year of the plan — 1958, he would build the east and west wings. In the fifth year — 1960, he would put up the front building. He wouldn't move too fast. It wouldn't look right for a Communist!

Even so, the Party time and again prevented him from carrying out his plans. His first five-year plan had already been ruined. During the Party rectification campaign, it was already denounced as a breach of Party discipline for a Communist to buy land. Chen-shan had no choice but to advance the date of his second five-year plan. But who would have thought that the minute he poked his head out he'd be spotted by the secretary of the Party branch!

At a Party rectification meeting the previous winter, Chen-shan had made a flowery speech:

"A truer word was never spoken! When the men of the Red Army were crossing the snow mountains and slogging over the swampy grasslands, they didn't know how long it would be before the whole country was liberated. But though their feet were torn and bleeding they marched on, and in a little over a decade they smashed old Chiang Kai-shek. Who can say? We may even reach socialism in another ten or twenty years!"

As Chen-shan, together with other Communists, came out of the large gateway of the Hsiapao Township government, his mind was filled with lofty socialist ideals. Walking along a path through the paddy fields, after crossing a single plank footbridge over the Tang Stream, he had an intimate chat with Sheng-pao. They discussed how to strengthen the mutual-aid teams of Frog Flat, how to help the needy members who were having difficulty in their work and in their daily life, so that they wouldn't fall back into the old mire.

But as he lay on his brick platform bed that night, amid his wife and children, and listened to the mighty snores of his brother Chen-hai in the west wing, and heard the ox crunching chopped corn stalks in the shed adjoining the east wing, and the cat which

guarded their grain growling as it pounced on a rat on the shed's roof, Chen-shan at once came back to reality. His public duties were occupying too much of his time. Chen-hai was always threatening to take his own share of the farm and pull out. If Chen-shan really went at mutual aid in earnest, Chen-hai would never agree. Chen-hai had only a couple of kids, but Chen-shan had a large brood and he wasn't as powerful a worker as his brother. Chen-shan couldn't allow a break with him. No, it was out of the question! As the old saying goes: "The only thing a good property fears is to be split up!" Separated from Chen-hai, Chen-shan and his family would be hard pressed! Together, the brothers had a substantial bit of land and their labour power was strong.

"I'll be a plain ordinary Communist. I'll do a good job of my village administrative work and that's all!" Chen-shan thought. "Glory! I haven't the conditions to win glory!"

And so, the man who had made such a name for himself in Hsiapao Township during land reform came to a final decision — he would look after his own household, he couldn't be bothered with the poor peasants and hired hands. He had never dreamed Secretary Lu would keep such a close check on him. Nor had he ever expected that the village administrative work would become so difficult that he couldn't get by with only going through the motions.

His mother brought in a bowl of hot noodles. Very colourful, it had red peppers, green garlic sprouts and golden drops of bean oil floating on the surface. It made your mouth water just to look at it! Carrying it over to her son, the old woman stirred the noodles a bit with a pair of chopsticks and said:

"See, Chen-shan, your wife cooked this for you. You must try to eat a bowl or two."

Chen-shan pushed aside the quilt, struggled to a sitting position and accepted the bowl. As he gazed at it, his brows knit in a worried frown and he thought:

"What shall I do? The village administrative work is so hard, being a Communist is so hard. What shall I do?" This extremely grave question was giving him a splitting headache.

"You're the one who's always teaching others," his mother grumbled. "Show a little sense!"

"Outside the house he's so clever, but at home he's all muddled!" Chen-shan's wife said irritably. She was suckling a baby. "Ma, leave him alone. He can eat or not – it's up to him!"

With an effort, Chen-shan raised some noodles with the chopsticks and put them in his mouth. He didn't even have the energy to chew. He fretted inwardly: "A Communist! A Communist! Why is it so hard to be a Communist? . . ."

The question was tormenting him. And Secretary Lu had looked at him with such displeasure in his eyes. Suppose he left the Party? He'd get along!

He forced down the first mouthful of noodles, and picked up a second. Again he was unable to chew. Suddenly all the blood in his body seemed to rush to his brain. He could neither move nor think.

It seemed to Chen-shan that he wasn't on the small brick bed inside his thatched hut, but on a boat on the Wei River. He was dizzy, he couldn't sit firm. His head heavy, his throat choked, a bitter taste in his mouth, he wanted to vomit. Horrible! The entire hut was moving, the bamboo basket hanging from a rafter was swinging, the cupboard against the wall was swaying. . . .

Somewhere outside the compound there seemed to be a huge explosion. Chen-shan's ears began to ring, his bowl fell on the quilt, and he lost consciousness.

When he wakened again, he was lying in bed with tears running down his bristly cheeks. Ashamed and unhappy, he assured the rest of the family that he was all right. He ordered them to leave and go about their business.

Chen-shan! Chen-shan! The weakness that was a peasant characteristic for thousands of years has been welded so firmly into your big powerful frame that it's difficult to pry it loose. You're crammed with ideas from the old society. Secretary Lu has already criticized you. Have you the strength to rip out your own deficiencies? Who is going to win the battle for your spiritual self – Chen-shan the Communist, or Chen-shan the peasant?

After the others had left, he lay alone beneath his quilt, his body drenched in cold sweat. What a pity! Instead of examining himself ideologically, Chen-shan the Communist merely scolded Chen-shan the peasant-cum-earthenware basin pedlar:

"What crazy idea has possessed you? Do you really want to take the road to the edge of the cliff? Wake up! Open your eyes! How can you think of leaving the Party? You must stay in the Party, you must! If you leave the Party the peasants of Frog Flat will stab you to death with their eyes! Your enemy Yao will piss in your face! . . ."

In that instant Chen-shan, the peasant who was working so hard to build up his family fortunes, could see it fairly clearly: The Party had great and limitless strength! It was effectively guiding the development of China's history! Its policies were influencing the life of every Chinese – It enabled those who had been starving to eat their fill; it made the extravagant frugal, brought honour to the labouring people, made the lazy diligent, forced tyrants to bend the knee, gave courage to the weak, brought stability to society and prosperity to the Huangpao market fairs . . . .

And what about Chen-shan himself? He had been an ordinary peasant. It was only after he began carrying out Party policies that people attached any importance to him. If he quit the Party, all he'd have left would be a big body which could support a load of two hundred catties and the petty shrewdness of a peasant getting along from day to day.

He had always considered being "in the Party" more vital than anything. He never missed a Party meeting. If the Tang Stream had risen, he would walk far along the bank to a small bridge. If that had been washed away by the mountain torrent, he would go all the way to Huangpao where there was a big bridge. Was he going to let his desire to build up his family fortunes make him leave the Party today? Nonsense! . . .

Blabbermouth Sun came to visit the chairman of the village deputies, and brought him some news from the hamlet: Blue Moth, wife of ex-corporal Pai, had revealed that rich peasant Yao had loaned them two measures of white rice. After depositing the rice at home, Pai had gone off to Sian to buy old junk. In fact two needy peasants in Kuan Creek Hamlet had secretly borrowed grain from Yao. Tseng-fu's brother Tseng-jung had also gone to the rich peasant's handsome tile-roofed compound. Tseng-fu was so furious, he had stamped with rage. . . . Many peasants upstream were going into the mountains with Sheng-pao's mutual-aid team to cut bamboo. Sheng-pao and Yu-wan

had talked to Iron Man until he couldn't refuse – he had agreed to lend grain to feed the families of the needy peasants in his ward while they were away in the mountains. Tseng-fu was organizing porters in Kuan Creek Hamlet to carry out the bamboo brooms. . . .

Chen-shan listened, depressed. The chairman of the village deputies had lost his power to control the affairs of Frog Flat. Matters in the hamlet were developing quite independent of his influence. The rich peasants evidently no longer feared him, the poor peasants weren't looking to him for anything any more. Sheng-pao and Yu-wan had not come to him for advice, to ask what they should look out for when they went into the mountains.

Blabbermouth's account ran on and on. As Chen-shan listened, one thing became clear: by his spontaneous go-it-alone approach to farming, he had removed himself from the ranks of the struggle in Frog Flat. He had placed himself outside the revolution. No wonder Secretary Lu had looked at him with displeasure in his eyes.

"Enough! Enough!" Chen-shan pleaded softly. "Don't say any more. I've got a headache. If you've something else to do, just run along. We can talk again some other time. . . ." Chen-shan once more covered his head with the quilt.

Blinking, Blabbermouth gazed at him in surprise. Then, disappointed, he left the hut. He had been intending to try and enlist the chairman's help in his quest for Kai-hsia after reporting the news. He hadn't realized that Chen-shan was so ill. *Ai*! . . .

As for Kai-hsia herself, her thoughts were as healthy as her rosy cheeks, her heart was as spotless as her sky-blue tunic. Like a bee seeking nectar, she diligently sought knowledge. She strove for progress and longed to win honour by contributing greater spiritual strength to society. To the twenty-one-year-old member of the Youth League branch committee, honour was everything. She simply could not understand how a person could live other than honourably in this great new society. An important reason for her disdain of Blabbermouth, aside from the fact that he gazed at her lustfully, was because he had not been accepted into the Communist Party after the chairman had recommended

him. "Humph! What kind of a youth is he?" she thought. "Can't even get into the Party!"

Land, houses, carts, draught animals, clothing, farm implements, and other such items of private property in Kai-hsia's eyes had no more significance than the stones and gravel and grass on the banks of the Tang Stream. If, when the time came, she applied to join the Party and were refused, she wouldn't know how to face people! To be a Communist, to add one's own strength to the great collective strength of the Party – this, it seemed to Kai-hsia, was the very minimum requirement of an honourable existence.

But, lacking sufficient knowledge and experience, she saw only the glory of being a Communist. She did not realize that the inner thoughts and secret conduct of certain individuals bearing this honourable name made them unworthy of it. Pure and honourable herself, with no selfish desires, she was accustomed to viewing people she respected in the best possible light, and assuming the worst about people she disliked. When she heard that rich peasant Yao and well-to-do middle peasant Shih-fu had the temerity to openly oppose the low-interest grain loans, she was so enraged she wanted to pinch them, to spit in their faces!

At the same time she sympathized deeply with Chairman Chen-shan, who was responsible for this work, from the bottom of her heart. Her relations with him ever since liberation gave her no reason to doubt his good intentions. She forgave his lack of enthusiasm for his mutual-aid team because he had a large family. "Of course!" honest Kai-hsia thought to herself. "Sheng-pao's situation is much simpler!"

And so that day when she returned home from the Hsiapao primary school and heard from her mother that the chairman of the village deputies was ill, she threw down her school bag and hurried over to the hut diagonally opposite.

Chen-shan acted quite differently from the way he behaved when Blabbermouth visited him. Pushing aside the quilt, he squatted on the sleeping mat, his feet bare, and chatted with the girl standing at the foot of the brick bed.

When she saw how ill he looked – this man who had always been so concerned about her progress and future – Kai-hsia was

shocked. It was only a few days since she had last seen him on the village streets, but he had changed enormously. Because Chen-shan had been sleeping too long with his head under the covers, his broad face had become pasty and swollen. Its lines had deepened into wrinkles. His bristly cheeks were even more unkempt looking. Squatting on the brick bed in a shadowy corner, Chen-shan had the appearance of a doddering old failure.

After asking a few questions about his ailment, Kai-hsia inquired with concern why he hadn't called the doctor from the health centre in Hsiapao?

"Ah, forget it!" Chen-shan's voice was still rather hoarse. "Forget it. I'm much better today!"

Indeed, his mother and wife could testify – this important member of their family obviously was gradually recovering. He had gained back a bit of spirit. Chen-shan now wore a smile when he talked with Kai-hsia. They were sure that a smile and anxiety couldn't exist at the same time, nor could a forced smile mask any worry in his heart.

Chen-shan had fought his way out of a dangerous state of mind. He was struggling to take a broader view, to look towards the light. He warned himself: As long as he and Yao were living in the same administrative village, he could never leave the Party! The hatred between himself and Yao could never be dispelled as long as they both were on this earth. Land reform had given Chen-shan a bit of solace, but it had made Yao hate him all the more. The sole reason why Yao hadn't dared to bare his fangs at him was because Chen-shan's position at the time had been just. For Chen-shan to quit the Party now would be the equivalent of looking for trouble. How could he stand up against Yao man to man?

Chen-shan came to a decision. He would accept Secretary Lu's criticism. The rice which he had invested in the private kiln would become the purchase price of bricks and tiles. Then no one could say he was "in business." As to his mutual-aid team, he would simply bear up under Secretary Lu's criticism and Secretary Wang's coldness. He'd wait and see how Sheng-pao made out with his team, then he'd talk. He couldn't risk the livelihood of a dozen or more people on this mutual-aid gamble. And since he was unwilling to respond actively to the

Party's call, of course he couldn't expect to be commended as he had been during the land reform. Well, Chen-shan thought, he'd just plug away at earning a living.

Now that he had convinced himself, Chen-shan's health improved considerably. He didn't have to wrap himself in the quilt any longer. His wife and mother saw only that he was feeling better. How could they know what a severe struggle he had been through? And innocent Kai-hsia! Never in your dreams could you imagine such complicated ideas. She could only see him squatting barefoot on the bed. How could she tell what he was thinking? In fact she even said to herself: *Aiya*! Look what worrying over our village's needy peasants has done to our chairman! He must be very angry with Yao and Shih-fu. . . . And for this, she respected Chen-shan even more!

In her plaid cloth shoes, the member of the Youth League branch committee stood on the earthen floor of Chen-shan's thatched hut. To manifest her sympathy for the chairman, she angrily attacked Yao and Shih-fu for their opposition to the low-interest grain loans.

After his internal struggle, Chen-shan now appeared calm and reasonable, and full of self-critical spirit.

"I have shortcomings," he admitted. "I have shortcomings. If, in the first lunar month, my family hadn't insisted that I take our small store of surplus grain and order bricks and tiles with it, would Yao and Shih-fu dare to act so bold today? If I had used that grain to help the needy peasants, I'd be in a position to talk firmly to those two! At it is – *Ai*! I was wrong! Wrong! I shouldn't have listened to my family! 'A family has many tongues but only one master!' We've been living in thatched huts for generations. Why should we be in such a hurry to build a tile-roofed house!"

His pained and self-critical manner touched Kai-hsia's simple heart. Self-criticism to any degree is always welcomed. It is in no way demeaning; on the contrary, it arouses people's respect.

"*Ai*! Good Kai-hsia!" Chen-shan continued dejectedly. "My family said: Every year we have to repair the thatch. On this wild flat, if the wind blew the roof away some dark night, we couldn't even get up in time to chase it. I thought to myself: It's true. Rather than no one being able to sleep whenever there

was a wind . . . but who knew. . . ." The chairman was simply too miserable for words.

Kai-hsia believed that he was sorry. She knew that selfish family demands could be a pit for any Communist or Youth Leaguer. If you were the least bit careless, you could fall right in. As she stood rolling the edge of her blue cloth tunic, she wondered whether there was anything intelligent she could say to comfort the chairman.

"You've come just at the right time," Chen-shan went on. "I've been meaning to tell you. I want you to ask your ma whether she's willing to join my mutual-aid team."

Kai-hsai was very surprised. "Haven't you already teamed up with Old Chin and his brother?"

"That's right. But Old Chin and his brother both have draught animals. The team isn't carrying along a family which has none. That's my fault too."

"I'm afraid Old Chin wouldn't agree," Kai-hsia said doubtfully. "We've got no men in our family, and no ox. We're a burden. No mutual-aid team wants us. . . ."

"Don't worry. If he isn't willing, I'll talk to him!"

Kai-hsia was delighted. Joy makes young people excited, and Kai-hsia said excitedly:

"You don't have to ask my ma. I guarantee she'll agree with all her heart. You live right across the lane from us. You know how we manage. Every year we have to borrow a draught animal from our relatives to till our field. . . ."

The innocent Kai-hsia felt closer to Chen-shan than ever. Here was a man who recognized his mistakes and corrected them! Kai-hsia had lost her father and had no brothers. She considered herself very fortunate to have this older man, this Communist, looking after her.

Chen-shan gazed at the girl's happy face, lovely as a newly opened flower. He asked:

"What about going to a factory? Have you made up your mind yet?"

"Not yet," Kai-hsia laughingly replied.

"What's taking you so long?"

Kai-hsia only laughed. She wanted to talk with Sheng-pao, but she still hadn't been able to find the chance. Of course that

wasn't entirely true. It would be more accurate to say she was waiting for Sheng-pao to speak up and arrange a meeting. She shouldn't have to go after him. That would be too embarrassing! She wouldn't be able to open her mouth! . . .

But how could a girl tell this sort of thing to a third person? Again Chen-shan pressed her:

"What's taking you so long?"

Kai-hsia smiled and said, "You'd better lie down and get some rest, chairman. I must be leaving. . . ."

XIII

Sheng-pao squatted on the dirt floor of Yu-wan's thatched hut. In one hand he held a short pipe that had already gone out. With the thick forefinger of his other hand he scratched figures on the floor in the light of an oil lamp, his lips moving.

"Five ones are five, five sixes are thirty. . . ."

"How is it?" Yu-wan asked. He was quickly shovelling rice into his mouth from a large bowl with a pair of chopsticks. He craned his neck to look at Sheng-pao's calculations. "Will we have enough to give each man fifteen yuan?"

"Yes!" said Sheng-pao. He continued figuring. "Five sevens are thirty-five. . . ."

On his person were two hundred and fifty yuan in crisp new bills! Brother! When had the pocket of Sheng-pao's old padded jacket ever contained so much cash? Never! The district consumers' co-op in Huangpao had advanced him a third of the price when he signed the contract for the bamboo brooms. This joyous event had given his spirits an enormous boost. As he walked to the branch of the People's Bank to cash the check, there was a spring in his step. Smiling, he thought: Ha! With the leadership of the Party, and a contract with the consumers' co-op, and the People's Bank acting as backstage manager, what have we got to worry about?

He put the bills the bank gave him very carefully into his pocket. The money was like a flame, warming his whole body,

making him deliciously comfortable. After Chen-shan had shown himself to be useless, Sheng-pao had come forward to try and straighten out the situation in Frog Flat. But it had only been out of a sense of responsibility as a Communist and sympathy for the needy peasants that night in the school-house, that he had agreed to take them into the mountains. He hadn't felt very confident.

He had plenty of confidence now. Speng-pao was calculating how much money he should give to each man. Everyone should have enough to buy grain for his family and cloth for their spring clothes, as well as the things he'd need in the mountains — a sickle, hemp sandals, leg-wrappings. . . . Huan-hsi was at that very moment in the paddy flats, going from one thatched hut to another, notifying the peasants of a meeting in Feng Yu-yi's hut, which was centrally located. Sheng-pao and Yu-wan were going there together as soon as Yu-wan finished eating.

"What do you say, Sheng-pao?" Yu-wan burst out excitedly. "Let's not borrow any money from Iron Man! Let's show those middle peasants that we paupers can get along without them!"

"*Aiya*!" Sheng-pao was surprised. "How can you be so dumb? We may be young, but we can't behave like a bunch of kids. It's true that some middle peasants aren't so hot on mutual aid and co-operation, and some of them look down on us poor peasants. But Party policy is for us to unite with the middle peasants, not to get huffy with them. . . ."

Yu-wan smiled apologetically and went back to finishing his meal. When it came to questions of Party policy, he couldn't argue.

Lighting his pipe, Sheng-pao continued: "If you really want to join the Party, you've got to quit always doing things any way the mood strikes you. Everything has to be done according to Party policy! Don't you remember what Secretary Wang told us? We're not just private individuals banding together in a mutual-aid team. We represent socialism. . . ."

Yu-wan's mother-in-law, who was seated on the brick bed, and Yu-wan's wife Golden Sister, who was standing by the table, were happy to hear Sheng-pao criticize him. The wild young fellow who had married into their household was like a lump of crude iron. Maybe Sheng-pao's lectures would file off some

of his rough edges. The women had never been able to convince him of anything. . . .

Gazing at Sheng-pao affectionately, the kindly old woman plainly had something on her mind. She looked and looked. Finally she couldn't resist asking curiously:

"Sheng-pao, you're twenty-what this year?"

"Twenty-five. Why do you ask, Aunt Feng?"

"Why? You run around so for all of us — don't you ever think of getting married?"

Yu-wan's wife, Golden Sister, gave Sheng-pao a thin smile. Feeling very uncomfortable, he said:

"There's no hurry about that. . . ."

"What do you mean, no hurry!" the old woman retorted. "When you pass thirty, no girl in this new society will have you! If you're interested, I know a fine girl in another village. . . ."

"Must you interfere!" Yu-wan, still eating, rudely interrupted his mother-in-law. "He's had a girl for a long time already. . . ."

"Oh? He has? Where does she live?"

"I haven't! I haven't!" Embarrassed, Sheng-pao firmly denied it. He glared at Yu-wan. From the wink Golden Sister cast at her mother, it was obvious that Yu-wan had revealed the secret of Sheng-pao and Kai-hsia to his wife. That blundering hulk! He had been afraid Yu-wan couldn't keep his mouth shut, the useless clod!

Sheng-pao felt badly about this failing of the young militia captain. Sometimes he couldn't help worrying. It was dangerous having to carry out the important task the Party had given him, working together with this young hothead! Not only was he unsteady, but his attitude was bad. Look at how he treated his mother-in-law. If the old widow and her daughter weren't so taken with the working ability of this chunk of crude iron, would they let him get away with treating the old woman so disrespectfully?

After the militia captain had finished his rice and the two young men were walking through the murky night to Feng's place, Sheng-pao criticized Yu-wan. Sheng-pao said he shouldn't have told Golden Sister anything he wasn't sure of.

"You could stuff your belly with a big tub of rice. Couldn't you hold down just a few little words? Were you so bloated you had to pop them out?"

"What do you mean?" Yu-wan asked, a trifle shamefaced. "Haven't you hooked up with Kai-hsia yet?"

"Where would I get the time? As old saw says: You can't do two things at one time. . . ."

"Just to say a couple of words — how long does that take?"

"You've got to find the right chance. When nobody else can see you. . . ."

"Ho! I never thought you'd be such a softy about this sort of thing!" Yu-wan had to laugh. "Why do you have to 'find' a chance? If you wait for that, you may have to wait till next year."

"What do you think I should do?"

"As long as you love her and she loves you, arrange a meeting the next time you see her!"

"How do I do that?"

"The next time you see her, say: 'Kai-hsia, tonight go to such-and-such a place. I'll be there, waiting. There's something I have to tell you. . . .' "

"A bold shameless advisor you are! How can you give me such a dirty plan?"

"What's dirty about it?" Yu-wan laughed. He wasn't angry in the least. "All right then, just wait! The next time Kai-hsia sees you she'll say: 'Sheng-pao, meet me tonight at such-and-such a place. I've something to tell you.' That little girl's got more nerve than you. She's not ashamed to speak up! The husband of a child-bride and still so shy when it comes to girls! These last few nights I was sure you were out in the peach orchard,

kissing Kai-hsia. I purposely kept away so as not to disturb you. . . ."

Sheng-pao closed his big hand into a fist and punched Yu-wan hard on his thick shoulder. "Shameless dog!"

But to himself, Sheng-pao had to admit there was something in what his "advisor" had said. He admitted he was too shy. In a thing like this, it probably was better to be a little crude, like Yu-wan. The past few days Sheng-pao had met Kai-hsia a few times, on the paths in the fields. Each time, when they were still a distance apart, he had gathered his courage, preparing to talk with her, to find out what her real feelings were. But the moment they came face to face, except for a simple greeting, he hadn't been able to say another word. And he had grown quite flurried, sure that all the people outside their thatched huts in the paddy fields were watching them. He was worried that being seen together would affect his standing in the village, which wasn't high enough yet. In order to do a good job of the task the Party had given him, he had to do his best to raise his prestige among the people, so that they would go along with him without any reservations.

Feng's thatched hut was a bit more spacious than most. Besides a small inner room with a brick bed and a cooking stove, it also had a somewhat larger room where the mutual-aid team made soy beancurd during the slack months of the year. Now, a dozen or more peasants squatted on the large room's damp earthen floor. When Huan-hsi had told them that the consumers' co-op had given an advance, they came rushing to the meeting. Aha! So it was the Communist Party and the people's government that were the most dependable after all!

An oil lamp was placed on the millstone where the soy bean was ground. Sheng-pao stood before the peasants and reported on the contract the Huangpao co-op had made for the bamboo brooms. The peasants would deliver fifteen hundred brooms weighing seven catties each. At fifty cents per broom, the total contract price amounted to seven hundred and fifty yuan. The co-op had already advanced one third, and would pay the remain-

ing five hundred yuan in a lump sum when all the brooms were delivered. . . .

"Good!" Old Jen the Fourth shouted approvingly, removing his pipe from his mouth. "The people's government is really fine! We had no land, so it gave us land. We had no draught animals, so it loaned us money to buy them. Now, even before we go into the mountains to cut bamboo, it advances us money. If I'd known that before —"

"Uncle!" His nephew Huan-hsi uneasily cut him short. "Save the idle chatter till after the team leader finishes talking."

"Who says it's idle chatter?" Old Jen wasn't taking any nonsense from a seventeen-year-old boy, even if he was a primary-school graduate. He asked the assembled peasants: "Is it idle chatter? If you all say it's idle chatter, I'll stop talking."

The others couldn't very well make him lose face. They only smiled awkwardly. But Yu-wan didn't stand on ceremony.

"If it isn't idle chatter, what is it? Are we meeting here to discuss whether the government is good or bad?"

"Don't pull any of those old Kuomintang ways on me!" Jen said stubbornly. "In our new society, nobody can play the bureaucrat — and that includes the captain of the militia!"

"What? If I don't let you chatter, then I'm using Kuomintang ways?" Yu-wan demanded in astonishment.

"Chatter? You call this chatter? Secretary Wang likes to listen to my 'chatter' I can tell you!"

"Then why not make your speech to the Huangpao district Party committee?" Yu-wan mocked him.

The others couldn't restrain their laughter. Sheng-pao, also laughing, said to Yu-wan: "You're always arguing with him. When he thinks of something, he feels awful if he can't speak it right out. The more you argue with him, the longer it takes him to say it."

"All right! All right! I won't argue. Let him talk!" With a forced smile, Yu-wan fell silent.

Having been given the team leader's support, old Jen became even more righteous. He stepped to the middle of the room and formally began his address.

"It's not that I'm gabby. But we poor people like everything our government does, and our words come pouring out."

"All right! All right! Hurry up and pour!" the cheerful Iron-Lock Wang laughed from a dark corner of the room.

"Our government has been better to me than my pa!" old Jen proclaimed, unruffled. "When my pa died, he didn't leave me and my brothers a bit of property. All he left us was a lot of debts. When others split up a family inheritance, they divide the buildings and divide the land. When my brothers and I split up our inheritance, we divided the debts. . . ."

"Must you go into all that again?" asked Huan-hsi in agitation. "You've told us that story a thousand times!"

"That's just the introduction! Don't interrupt. I'm coming to the main point!" old Jen retorted seriously. He plainly was getting himself worked up, and he said with considerable feeling: "If I had known about the co-op before, I wouldn't have borrowed any of Shih-fu's stinking grain last year even if he came to my door and kowtowed! Why? Because there's not one line of mountain work that old Jen's not an expert in. If I can go to Huangpao and make a contract with the consumers' co-op, and they give me a one-third advance so that my family has food to eat and clothes to wear, why should I have to owe Shih-fu anything?"

Yu-wan simply couldn't stand any more. The old man's ridiculous nonsense was wasting time. Huan-hsi was ashamed of his uncle's utterly impractical though honestly impassioned speech. The sensitive young fellow had noticed that several people were laughing at the old man.

"You make it sound so easy!" said Yu-wan, both amused and angry. "Think you can do it?"

"Why not? Aren't I one of the Communist Party's basic masses?" Jen observed that everyone was looking at him in a funny way, and he became a little confused. "I figure if Sheng-pao can make a contract, there's no reason why I can't too!"

Sheng-pao explained to the old man: It wasn't just anybody who could enter into a contract with the consumers' co-operative, only a representative of a mutual-aid team bearing a letter of introduction from the township government. As to private indi-

viduals, the co-op might buy a few brooms from them, but not until they had brought the brooms out of the mountains and put them on display in the Huangpao market. . . .

"We have what's called a tie-in contract. It means that the consumers' co-op ties in with the mutual-aid teams," said Sheng-pao.

Old Jen opened his whiskery mouth. "Oh! Why didn't you make that clear before?"

"You were talking so much, no one else could get a word in edgewise!" Huan-hsi gave his uncle a disapproving look. Old Jen laughed in embarrassment, went back to his place by the wall and squatted down.

Yu-wan urged Sheng-pao to distribute the money, but Sheng-pao wanted to take this opportunity to tell his mutual-aid team and the peasants from Iron Man's ward some exciting news first.

When he had gone to Huangpao to sign the contract, he had met a cadre from the county office of the consumers' co-op. The comrade said that in Tawang Village in the Lu River Valley, all of the mutual-aid teams, with Wang Tsung-chi's agricultural producers' co-op as their mainstay, had made a contract with the Toupao District consumers' co-op for ten thousand bamboo brooms. Every one of the village's sixty able-bodied men was going into the mountains. In a little over a month they would earn five thousand yuan. Not only was there no question about food grain and cloth for spring clothes for the entire village, but the Tawang peasants had already ordered all the fertilizer they would need for the coming season. County, district and township cadres, whenever they stopped in Tawang, didn't see a single person in ragged clothes or anyone who looked gloomy because he was having a hard time making a living. The whole village was at work – men and women, young and old. . . .

"I asked the comrade from the county office of the consumers' co-op: With all those people from Tawang Village going into the mountains, does that mean the middle peasants will be out cutting bamboo also? 'Why shouldn't they?' he said. 'You think a middle peasant can only go into the mountains to dig medicinal herbs, but not to cut bamboo? Use your head! If the poor peasants and hired hands stick together and take the mutual

aid and co-operation road, the middle peasants have to follow!' You see how strong their mutual aid and co-operation is over there." Sheng-pao concluded encouragingly.

As the poor peasants and hired hands squatting on the floor of the beancurd-making room listened, they grew more and more animated. At first, they only stared in surprise. Then pleased smiles appeared on their faces and they looked at one another, their spirits visibly rising. The enthusiasm with which Sheng-pao had been infused now fired the peasants before him.

What he was trying to convey to them was that they shouldn't merely be impressed with the fifteen yuan each had received as an advance for the bamboo brooms they were about to cut in the mountains. He wanted them to see the strength of poor peasants and hired hands when they were united, and not to feel inferior to middle peasants simply because of the difficulties they were having in production or in their daily lives.

His words had their effect, and many peasants began speaking at once:

"We'll do it, Sheng-pao! Just give us the lead!" said a tall thin man.

"We'll stay hot on the heels of Tawang Village!" a solemn, ruddy faced peasant asserted.

"We're all the same men under the sun! If Tawang can do it, why not Frog Flat!" demanded the cheerful Iron-Lock Wang.

But Jen the Fourth, usually so fond of expressing his opinion, this time was silent. As he squatted leaning against the wall, hands hooked behind his neck, his pipe between his teeth, he was thinking very hard. When he heard Sheng-pao's report, his first reaction was – how considerate the government is of the poor peasants and hired hands! He hadn't realized that the thing depended on the poor peasants and hired hands themselves. In other words, their unity was the Party's strength. At last, in a very moved voice, old Jen spoke:

"Sheng-pao, you're the one with the good head after all. If the poor peasants and hired hands don't organize and the government has to help them one by one, how can it look after so many? While it's propping this one up, that one will fall. Take Tseng-fu in our village, for example. Did the government lend him money to buy a draught animal? It did. But his ox died. And

he couldn't repay when the loan came due. What's the government supposed to do – make him another loan? Organize, that's the answer! We've all got to organize!"

"Now you're talking sense!" Yu-wan grinned. Again he urged Sheng-pao: "All right. Hand out the money."

With great satisfaction, Sheng-pao pulled a packet wrapped in red cloth from a pocket inside his tunic. All eyes were fixed on the movement of his thick fingers as they opened the packet and counted the bills. He had counted the money once in the bank, and then again at home. But this was the first time since he had begun managing things that such a large sum had come into his hands. He didn't want there to be the slightest mistake. On the road home from Huangpao he had been rather keyed up. Even though the pocket containing the money was fastened with a safety pin, he kept feeling it from the outside, as if afraid that the small red cloth packet would run away. He knew how much toil his beloved neighbours would have to put into earning that money, how they would have to sweat!

How the peasants' eyes watched his moving fingers! What concentration! And the brains behind those eyes – what were they thinking? How precious the money was to the needy peasants in this difficult season! In previous springs, they had also gone into the mountains – once, maybe twice, scraping together just enough so that the wife and kids wouldn't starve till the barley came in.

Some wanted to go more often, but it wasn't easy to find partners. The mountain wilderness was covered with deep forests where tigers, panthers and bears roamed. A peasant who could find any other way to earn something always preferred it to risking a mountain expedition with a small band of two or three.

Now everything was all right – they were sixteen strong. And a month of bamboo cutting on Mount Chungnan would bring them a few score yuan each. . . .

Sheng-pao counted out the shares of fifteen yuan and Yu-wan distributed them, while Huan-hsi kept a record.

After the peasants had received their advance, Sheng-pao told them what to prepare. It was agreed that they would go into the mountains right after Clear and Bright Day.

As the meeting was breaking up, the door of the compound gate squeaked. Who was that walking across the courtyard? All eyes turned to the open door of the thatched hut. A shadowy figure approached. He was carrying some object. With a despondent tread, the man crossed the threshold.

"*Aiya*! It's you!" the peasants cried.

"I groped through the dark to your house first, and they said you had gone to Yu-wan's. Again I groped through the dark, but at Yu-wan's place they said you two had come here," Tseng-fu declared to Sheng-pao. Holding the sleeping Tsai-tsai in his arms, he had brought in a bit of the spring night chill.

"What's wrong?" asked Sheng-pao, seeing Tseng-fu's dejected manner. "Having trouble organizing the porters?"

"No. That's all arranged."

"Then what's so important that it brings you out with a sleeping child to look for me in the middle of the night?"

For the moment, Tseng-fu was unable to speak. Everyone could see that the thirty-year-old peasant was holding back his tears only with the greatest effort. Could this unlucky man have suffered another mishap, wondered Sheng-pao? With no woman in the house and no draught animal to till the land, father and son led a bleak and lonely existence. Could fate hurt them any worse than it had already? . . .

Everyone knew that Kuan Creek Hamlet had a lot of middle peasants, with a big well-to-do middle peasant at the east end, and at the west end a family who had been rich peasants for generations. Although Tseng-fu was a people's delegate, after the new land deeds were distributed, he started being isolated in his own election ward. But who would have thought that some new misfortune would fall upon his head?

One of the peasants handed forward a stool and urged him to sit down – he was carrying the little boy. Tseng-fu said he wasn't tired, he was used to it; his arms had grown quite strong. Everyone laughed wryly. They waited for him to speak. He shifted Tsai-tsai in his arms, swallowed, and said:

"My mutual-aid team's collapsed. My brother – he's hitched up with the rich peasant. The other two men on my team say that since my brother's quit, they're quitting too."

"What!" His listeners' jaws dropped in astonishment. "Is this true?"

"It's true. My brother and Yao are working together," Tseng-fu said heavily. Sarcastically he added, "My brother's short of animal power and Yao's short of labour power. Together they make a fine pair. What's more, that son of a bitch Yao had the nerve to insult me. He sent my brother with a message. He says if I'm willing to join him, he'll forget old scores. Is that pissing in my face or isn't it, I ask you!" Tseng-fu ground his teeth in rage.

The faces of the other peasants flushed an angry red. Yu-wan stamped his foot.

"That rich peasant is running wild! What are things coming to when a rich peasant can act like that? Why didn't you tell the chairman?"

Tseng-fu shook his head. He thought to himself: "He's not the same Chen-shan he was two years ago! On the surface he's a Communist, but in his heart he's a well-to-do middle peasant. The land reform has made him fat. He's content with life." But he didn't voice these sentiments aloud. Instead, he said to Yu-wan dully:

"Don't you remember that night when we wanted to stop Yao from moving out his grain? What's the use of telling Chen-shan? I've thought it over. There's no law to stop a rich peasant from teaming up to farm with anyone he likes. What can the chairman do? Forget it! We've only ourselves to blame!"

"But what about you?" asked Sheng-pao. He was racking his brains for a way to help this unlucky fellow.

With all the strength in his body Tseng-fu replied: "Let my brother take the line of the rich peasants, I'm sticking with the poor! I've been looking for you to see if you have any ideas."

Sheng-pao thought hard. If you'd stuck him with an awl at that moment, he wouldn't have felt it.

"I knew that's how you'd feel," Sheng-pao said at last. "Don't you worry about a thing! There's no need getting upset. You can take charge of the porters going into the mountains. Leave Tsai-tsai with my ma!"

Sheng-pao's generous offer in this time of crisis aroused everyone's admiration. As to Tseng-fu, his misery and worry were at once forgotten, and all his energy surged to his face.

For some time Jen the Fourth said nothing, his loose old eyelids filling with tears of sympathy for Tseng-fu. Then a smile appeared on his wrinkled countenance, and he cautiously reminded Sheng-pao:

"There's no question about your ma. But the old man. . . ."

"There's no question about my pa either. He does three things every day – eats, works and grumbles. But for all his grumbling, he has an honest heart. If he's not with us this year, he'll be with us the next. Nobody knows my pa better than me!"

Turning to Tseng-fu, Sheng-pao said, "Don't you worry. Leave Tsai-tsai in my place and he'll be treated right."

Tseng-fu didn't know how to thank him. "I'm sure of that one hundred per cent," he said, a faint smile on his thin face.

But then his expression darkened. He told Sheng-pao and the mutual-aid team members the other news he had brought: Shih-fu was also going to Kuo County to buy Hundred Day Ripener rice seed; he too was planning to raise both a rice and a wheat crop on the same land. The announcement only stimulated the members of Sheng-pao's team.

"Good!" they cried. "We'll have a contest with old Shih-fu!"

Young Sheng-pao wasn't the least alarmed by old Shih-fu's challenge. He was more interested in the developments in Tawang Village. As to the activity of the prosperous old middle peasant with the grey streaked hair – that was only temporary. And the vicious behaviour of the rich peasant with the scar on his right

eyelid – that too was only temporary. Both men were sure to knuckle under again.

It seemed to Sheng-pao that the people who truly had the power in Frog Flat, drawn by a new goal were all gathered here; rallying around his mutual-aid team.

Come on then, staunch fellows! Sheng-pao will stand by you through thick and thin!

He understood clearly now the significance of the expedition to Mount Chungnan. It was even more important than he had thought.

XIV

How interesting! Kai-hsia had received a love letter from someone in the county middle school.

Every day, Hsiu-lan went to the Hsiapao post office to see whether there was a letter from her fiance in Korea, and that morning she picked up the letter for Kai-hsia. The honest young girl couldn't conceal her disappointment at what she assumed was a defeat for her dear brother Sheng-pao. She quietly delivered the letter to Kai-hsia and left.

At first Kai-hsia wouldn't believe it. "Nonsense! Who do I know in the county middle school that would write to me?" Then, seeing that it really was a letter addressed to her, the shy girl blushed. But when she discovered that the writer was Yung-mao, son of the prosperous middle peasant Shih-fu, her face darkened.

Kai-hsia didn't like anything about Yung-mao. To prove that she had nothing to conceal, she opened the letter in Hsiu-lan's presence when the girls were on the road home from school. Kai-hsia then pulled her over to a grassy bank of the Tang Stream so that Hsiu-lan could help her read this literary creation. There were many words in the three-page missive that the girls – one in third-year primary school, and one in fourth – didn't know. Only after guessing their meaning from the general context did they get some idea of what the letter was about.

The middle-school student, so proud and aloof whenever he returned to Frog Flat at vacation time, began his letter with a

complaint – true or false, nobody knew. Because of Kai-hsia, he said, he slept badly at night, and couldn't concentrate in class or in outside study. His school work had been seriously affected. Only if Kai-hsia would provide a "solution" to his "love question" would he be able to study in peace. He made it sound as if a failure to agree to this "solution" would be positively inhuman.

Instead of working at his algebra and geometry, the young man had taken great pains to copy a lot of fancy phrases out of some elegant essay. These he used to describe the beauty of Kai-hsia's face, eyes and mouth, to extol her figure, her hair and the way she walked. Unfortunately, this display of erudition only added to the difficulties of the primary-school girls – their reading ability was very limited. Oh! Oh! He praised Kai-hsia's firm character and her vivacity, but regretted that she didn't recognize her own "worth," that she "wasted her youth" in various community activities during the school vacation periods.

"Take the measuring of the land and calculating its output last winter," Yung-mao wrote in blue-black ink on the red-lined letter paper. "Why did you have to take part in the measuring? There are many people in the village who could have done it. If you spent your winter and summer vacations studying at home, you could complete the six years of primary school in five and take your entrance exam for middle school a year earlier. Wouldn't that be fine? I would like very much to help you with your preparations. It really pained me to see you running all over the fields with those ignorant village cadres. . . ."

"Pah!" Kai-hsia spat contemptuously. "What a stinking attitude! Everyone else is ignorant! Only you've got any brains!"

Honest Hsiu-lan gazed at her searchingly, trying to guess what was in her heart.

"Yung-mao doesn't seem like a youth of New China," she agreed. "He treats our village campaigns as if they were nothing but idle chatter. The only thing that matters is his studies! But he's not studying for the sake of the country. He just wants to get himself a good job and earn plenty of money! Am I right?"

"He doesn't give a hang for the Party's call!" Kai-hsia said emphatically.

The girls went on with the letter. Now in an entirely different style, borrowing heavily from newspaper phraseology, Yung-mao wrote:

"Our social transformation has been fundamentally completed and large-scale national construction has commenced. Since Party policy is to develop industry first, the countryside is not likely to change for the next several decades. My family is fairly well off. If you consent to my plea, my father promises to pay your way through middle school. . . ."

"Pah! Disgusting!" Kai-hsia was furious. "Who cares if your family has a lot of land and a rubber-tired cart! Shameless dog!"

She felt that Yung-mao was insulting her. He acted as if she were some vulgar money-grubber. She had heard all about the national situation from Chairman Chen-shan long ago. Her problem was that although she wanted to take Chen-shan's advice and go to Sian and become a member of the working class, she couldn't bear to part with Sheng-pao. She certainly had never even considered turning her back on the road the Party had pointed out, now that the tempestuous land reform period was over, and seeking personal gain by throwing herself into the arms of a wealthy young man.

When the People's Republic was established in 1949, Kai-hsia was a mere girl of seventeen. She grew into young womanhood in the storm of social transformation. Her mother gave her physical life, but her spiritual life was given to her by the Party, you might say. Kai-hsia hated the shallow son of the prosperous middle peasant for his narrow vision. He saw only her exterior, but he couldn't see what was in her heart. Kai-hsia's even white teeth bit her glistening red lip. She wanted to tear the shameless missive to bits and throw it into the green waters of the Tang Stream. But suddenly she had another idea. She said to Hsiu-lan:

"I'll give it to the chairman! How about it? That pig insulted our village cadres. And he tried to get me to give up my Youth League activities. . . ."

"Right!" Hsiu-lan heartily agreed. "Where does he come off writing love letters to anyone he feels like and saying nothing but bad things? The dirty dog!"

The girls crossed a single plank bridge to the sandy green bank on the other side of the stream. After walking a while, through the tender budding branches of a screen of elm and willow trees they saw Chen-shan and his brother Chen-hai. The men were levelling some ground beside Liberation Creek to convert it into a paddy field.

Shading their eyes with their hands from the red rays of the setting sun, the girls saw the chairman bent over, digging, his large rump raised high, while his brother pushed a wheelbarrow. The men were stripped to the waist, the sweat on their powerful arms, backs, and thick chests glistening in the light of the sinking sun, now balanced on the horizon of the western plain.

Hsiu-lan went home. Kai-hsia, carrying her school bag, left her accustomed path. Trampling the new grass on top of the ridges, she angrily walked straight through the paddy fields to Chairman Chen-shan.

In the winter of 1951 Chen-shan had bought a two-*mou* peach orchard from a shoemaker who lived in Hsiapao. For this he had been ticked off so severely at the Party rectification meetings that he couldn't raise his head! And when he criticized himself at a meeting of all the Communists of Hsiapao Township, the bristly cheeks of his broad face had burned like fire.

But on the way home immediately after, Chen-shan had gazed at the two *mou* and felt wonderfully eased. He used to tell people: "It would have been a waste to leave this land in the shoemaker's hands, a real pity. First of all it's on the opposite side of the stream from him; secondly it's too far from where he lives; thirdly, he hasn't anybody to work it. He had been figuring on selling a crop of fresh peaches every year. Then the trees went bad and he planted wheat. But about as much came up as the hairs on Liang the Eldest's bald head. The place is practically barren. This is completely against the government's call to increase production. Now that I've got it — ho! — with a couple of good workers like my brother and me, we'll be able to make something out of it. Maybe a Communist shouldn't buy land, maybe it gives people a bad impression, but it will mean more output, which is what the government wants. . . ."

At Chen-shan's Party branch meetings, one member after another rose to criticize him for his glib cloaking of his real intentions. They showed that he was using fine words to conceal his selfish desire for more property.

Kai-hsia wasn't present at these meetings. Youth Leaguers took part in ordinary meetings of the rectification campaign, but they were not asked to attend when the ideology of members of the branch committee was examined. All she knew was that Chen-shan had been criticized somewhat during the Party rectification, but she didn't know the details.

She had wondered, at the time, why such a competent Communist should be eager to build up his family property — like any ordinary peasant. But when she saw how hard he worked, she was inclined to forgive him. After the chairman bought the orchard, he and his brother had pulled out the peach trees. They tilled it as dry land for one year, now they were converting it to paddy. They wanted to put in rice sprouts. . . .

Today, the Chen-shan working in the field beside Liberation Creek looked very different from the man Kai-hsia had seen sick in bed two days before. His physical illness and mental distress had faded with the red cupping marks on his forehead; all were completely gone. He had felt very badly that day because he had not been able to arrange any low-interest grain loans; his painful self-criticism had aroused Kai-hsia's sympathy and respect.

Shortly after Kai-hsia had left, Blabbermouth Sun had hurriedly arrived and reported that not a single rich peasant or well-to-do middle peasant in any of the township's five administrative villages would agree to make such a loan. Only a few ordinary middle peasants here and there were willing to lend a few measures. Blabbermouth had begged the chairman not to worry. Chen-shan's failure in Fifth Village wasn't anything to get upset about.

At this, the chairman's spirits had at once revived. He leapt from the bed, his illness and depression gone. "Let's see Secretary Lu criticize me now!" he thought. "You can't say what happens in other villages is my fault. Why weren't they able to raise any loans?" That was the way the tide was going in the villages now that the new deeds had been distributed. Why blame Chairman Chen-shan?

The big peasant ate two catties of steamed bread and drank a large bowl of corn-meal gruel, then belched loudly and said to his brother:

"Chen-hai, get our mattocks, shovel and wheelbarrow ready. We're going out to level that field!"

That night, while Sheng-pao and his team were meeting in the beancurd-making room of Feng's thatched hut to discuss their expedition into the mountains, a strapping big peasant, avoiding the main road like a petty thief, cut stealthily across the barley fields and made his way to the private kiln outside Huangpao's north gate. Softly, he called the kiln owner out and led him to a dark deserted place.

There had been a leak about his investment in the kiln, Chen-shan said. Secretary Lu had already questioned him. Because he wanted to remain "in the Party," Chen-shan declared, he would have to withdraw his investment. If the kiln owner had no money or grain on hand to repay him, he could consider Chen-shan's investment as a payment for bricks and tiles. Chen-shan would call for them after Clear and Bright Day.

The kiln owner was very reluctant to give up the investment, but this was an important matter involving someone's remaining "in the Party." Squatting down on his heels, he supported his drooping head with his hands, the picture of dejection. After a while, his mouth reeking of water-pipe tobacco, he said:

"Since there's been a leak, I can give you some bricks and tiles to satisfy prying eyes. But chairman, you can't pull out altogether!"

Chen-shan thought a moment. "I must," he said. "After Clear and Bright, I'm definitely coming for those materials. Of course I'm pulling out completely. I'm not a child. I know what I'm doing!"

His peasant ideas of private expansion were fundamentally different from those of the crooked kiln owner. Chen-shan felt instinctively that he couldn't let the sneaky businessman draw him any deeper into the mire. For his own sake, for the sake of his wife and kids, Chen-shan had to remain in the Communist Party!

At the time he was returning to Frog Flat, Sheng-pao and his team were still conferring in Feng's thatched hut. Chen-shan didn't meet anyone who knew him either while going to Huangpao or returning. Quietly, secretly, he had plastered over the

dangerous crack in his affairs. And he had handled it very well! If Sheng-pao had even a tenth of his brains, he'd be lucky!

Today, Chen-shan didn't have a worry in the world as he levelled the field by Liberation Creek. His energy increased as he worked. He dug with his mattock, then shovelled earth into the wheelbarrow. One man doing the work of two! Chen-hai, inspired by his brother's vigorous efforts to improve their family property, ran so swiftly with the barrow, it fairly flew. When Chen-hai returned with the empty barrow, instead of resting while Chen-shan filled it, he also grabbed a shovel and pitched in. Both men were dripping sweat.

Work! Off with your shirts and work! They went at it so hard that they drew the attention of all Frog Flat. Some people envied Chen-shan. They quoted the old saw, "When the whole family pulls together, ordinary earth can be turned into gold." Others were displeased, saying he was only interested in his own property; he never did anything for the needy peasants of Kuan Creek Hamlet. But envy or complaints, Chen-shan knew nothing of them. To tell the truth there were few in Frog Flat who dared to berate Chen-shan to his face. When his expression darkened, he certainly could look as nasty as they come!

But in the eyes of the innocent Kai-hsia, the chairman was basically honest and correct. And it was he who had recommended her dear Sheng-pao for membership in the Communist Party. She heard that when Chen-shan had been criticized during the rectification campaign, everyone had first said a few words about his good work in the land reform and only then, regretfully, pointed out that he wasn't keen enough on mutual aid and co-operation.

Trampling the new grass on top of the ridges as she hurried towards the chairman, Kai-hsia would never have dreamed that he was the kind of man who would steal through the night to see the boss of a private kiln. If anyone had told her, she would have thought he was deliberately inventing the story to injure a Communist's prestige. For she believed that Chen-shan's inner self was part of the same entity as his enthusiastic phrases, his powerful frame and his respectable exterior.

Even the fact that he had to criticize himself in the Party rectification meetings for the selfish mentality that led him to take

advantage during land reform and to purchase land afterwards did not spoil the excellent impression Kai-hsia had of him all during the land reform period. Heaven above! In Hsiapao Township there were only two people's deputies to the county government – Secretary Lu and Chairman Chen-shan! If Kai-hsia were to suspect a man like that, who in the world could she believe in? It seemed to her that Chen-shan was entirely reliable. He was the Party leader in Frog Flat. Sheng-pao was a green sprout, just emerging. It would take time for him to prove his worth. What's more, the chairman had always shown a selfless interest in Kai-hsia's future. . . .

Now, very angry about Yung-mao, she charged up to Chen-shan. He was bent over, digging with his mattock. Kai-hsia halted before him and held out the letter.

Chen-shan stopped working and straightened up. Stripped to the waist, mattock in hand, he gazed at the girl with brotherly concern. She was breathing hard, her face darkly angry. Chen-shan took the letter and asked with a laugh:

"What's happened to put you into such a state?"

"That shameless Yung-mao sent me this thing!" Furious and ashamed, Kai-hsia was blushing hotly, her eyes shooting sparks. Grinding her teeth, she hissed: "He's written all sorts of trash! Trying to lure me with an offer to put me through middle school! Trying to provoke me into leaving the Youth League! I can't let him insult me like this!"

Rather stunned, Chen-shan was still considering what to say when Kai-hsia turned and walked away. Chen-hai was coming back with an empty barrow and she was too embarrassed to remain. Chen-shan, always quick to sense things, smiled and let her go. . . .

When Kai-hsia got back to her thatched hut in the persimmon-tree compound, her mother saw that she was upset and asked her what was wrong. The girl had to tell the whole story again, and again she burned with rage. Her mother comforted her. . . .

At dusk, when mother and daughter were eating their evening meal, a big peasant, carrying a large rice bowl in one hand and a small vegetable dish in the other, with the towel-cloth that peasants use at meal time hanging on one arm, strolled in through the compound gate. It was their neighbour from across the lane. Dropping in with his food and eating with them had become his

habit. By now, the tacit acknowledgement of each other's presence was more affectionate than any greeting voiced aloud would be.

Although he had been working hard all day, Chen-shan showed no sign of fatigue. He put his dish of vegetables on the ground outside the door of the hut and squatted down beside it. As he ate, he smilingly addressed Kai-hsia. She was seated on the doorstep, also eating.

"Why should you get so mad? Did you expect the son of a well-to-do middle peasant to think as clearly as a Youth Leaguer or a Communist? If you don't like him, just ignore him. You're in the same village and living in the same lane. It's not worth fussing over a little thing like this. People would only laugh at you!"

"Right!" Kai-hsia's mother chimed in. "That's just what I've been telling her. . . ."

Kai-hsia said nothing. She was too angry.

The chairman took a sip of corn-meal gruel, picked up a piece of salted vegetable with his chopsticks and put it into his bristly mouth. In a friendly earnest tone he advised Kai-hsia:

"Anyhow, you'll be leaving the next time the Sian textile mill asks our county for workers. Why raise a big storm in the village about this love business? Maybe you'd shame Yung-mao, but you'd make it pretty awkward for yourself too, wouldn't you?"

"That's a fact," Kai-hsia's mother agreed.

"If Yung-mao doesn't write you again, then forget it," the chairman continued. "If he does, you just give the letter to me. I'll tell him a thing or two! All right, Kai-hsia?"

Confronted with such an authoritative analysis, what could she say? Kai-hsia consented.

Chen-shan made a generous proposal to the girl's mother:

"Aunt, you're part of my mutual-aid team now. I'll do all your ploughing and harvesting! You won't have to worry about a thing when Kai-hsia goes to work in the factory. Heaven above! They're going to build socialism in the big cities. If we Communists and Youth Leaguers won't go, who will? Here at home, in the fields, she's not such a strong worker. After she joins the factory if you have any trouble, just come to me. You needn't worry in the least! . . ."

The widow smiled. "If Kai-hsia's willing, it's up to her. . . ."

But Kai-hsia didn't indicate either willingness or unwillingness. She was a girl with a mind of her own. The chairman could get her to think about things, but he couldn't make her decisions for her. She wouldn't commit herself definitely because she hadn't discussed it with Sheng-pao yet. Kai-hsia didn't want to talk too much about a thing she hadn't thought over thoroughly for fear of giving her mother and the chairman the wrong impression.

The following morning, after Kai-hsia had left for school, her mother suddenly remembered something. She ran after the girl and caught up with her outside the compound gate.

"Kai-hsia, when school is over today, go to your big sister in Kuochia Village and ask her for a loan of their ox if they can spare it tomorrow. I want to grind some corn and beans. . . ."

"All right. . . ."

Chen-shan, who was setting out with his brother for their plot by Liberation Creek, overheard.

"Don't bother, Kai-hsia," he said. "We're not using our ox now. He's just standing there. You take him and grind your meal."

Holding her school bag, Kai-hsia halted and looked questioningly at her mother who was in the compound gateway. The widow said to Chen-shan:

"She'd better go to her sister's. We often have to use an ox. It isn't only this once."

"More than ten thousand times a year?" the chairman countered jocularly.

Kai-hsia's mother laughed, honestly and frankly. Chen-shan teased her:

"I dare say in a year you wouldn't want our ox for three hundred and sixty days?"

"Not even for thirty-six days, but —"

"Well then, take our big yellow ox! It won't hurt him a bit to grind a little meal for you two! And since you're now in my mutual-aid team, what do you mean by borrowing an ox from your relative? Are you trying to make me look bad?" Although Chen-shan's words were sharp, there was a smile on his bristly face.

Since the chairman was so sincere, how could the widow and her daughter refuse?

At dusk that evening, after Kai-hsia had returned from the Hsiapao primary school, she went with her mother to Kuan Creek, north of their compound. There, with sieves and strainers they washed some corn and beans.

The next morning, Chen-shan led his big yellow ox, already bridled, into the courtyard with the single persimmon tree. Embarrassed at this kindness, Kai-hsia's mother bustled about, thanking the chairman profusely. Really! You troubled a person enough when you borrowed his ox; how could you let him bring it personally to your door!

"Just tie him to the persimmon tree, Chairman Chen-shan, we'll do the rest. You've got your own work to attend to!"

"No hurry!" Chen-shan smiled. One big hand holding the lead rope, with the other he proudly patted the animal's sleek golden hide. "Sweep off the mill stone," he said. "I'll help you hitch him up."

Not only did the strapping peasant help the widow hitch the ox to the mill roller, he carried the cleaned grain and all the necessary implements — strainers, the pan — into the mill shed. He was more like a member of the family than a neighbour. Gratefully, the widow kept entreating him to go and attend to his own work. But it wasn't until everything was made ready for the grinding that Chen-shan dusted off his two large hands and departed, his mind at ease.

Chen-shan's extreme solicitude aroused Kai-hsia's mother's suspicion. While grinding the meal she wondered: "Why is the chairman so good to me? I'm only an old widow. What use can I be to him?"

She forced herself to look at the good side. She hadn't the slightest reason to doubt him. He was always trying to teach the villagers to do the right thing. Surely he couldn't be hatching some dark scheme of his own? When she married and came to Frog Flat, Chen-shan was only nine years old. She had seen him grow into a respected man over forty. His attitude towards women had always been courteous, even in the old society, to say nothing of now, when he was both a Communist and the leader

of the village. Besides, Chen-shan was twenty years younger than her and twenty years older than her daughter. . . .

Because of their special circumstances, Kai-hsia's mother had always been particularly careful in her dealings with men. To prevent gossip, she hadn't even allowed any of her neighbours to become too friendly. That was why she wouldn't borrow a neighbour's ox, but preferred to go all the way to one of her two sons-in-law, both living in other villages, to borrow an animal when she ground her grain.

When Kai-hsia came home from school that day, her mother mentioned her suspicions of the chairman. Kai-hsia laughed so hard she bent double, her braids sweeping the ground. Finally she straightened up, still laughing, tears of mirth in her eyes. When she regained control of herself she swung her braids behind her back with a toss of her head, then wiped her tears and said:

"Ma! Your mind is smaller than the eye of a needle! You can think of the strangest things. . . ."

The widow stared at her, quite displeased. How could you expect her to know so much about this new society? She was busy all day with pots and pans, bowls and chopsticks, sieves and strainers. When did she have time to think about the many things that were happening outside her persimmon-tree compound?

"Nasty minx! How dare you laugh at your ma?"

As Kai-hsia dried her eyes, her lovely face grew serious. She told her mother the facts as she knew them:

"The chairman has accepted Secretary Lu's criticism and is taking a real interest in his mutual-aid team. He wants to help his needy neighbours, just like Sheng-pao. Ma, this is something inside the Party. Don't breathe a word of it to anybody, whatever you do. . . ."

Her mother looked annoyed at the mention of Sheng-pao, and Kai-hsia said no more.

The chairman rose higher in the widow's estimation. She had a better understanding now of what it meant to a peasant to be "in the Party." The Communist Party taught peasants to be more honest, more generous, more farseeing, and that was how the widow liked people to be.

But she was sorry that Sheng-pao was also in the Communist Party. There was nothing between him and Kai-hsia that couldn't

be explained – she was convinced of that. But she wasn't at all sure that there was nothing in their actions that didn't give offence to the eye. Sheng-pao had no right to have any relations with an unmarried girl which weren't entirely open and public – that was what the widow had against him. She disliked everything about Sheng-pao, even the way he walked. Rather than let Kai-hsia and him become sweethearts, the widow was even willing that the girl should leave her and go to work in a factory. . . .

XV

Although the road of life is long, its most important sections are often covered in only a few steps, especially when a person is young.

No one's road is absolutely straight, without any forks in it. At some of these forks – whether they're a question of politics, personal career, or private affairs – a wrong step may affect you only temporarily, or it may influence your entire life. Before liberation, because the social environment was rotten, many young people didn't realize this and wasted their energy. Some were always busy over trivialities without making the slightest contribution to society. After liberation, Youth Leaguer Kai-hsia, although she was only a country girl, came to understand quite early what kind of attitude a person ought to have towards life.

The peasants of Frog Flat saw nothing to indicate that Kai-hsia and Sheng-pao were in love. They neither climbed over walls nor slipped in and out of windows. They had no time to idle along, waiting for each other on country roads. Kai-hsia, a third-year primary-school student, couldn't write enough words to compose a love letter. Indeed, even if she could, Sheng-pao, who still hadn't finished his spare-time course in elementary literacy, wouldn't have been able to read it. Nor was there any Hung Niang, the loyal maidservant in the traditional opera, to act as their messenger. The young couple found courtship very difficult!

While feudal economic and political concepts had been discarded, it would still be some time before all feudal influences could be

eradicated from the peasants' minds. It was better for promising young people in love to be a bit careful.

Yet in spite of all this, the love between Kai-hsia and Sheng-pao was many-sided and modern.

Kai-hsia and her mother slept in the same bed. One night, after they had retired, the widow was soon snoring, but Kai-hsia couldn't fall asleep. Oh, short spring night! Why did it seem so long to the lovelorn girl? Oh, spring wind! Rest a while! Must you keep rustling the new leaves on the trees outside the compound wall? Let Kai-hsia slumber!

Kai-hsia's mind wrestled with a problem as she tossed and turned upon her bed. Did she really want to leave this persimmon-tree compound where she had been born and raised? Did she really want to part from the blue-green Mount Chungnan, the pale green Tang Stream? From the paddy fields where the white cranes, the herons and egrets and the brown wild ducks flew? Did she really want to go to some red-brick factory building in the outskirts of Sian, to a dormitory that was completely new to her, and start a new life, make new friends? And finally, did she really want to fall in love with some new young man – not Sheng-pao – and share with him the same life and fate? . . .

Kai-hsia's heart was heavy. She felt depressed, irritated. She asked herself a question and demanded a definite answer: Are you willing to leave beautiful Frog Flat and go to the city to take part in national industrialization? She certainly was! To a girl who had become an activist during land reform, to a Youth Leaguer longing for the beautiful prospect of socialism, what could be more ideal than joining industry? Many army and local government cadres were being transferred to the factories. Joining industry had become almost a fashion.

The glory of being a member of the working class attracted Kai-hsia. She couldn't dispel this attraction, relying only on her own analytical powers. In 1951 and 1952, when the Sian factories appealed to the county for new workers, people had to be persuaded; few wanted to go. By 1953 things had changed. Many of the older girls in the Hsiapao primary school were planning to enter the mills. Some eagerly discussed the things schoolmates who had gone two years before had written about in letters:

What people in the city ate, what they wore, where and how they lived, what there was to see. . . .

Kai-hsia, member of her Youth League branch committee, pursed her lips and wrinkled her nose. She despised these material-minded daughters of the well-to-do middle peasants. What appealed to them were the high buildings, the electric lights and telephones! That wasn't why Kai-hsia wanted to enter a factory. She had seen photos in a picture magazine of the girl model spinner, Ho Chien-hsiu. Kai-hsia wanted to be like her. New China had given this poor girl the chance to become one of the best textile workers in the country. Kai-hsia had been thrilled by her accomplishments.

That being the case, Kai-hsia should have been happy. Why was she so miserable?

But she was — miserable and annoyed. She wondered whether it would be selfish of her to go off to a textile mill? Would she be acting unfairly to Sheng-pao? She knew from his uneasy manner in her presence, from the way his eyes seemed to be trying to read her heart, that he was still very interested in her. And she herself? If she hadn't fallen in love with him the whole thing would be simple! But she still loved him, and that was what was weighing in her heart like a stone! The blue-green Mount Chungnan, the pale green Tang Stream, the beautiful paddy fields, the flying cranes, the familiar thatched hut — Kai-hsia would have been able to give them all up, if a young fellow named Sheng-pao weren't living there!

When his child-bride was still alive and Kai-hsia was constantly running to the township and district governments, trying to break off her engagement, she often thought: "Wouldn't it be fine if I had someone like Sheng-pao!" He was her ideal. She couldn't say what it was about Sheng-pao's face, eyes, eyebrows, nose or mouth that attracted her. As a matter of fact, he was quite ordinary looking. His good heart, his decent behaviour and his courage, blending into an entity with his voice, his face and his body — these are what won our Kai-hsia's loving girlish heart.

What did she care whose son he was, how much land and how many houses he had, or whether his parents were amiable or crochety! "No matter if he owns valley land. What matters

is whether he'll make a good husband!" as the local saying put it. Two years ago, if both of them had been as unattached as they were today, even the Old Lord of the Sky couldn't have stopped Kai-hsia from going to Sheng-pao's thatched hut as his bride! Neither her mother, nor public opinion, nor Liang the Third's disapproving stares, would have outweighed the pure love in Kai-hsia's bosom. They didn't bother her a bit! Although she wasn't able to express her feelings very well in words, compared with those middle-school and university students who could define their love with such precision, she was infinitely more ardent, considerate and true!

But today, now that Sheng-pao was single again and she had ended her engagement, society had changed more than she had dreamed possible. The drums and gongs, the shouted slogans that resounded in Frog Flat during land reform could no longer be heard. No more did you see people marching with red flags down the streets. Except for the occasional lowing of an ox, the bark of a dog, the clucking of a hen, the villages were deathly still. It was dull enough to drive you to distraction! At the same time, the factories springing up in the cities like mushrooms after rain were beckoning to the third-year primary-school student. Kai-hsia was really troubled! She wasn't one of those frivolous girls. How could she toss aside her old love, abandon Sheng-pao, and fly off, with no regard for anyone but herself?

"You've had three years of school. And the men who've proposed are all educated. But that Sheng-pao has only learned a couple of words in the literacy class. . . ." That was how Kai-hsia's mother looked at it. The old widow didn't say so, but you could see it in her face. Ha! Poor old backward feudal

brain! Is your daughter going to school just to raise her status so as to find a better husband? Kai-hsia wasn't that kind of a cheap baggage.

The girl knew what little difference the three years of schooling had actually made in her. Whereas Sheng-pao, even when he was still the captain of the militia, even before he had joined the Communist Party, was plainly a man who was going to do big things. She could tell it from the way he talked and handled his affairs. Kai-hsia remembered many times like this: Sheng-pao would be standing in a public meeting place, his manner neither forward nor apologetic. He would listen quietly while someone else was speaking, seldom interrupting. But when he finally spoke, he would express himself much better than the others could. His words would be extremely well balanced and would attract everyone's serious attention. On each such occasion, Kai-hsia would feel herself irresistibly drawn to him. Sheng-pao — a poor village boy without a selfish thought in his head. This too tugged strongly at Kai-hsia's heart strings.

But Kai-hsia also had this sort of feeling: "Sheng-pao is a fine boy, it's true, but who knows how many years it will be until the countryside gets to socialism? A few dozen, at least! And the selfish forces trying to build up their private property are so fierce! No matter how good he is, how much of a wave can he stir up with his one little mutual-aid team? I'd better just attend to my own future and not be ruled by emotion!"

Kai-hsia wanted to get married not because she was looking for someone to provide her with food and clothing, and even less to satisfy a physical craving, but because she had an honest desire — to help build a new society, husband and wife together. It was for this reason she thought that leaving Sheng-pao to work in a factory was right. The decision, she felt, was patriotic, forward-going and positive. For several days her mind was at ease.

But when she heard that Sheng-pao had organized a large group of men and they were getting ready to go to Mount Chungnan and strike back boldly at the provocative boycott of the low-interest grain loans by the forces of private expansion, Kai-hsia's heart again was moved. Dear Sheng-pao! To take such a courageous step in the spring of 1953 was not easy! Many residents of Frog Flat were looking forward to a long era free of harsh

taxes, marauding soldiers and bandits, tyrannical landlords, robbers and thieves — a period in which only ordinary peasants and no others would be allowed to compete for property and profit!

Imbued with the spirit of the Party rectification, Sheng-pao was going to start a new battle at the head of a group of poor peasants, the most reliable of the masses. His brave action made Kai-hsia waver about entering a factory. Several times she had thought of talking with Hsiu-lan, but after considering the fact that an intermediary never can convey the full import of the original words, Kai-hsia swallowed back what she was going to say. She had to have a talk with Sheng-pao quickly. She definitely would find a chance before he went off to the mountains. They'd have a good long chat, in detail, unhurried. . . .

The chance Kai-hsia was waiting for came at last. Sunday also happened to be market day in Huangpao Town. She had learned from Hsiu-lan that Sheng-pao would be leaving for the mountains right after Clear and Bright Day and that he was busy preparing for the expedition. "He's bound to go to market," Kai-hsia thought. "I can meet him in Huangpao and the two of us can very naturally take a stroll along the road on the eastern plain. There aren't many people we know there. . . ."

"Ma, I'm going to market," Kai-hsia told her mother that morning.

The widow was surprised. "What for? I thought we were going to plant beans today?"

"I have to buy a notebook. . . ."

"What kind?"

"A notebook! How many kinds are there? For homework! . . ."

Her mother glanced at her suspiciously, then said, "Hmm. Go ahead."

While the widow was busy sweeping the hut and cooking breakfast, Kai-hsia sat by the window in the spring sunlight, combing and braiding her black hair. Facing the mirror, the twenty-one-year-old girl braided her thick glossy hair carefully. Lowering her head, she followed with pleasure the line of the braids as they passed the swell of her breasts and extended down to her waist. With the expertness instinctive in all women she appraised

the effect her primping was likely to have upon Sheng-pao. Finally satisfied, she tossed the two braids behind her back.

After breakfast, carrying a bamboo basket in which her mother had placed some thirty eggs, Kai-hsia went out the gate of the persimmon-tree compound. Raising her head, with its crown of glistening dark hair, she looked for Sheng-pao. But she saw only his thatched hut, silently squatting beneath the elm and poplar trees that were just beginning to bud. Her mother followed her to the compound gate and cautioned:

"Go early and come home quickly. Don't dawdle away the whole day. In the afternoon, we still have to plant those beans!"

"Yes, ma," said Kai-hsia. And she thought to herself: "Sheng-pao hasn't left yet. I'll go on ahead and wait for him in Huang-pao. . . ."

Her small feet, clad in plaid cloth shoes with button-down straps, tread lightly on the raised path between the paddy fields. Kai-hsia was happy, gay, like the dandelions and daisies growing in profusion by the side of the road.

With the approach of Clear and Bright Day, both banks of the stream had changed into colourful spring garb. It was the time of red peach blossoms and green willow tendrils, of flying larks and skimming swallows. Burgeoning wheat sprouts, warming in the sun, emitted a verdant fragrance. The barley was already putting out heads. Crystal clear water flowing in the creek beside the road gurgled as it hastened along on its journey to the distant sea.

The government had urged a spring-time irrigation. But many peasants who were still farming alone hadn't been able to decide, their minds fettered by the old feudal superstition: "Irrigation in spring, no grain in summer." Sheng-pao's mutual-aid team had set an example for the other peasants. They had irrigated their land and spread chemical fertilizer, and the leaves on their wheat were a lush dark green that rivalled the pines of Mount Chungnan.

Leaving the path between the paddy fields, Kai-hsia set out along the Huangpao road. Peasants — pushing barrows, driving donkeys, bearing reeds on their shoulders or boards on their backs, toting shoulder-poles, holding baskets, carrying chickens — moved along the dusty road to the market town in an endless procession beneath the warm rays of the sun. Some had already changed

into light spring garments; others still wore their padded winter clothes.

Kai-hsia moved very slowly. Peasants travelling alone or in groups of two and three passed her from behind. Some turned to look back and then declared to their companions with a laugh:

"That girl must be waiting for someone. She walks looking at her toes. . . ."

"Is it any of your business? Nosey!" Kai-hsia said to herself, sweeping them with an angry glare.

Small groups of Frog Flat peasants who were preparing to go into the mountains also passed her by. They were talking about the things they intended to buy — curved sickles, straight sickles, felt leg wrappings, hemp sandals. . . . One man said he already had a curved sickle, he would just buy a straight one. Another peasant responded that Sheng-pao said it wasn't necessary for each person to buy a straight sickle; two or three could share one among them; cutting thin branches off the handle of the bamboo broom wasn't like cutting the bamboo trunk — it took very little time. "Sheng-pao said," everything was "Sheng-pao said." Sheng-pao seemed to have become their authority.

As Kai-hsia listened to them, her heart felt smooth and comfortable, as if it had been ironed. "Sheng-pao can manage," they said. "He's bold but painstaking. . . ."

"*Aiya,* Kai-hsia!" The voice was old Jen the Fourth's. "Are you going anywhere, or aren't you? You're walking as if you can't decide!"

"I'm thinking about something," the girl replied hastily, blushing.

The old man's stubble-covered lips split in a grin, and he walked on, his bow-back swaying. What's keeping Sheng-pao? Kai-hsia wondered. She wanted to look over her shoulder, but she was afraid someone she knew would see her and laugh. After a few more steps, she thought: Maybe Sheng-pao has a lot to do in Huangpao, maybe he's there already?

"Going to market, Kai-hsia?" Blabbermouth's leering voice struck her like a blow in the back. She didn't have to look; she could picture his lecherous stare. That avid gaze was enough to frighten any respectable girl. . . .

Blabbermouth hurried a few steps to catch up. Now he walked by her side, deliberately pressing the white sleeve of his shirt against the blue sleeve of Kai-hsia's simple cloth tunic. Distastefully, she drew away.

"Here, let me carry your basket."

"No need. I can carry it myself." Kai-hsia shifted the basket from her right hand to her left.

The persistent Blabbermouth circled to her left side and again reached for the basket.

"You don't have to worry about those eggs. I can't eat 'em raw!"

Kai-hsia moved the basket back to her right hand. Her face stiffening, she said coldly, a note of warning in her voice:

"You just walk along properly. Quit grabbing and skittering about! What will people think?"

Blabbermouth neither blushed nor looked sheepish. Though he gave up trying to take the basket, he wasn't discouraged. He would find some other way to render service to Kai-hsia.

"Is it worth making a special trip into town just to sell those few eggs? You must have other things to do also?"

The girl didn't reply. She felt uncomfortable, as if some fiend were walking at her side. "Of all the luck!" she thought. "Running into this mug! If he didn't help Chairman Chen-shan on the civil affair committee, I'd be a lot less polite!" She forced herself to be patient, for the chairman's sake.

"You also have other things to do at the fair?" Blabbermouth tried again.

"Yes."

"What are they? If you're too busy, I can help—"

"No need."

As they talked, Kai-hsia quickened her pace. One by one, she caught up with and passed those who had passed her before. She wanted to shake off Blabbermouth. Kai-hsia couldn't bear the hungry way he stared at her face, her braids, her bosom. She had made up for Sheng-pao, not for Blabbermouth! And the leering, simpering tone he used — as if she were some hussy with a bad reputation. "The filthy dog!" she thought furiously.

But Blabbermouth was blithely unaware. Matching his stride to Kai-hsia's, he went right on talking and smiling, trying hard

to give everyone on the road the impression that here, beyond a doubt, was a young couple going to market. He told the girl that in the Huangpao cultural centre there was an illustrated series of posters explaining the new marriage law, and also a chart on the new method of midwifery. On market days, many, many people went to see them. As for himself, he made a point of going every time he went to market, because it improved his mind and taught him something scientific. He strongly recommended that Kai-hsia also go. . . .

"Shameless wretch!" the girl swore to herself. "Even if you improve your mind at the Huangpao cultural centre every day, you'll never find a girl! Eat your heart out!"

But she didn't say a word. She just let Blabbermouth ramble on. Repressing her rage, she flew along like the wind. Only after she crossed the big Huangpao bridge and passed the grain, hay and animal market outside the town's south gate, did she finally manage to lose Blabbermouth in the noisy milling crowds. Kai-hsia pushed on through the south gate into Huangpao proper. When she saw that Blabbermouth was no longer at her side, she heaved a sigh of relief.

She had come to meet Sheng-pao! But where was he? Should she wait for him at the big bridge? No, that wouldn't do. She had seen Chen-shan at the animal market by the bridge, buying piglets! The chairman had urged her so often to join industry, she didn't want him to know that she was talking to Sheng-pao behind his back.

"Bad luck! Rotten luck!" thought Kai-hsia, standing amid the crowds. "I rushed to get here, but what for?"

At the food purchasing department of the consumers' co-operative she sold the eggs her mother had given her. She drifted down the market street, lined by awnings held in place by rope and bamboo poles, then she drifted back again. Should she stand somewhere and wait for Sheng-pao, Kai-hsia wondered anxiously, or should she continue to wander around until she "accidentally" met him? She couldn't miss this chance. In another few days it would be Clear and Bright, and Sheng-pao would be going into the mountains.

Kai-hsia made three circuits of the Huangpao market street, which was heavily thronged with peasants. Looking for a ruddy

young face with large eyes and thick brows in that moving sea of straw hats and towel-cloth headgear was very tiring. Kai-hsia was getting a headache. She changed her plan and went to the crossroads of the south gate street to watch for Sheng-pao there. Not a sign of him! Where could he have gone? Kai-hsia was beginning to get a trifle discouraged, and a trifle annoyed with Sheng-pao. Was he just being obstinate where their love was concerned? Couldn't he co-operate a little, be more considerate? Suddenly another thought struck her. Even if she met him, suppose he had Yu-wan, Huan-hsi or some of the others with him, all in a hurry to do things? How could she get him off to the east plain road?

"He's busy! He must be busy! How could he be otherwise? He's going to take a group of men into the mountains! What shall I do?" The more Kai-hsia thought, the more discouraged she became, and the more she felt there was no point in waiting.

But she continued to wait. She thought: "I'll just stay here till noon. . . ."

Damn! The bristly-faced Chen-shan, carrying two squealing piglets in a hamper, was coming her way. Beside him in a black cloth cap trotted Blabbermouth, fawningly begging the chairman for some favour. Kai-hsia hastily hid herself in the crowd, and they walked by without seeing her. After they had passed, she came out again. She could hear the chairman's big voice saying:

"There's no use your having any ideas about Kai-hsia. She's not meant for a country boy. She'll be leaving soon!"

"Where's she going?" The neatly dressed Blabbermouth asked in surprise.

"Don't you bother about other people's affairs," Chen-shan instructed him. "Just mind your own business and you'll get along fine. . . ."

Kai-hsia couldn't hear the rest of the conversation, for the chairman and Blabbermouth walked on towards the agricultural supplies department of the consumers' co-op.

She thought the chairman's answer was very clever. He had given her the good idea of going into industry, and he was helping her keep the secret. Chen-shan was as shrewd as they come!

For a moment, particularly because Sheng-pao was making her stand on a street corner and wait for him in vain, for a moment

her mind ran riot. The chairman was so concerned about her welfare, and here she was deceiving him! It was too discourteous of her. Kai-hsia felt ashamed, repentant. She felt unworthy of the chairman's care. Although she was all alone, the honest girl blushed.

Standing by herself in the market crowds, Kai-hsia again wondered whether there could be anything behind Chen-shan's interest. Nonsense! What cause had she to doubt him? Had the bristly-faced peasant ever made any demands on her? His youngest brother was engaged to a girl in another village. The couple had already come to Huangpao where they had their picture taken together, ate in a restaurant, strolled the streets, and bought materials for their wedding clothes; all they had to do now was register. Kai-hsia was sure that the chairman's kindness to her was prompted only by the best of motives — his sincere concern for her future and for the country's industrialization.

This attitude coincided entirely with Kai-hsia's own.

She decided to go home, she wouldn't wait for Sheng-pao. This was final! Unhesitatingly, she made her way through the crowds of peasants and crossed the big Huangpao bridge. The traditional code of conduct had once again overcome modern love!

On the road back, deeply stirred, she said to the absent Sheng-pao, wherever he was: "I wish you success, I wish you victory. I hope you find the kind of girl you want. As for me, I'm leaving. . . ."

Suddenly her nose tingled and tears welled to her lovely eyes. It wasn't that she was weak, and it wasn't that she was backward. When you sacrifice your love for a lofty ideal, tears are entirely reasonable. Just think! If a tender sprout of love which you yourself had raised in your heart was then uprooted by you yourself, how could your body help but bleed a few drops of emotion? Only if there was no end to them, only if the tears couldn't be stopped, could they be called the dirty water of weakness and backwardness! With a delicate finger Kai-hsia wiped away the two tears that had formed in the corners of her eyes, and continued towards home.

She was positive now that Sheng-pao was on the streets of Huangpao, swallowed up by the peasant crowds. She hadn't been able to talk with him. What a pity! What a pity!

Head down, she walked on. There were not many people going to market on the road now, so Kai-hsia didn't bump into anyone, even though she didn't look where she was going. As she trudged, she wondered about the mystery of love. Although she had decided to be a new-type woman, she was still a country girl after all. The change in the situation and the various unexpected elements made it very difficult for her to analyse a thing as complex as "being in love."

"Forget it," she said to herself. "I won't think about it any more, for now."

She looked up and suddenly she saw him! Sheng-pao, together with Yu-wan, was coming towards her down the broad highway! Kai-hsia was overjoyed. All at once the whole earth and sky became bright and shining. How delightfully soothed her heart felt!

What had she been thinking a moment ago? In the wink of an eye she had forgotten everything. Could it be that she hadn't been thinking at all?

Happily, she gazed at Sheng-pao. Yu-wan was excitedly telling him something as they walked, and Sheng-pao was listening, smiling, moving along with large strides. Her beloved had changed into his spring clothes, and he was wearing a white shirt, open at the collar, revealing his sunburnt neck. In one hand he carried a basket of eggs – products of his hard-working mother's side line.

When they noticed Kai-hsia, Yu-wan and Sheng-pao halted, and exchanged a glance. Then they continued walking, but there was no more talk now. Both men were very serious, as if preparing to meet some important personage.

Their manner put Kai-hsia into a panic. On this big open road, where could she and Sheng-pao confer in private? She was tense, completely unprepared. What should she say? How should she say it? That nuisance Yu-wan! Had he been grafted onto Sheng-pao's body? Why did he always have to be tagging along? Just to embarrass her? What a pest!

Now both sides were drawing close. Kai-hsia's face was burning, her heart pounded, her hands and feet felt wooden. Yu-wan grinned slyly, hailed her briefly, then, leaving Sheng-pao behind,

strode rapidly away. Young Yu-wan might be rough, but he knew when to show some tact!

Sheng-pao, red in the face, stood alone before Kai-hsia, very constrained. He peered to the left and then to the right, at the neighbouring fields and up and down the road. Only after he assured himself that there was no one nearby who knew him did he conquer his flurried sensation, and look at Kai-hsia and smile.

The spring sun shone down on them benevolently!

While Sheng-pao had been surveying their surroundings, Kai-hsia had pulled her two thick braids around to the front and let them hang over the gentle swell of her blue cloth tunic. It was an instinctively feminine gesture, no one had to teach it to her. She knew how to win the admiration of the man she loved. Sheng-pao's eyes ran over her quickly, and he smiled an understanding smile.

Kai-hsia waited for him to speak, but obviously he didn't know what to say. He wanted to be well-mannered, to chat first of other things. It would be rude to plunge right into the subject, like talking business. But he was very busy. He had a lot to do in town. Yu-wan was already far ahead. Sheng-pao didn't have time to beat about the bush. And this broad open road was hardly an ideal place for a country boy to talk of love. Sheng-pao looked very upset, and very much in a hurry.

The intelligent Kai-hsia could read his mind. She noticed a watchman's lean-to south of the road. The spring crop hadn't come up yet, and the place was deserted. What was there to be afraid of? She'd risk it. Let people say what they liked! She suggested to Sheng-pao that they talk in the lean-to, screened from the eyes of Frog Flat. He happily agreed. Taking separate paths through the fields, they both proceeded to the meeting place.

The weather-beaten lean-to was very helpful. Blocking off the road and Frog Flat, it gave them a little private world of their own. Now they didn't have to worry about being observed. There were just the two of them, face to face, alone with their serious problem. Unfortunately, this arrangment tended to increase the solemnity of the atmosphere, and this was not favourable for a talk about love. Taking the end of one of her braids in her free hand, Kai-hsia stared at it and asked in a slightly reproachful voice:

"Why are you so late going to market?"

"Ha!" Here at last was something Sheng-pao could talk about. "We had a terrible time with Shuan-shuan's father. Shuan-shuan's in our team. The old man didn't want him to go into the mountains with us – thought it wasn't safe. We had to talk to him for hours. Otherwise we'd have gone to town long ago. We've got dozens of things to do! . . ."

"You're leaving for the mountains after Clear and Bright?" asked Kai-hsia. She knew very well he was.

"Yes. In three days from now. . . ."

"How many of you?"

"Sixteen will be cutting bamboo. I'm not sure yet how many porters there'll be. Tseng-fu's organizing them."

Kai-hsia, angry with herself, said mentally: "Stop this idle chatter! You're wasting time!" But no matter how she tried, she couldn't bring herself to talk to him about marriage. She just couldn't get the words out. Kai-hsia realized at last that love was no simple matter. After a silence, she gathered her courage, and made a great effort to provoke him into proposing.

"Comrade Sheng-pao," she said formally, "there's something I want to talk to you about. . . ."

"Go ahead. . . ." Sheng-pao was very relieved. This would save him the trouble of raising the subject, he thought. He also was afraid that he couldn't speak out.

Head down, staring at the tip of the braid she was holding, Kai-hsia said, as if seeking his opinion:

"I'm thinking of going to work in the new textile mill in Sian. What do you think?" Eyes still lowered, she smiled at her braid tip and waited for Sheng-pao's violent opposition. Kai-hsia was quite pleased with her stratagem. Sheng-pao would be forced to plead for her hand without delay. Once he stated that he was against her becoming a textile worker, she wouldn't go no matter who urged her.

But when at last she raised her head, Kai-hsia was dumbfounded. Sheng-pao's face had turned ashen, and he wore a sarcastic smile.

"Fine! Take the entrance test, by all means!" he urged courteously. Suddenly he had become cool and distant, with an unforgiving look in his eye.

Kai-hsia's heart sank. Her brain felt paralysed. It couldn't function.

"Fine!" Sheng-pao concentrated his thoughts on going into the mountains. "I'm busy," he said politely. "Yu-wan's waiting for me in Huangpao. We can talk about this again some other time. . . ." He quickly rose and, even before his voice had died away, started off.

"Sheng-pao, how can you act like this! Let me finish!" the girl shouted after him frantically, still hoping to save the situation.

But he continued walking with his basket of eggs, and called back over his shoulder: "Next time! I'm too busy now. . . ."

From the small path, he returned to the highway and strode away. *Ai!*

"Hey, Sheng-pao, so here you are! I've been waiting and waiting!" shouted Yu-wan, running up to him. The young militia captain was carrying two pairs of hemp sandals and a curved sickle which he had just bought. A confidential grin all over his face, he gave Sheng-pao an affectionate slap on the back.

"How did you make out?"

Sheng-pao was squatting by the doorway of a hardware shop. On display, both inside the shop and out, were mattocks, spades, shovels, sickles, carrying-pole hooks, iron ladles, cauldrons – the usual farm and kitchen implements. He was examining a small cauldron when Yu-wan came yelling down the street – there was nothing you could do with him; he was just that kind of a bird. Irritably, he poked Yu-wan with his elbow.

Yu-wan squatted down beside him and threw a friendly arm over his shoulder. Laughing, he asked:

"What happened to you two, Sheng-pao? When I got to the top of the bridge I looked around, and you both were gone. Did you burrow into the ground?"

"Don't make such a racket!" Sheng-pao's face tightened. He pushed off Yu-wan's arm, obviously very annoyed.

Surprised, Yu-wan glared at him. "What's the matter? Did you try to get fresh and she wouldn't let you?"

"What do you think of this cauldron? Is it big enough to cook gruel for all of our bamboo-cutters?" Sheng-pao asked, rapping a small cauldron on the ground before him.

Yu-wan was in no hurry to reply. Unwilling to let Sheng-pao change the subject, Yu-wan continued to study his face. Although Sheng-pao appeared calm, a bit of his unhappiness showed through. But he stuck to his cauldron.

"One foot eight in diameter ought to be big enough for sixteen people. If we get one any bigger, it will be too heavy to carry. What do you think?"

Yu-wan had no choice but to give up his inquisition. He looked the cauldron over, and considered Sheng-pao's question.

"Of course," said Sheng-pao, analysing the matter from every angle, "that's if we cook only gruel to eat with corn muffins. If we want to cook rice, it's too small. But why couldn't we use the cauldron twice for each meal?. . ." His whole mind was centred now on the problem at hand.

After thinking a moment, Yu-wan asked: "Why don't we borrow one from one of our homes?"

"From whose home? Every man going into the mountains is only a small householder. Nobody has more than one cauldron. The big households have extra cauldrons, but they won't lend them to us, that's certain. We'll buy our own! After we come back from the mountains, if no one else wants it, I'll take it. Deduct it from my earnings."

"Let me think," said Yu-wan. He pondered a moment, then he asked, "What about Tseng-fu's cauldron? When he goes off with his group of porters, there won't be anyone at home. His Tsai-tsai will be at your house. . . ."

Sheng-pao brought both hands down smartly against his thighs. "Right! Right! I wasn't thinking of him. . . ." His spirits were beginning to revive.

"Who were you thinking of?" Yu-wan quipped, almost automatically.

Sheng-pao refused to be diverted. "You're right!" he exclaimed with satisfaction. "Tseng-fu's cauldron — no question about it. That fellow, if you ask him for a loan of his shoes, he'll give you his socks as well! It's a sure thing!"

He bought a curved sickle and a straight one, then he and Yu-wan left the shop. Only as they were walking down the street through the crowds of peasants did Sheng-pao announce sadly:

"I guessed right! She's changed her ideas. She's not one of us any more."

"What?" Yu-wan was astonished. "What did she say?"

"She wants to go into a mill. If that's the way her mind's running, why should I stir up trouble? I'm just an ordinary muddy-legged peasant with a sunburnt back. I can't expect too much in the way of a wife. Besides, we're busy with mutual aid and co-operation, and we're pushing for high yields. Who's got time to hang around her? From now on, don't talk to me about this any more."

The brawny young Yu-wan was completely bowled over. This was something he hadn't expected. He swore violently.

"Where does she come off acting so high and mighty? She's only had a couple of days of schooling! Let my mother-in-law fix a match for you with that girl in the other village!"

"No. This year I don't want to hear about it."

"Why not?"

"I don't want anything to divert my mind. If I hold up our mutual-aid team and we don't bring in a big harvest, my loss of face will be the least of it. The Party's influence will suffer, and we'll be making it harder for others who also want to go in for co-operative farming."

His words moved Yu-wan deeply. The militia captain gazed at his friend respectfully, and said no more about the matter.

Wandering along the street, they made a few more purchases. Sheng-pao bought himself a pair of hemp sandals and some felt leg wrappings, and a set of each for two of his other team mates. He put the things into his basket and asked Yu-wan to take them back to the village.

"You go home first," he said. "It's only mid afternoon. You can still get some work done. I'm going up to the district Party committee to see whether Secretary Wang is in. Before we go into the mountains, I want to ask for his advice."

XVI

The lower end of the main thoroughfare of Huangpao was the business section; at the upper end were only peasant homes. Although the street narrowed on reaching the residential section, it seemed more spacious and comfortable to Sheng-pao than in the crowded, noisy, dusty commercial quarter of town.

After completing his business in the market and getting rid of Yu-wan, Sheng-pao walked alone, and his personal unhappiness again surged up in his heart.

He was indeed unhappy! Kai-hsia's changed way of thinking made him miserable and upset.

Sheng-pao had to confess that he liked Kai-hsia's large expressive eyes; he liked her musical voice; he liked the way she carried her fine body when she walked and her graceful steps! He admitted that he liked this outward beauty! He wasn't the kind of fool who, when unable to attain the girl he loved, told one and all that she was ugly. It was just that he didn't let this outward beauty outweigh everything and seek after it regardless of cost. Our young peasant wasn't so crass!

There was another side to Kai-hsia which Sheng-pao liked even more: her intelligence, her grit, and her love of labour. It wasn't that he had a low opinion of girls in general, but the fact was that the determination Kai-hsia showed in breaking off her arranged engagement, the way she threw herself into hard work when her brothers-in-law came to help in the fields during the busy seasons, her enthusiasm in community affairs, the honest way she sought knowledge in her studies – standing out among her schoolmates like a crane among hens . . . all these were rare qualities in a girl her age! This will-power, spirit, this urge to progress, were exactly suited to the demands of the community work Sheng-pao was doing. He felt that if he and Kai-hsia could marry they would be like a double-strand rope; their combined strength would be great. If he were interested only in outward appearances, there were plenty of beautiful girls on the stage – who all looked tender, intelligent and straightforward. . . . Could he love every one of them? Nonsense!

But today Kai-hsia wanted to take part in the country's industrialization. Could Sheng-pao be so frivolous as to try and convince her to abandon her excellent intention just to satisfy his own personal wishes? For the sake of national construction he ought to help her enter a factory.

When he thought of this, Sheng-pao tried to conquer his unhappiness. But every man's spirit is sustained by a few emotional pillars – the way he feels about his parents, his faith, his ideals, his intimate friends, about love. If any of these pillars snap, no matter which, his heart is bound to ache. Until such time as Sheng-pao could form an interest in another girl, whenever he thought of this matter, he would be unhappy.

Depressed by his disappointment in love, Sheng-pao entered a compound gate beside which hung the placards of the Huangpao district Party committee and the Huangpao district government.

Ho! Inside the front yard, bare except for a few thorny locust trees that were just beginning to bud, peasants – men and women, young and old – were crowded around in a large circle, six deep. Some were standing on tiptoe and craning their necks to see; others were turning their towel-covered heads and cocking their ears to listen. . . .

"What's all the excitement about?" Sheng-pao wondered. "What's happened?"

He walked up to the edge of the crowd and also stood on his toes to try and peer over, but he couldn't see a thing. He also tilted his towel-covered head and listened. But he couldn't make any sense of what he heard.

Some one was shouting: "Look at that! See! That's a bruise! There!"

And another voice retorted: "You said I practically beat you to death. Then what are you doing here? You can still talk loud enough! Why don't you tell the truth, eh?"

Listening to peasants from the same village as the contestants, Sheng-pao learned what the quarrel was about.

The Second Brother and Third Brother of a family living in a village on the eastern plain of Huangpao district had a falling out. Their Eldest Brother had died that morning. His body was still lying on the floor; it hadn't even been placed in a coffin yet. Instead of getting busy with funeral arrangements, the two remaining brothers got busy with litigation. Because Eldest Brother had

died without leaving a son, Second and Third Brother each wanted one of his own sons to be considered the deceased's heir.

Second Brother claimed that according to the rules of kinship, his son was the next in line; Third Brother's son didn't qualify. Third Brother's position was that he had three sons, while Second Brother had only two; Second Brother ought to be reasonable about this thing, not just talk about line of succession! Relatives, neighbours, kinsmen, crowded the brothers' compound. They had talked all morning, with no result, and so now the contestants had come to the district government. It had to be decided immediately who was the official heir, or the funeral couldn't take place. While the brothers were both here arguing their case, their wives and children were at home mourning the deceased, crying so vigorously they were practically howling, in a demonstration of their deep emotion. As a matter of fact, their emotion was actually directed at the ten *mou* or so of land the deceased had left. . . .

The story made Sheng-pao sick at heart. During the Party rectification study sessions, he had heard a talk by Secretary Wang of the district Party committee on the history of the development of society. Today, he was again reminded how he hated that loathsome thing — private property.

Private property — the root of all evil! It had caused trouble between himself and his step-father, it was destroying the affection between these two brothers, it was sapping the capable Chen-shan of his enthusiasm, and preventing the soil of Frog Flat from developing its full potential. Faster! Faster! Faster! Let's get rid of this system of private property as fast as possible! Communists have more respect than anyone for the dignity of man, and Sheng-pao wanted to take this lofty aim as his own responsibility.

He didn't like the ugly comedy being enacted in the district government courtyard. It was a farce on humanity! Dejectedly walking away, he urged the crowd to leave also. He said the two brothers were just ridiculous.

As Sheng-pao proceeded to the rear courtyard which housed the district Party committee, his hatred of the private property system over-rode the depression his unsuccessful love affair had induced. In any honest Communist — be he soldier, worker, cadre, peasant,

scholar — society's problems always take precedence over his personal difficulties. Sheng-pao wasn't one of those useless fellows who stewed all day over some private matter, groaning and sighing and cursing fate, while behaving quite tepidly when it came to social problems, the revolutionary cause or the situation confronting the Communist Party at the moment!

"Is Secretary Wang in?" Sheng-pao called from the centre of the district committee courtyard. His mood was again militant and strong.

He heard a door open, and a hand pushed aside a white cloth door curtain. Then his beloved Secretary Wang, round face wreathed in a welcoming smile, came out and stood at the top of the brick steps. The secretary wasn't tall but he was very solid. Extending his hand, he said cordially:

"Come in! Come in! . . ."

Sheng-pao ran forward and grasped the secretary's hand like a younger brother. The secretary's spirit and his own immediately fused into one, as if they were material things. Sometimes you have this relation between brothers, sometimes not. There are also brothers like the two who were fighting for the inheritance.

Secretary Wang had a rough exterior but a heart as pure and shining as snow. It was he who, the previous winter, during the Party rectification in Huangpao, had injected into Sheng-pao's plain peasant body a powerful spiritual strength. After joining the Communist Party, Sheng-pao felt that life had taken on a new meaning; its very nature seemed to have changed. Instead of living directly for himself and only indirectly for society, he was now living directly for society and only indirectly for himself. He was grateful to Secretary Wang for having taught him.

Meeting the secretary again, Sheng-pao laughed happily. His distress over Kai-hsia, his disgust with the two wrangling brothers, now vanished completely from his mind.

Pulling Sheng-pao by his large rough peasant hand, Secretary Wang smiled and said: "You've come just at the right time! See who I've got sitting inside!"

With the secretary's hand resting lightly on his back, Sheng-pao fairly floated into the room. He was so delighted he wanted to skip like a child.

"Secretary Yang!" he said. "When did you get here?"

The assistant secretary of the county Party committee was seated by a window at the rear of the room. Leaping to his feet, he strode up to Sheng-pao with a broad smile, grasping his right hand with his own left, and placing his right hand on Sheng-pao's left shoulder. With the warmth of a big brother, he said:

"We were just talking about going down to your Frog Flat."

"Let's all go together, then!" Sheng-pao was beaming.

"Now that you've come, we don't have to go," said Secretary Yang. "The county committee just telephoned. They want me back today. I'm pretty busy. . . ."

The county Party secretary was about thirty. His handsome eyes shone with intelligence as he gazed appreciatively at the young peasant in the towel-cloth headgear. He looked so long that Sheng-pao became a little embarrassed. Ever since his talk with Comrades Tao and Yang, the secretaries of the county Party committee, in the first lunar month of the year, Sheng-pao began to have the feeling that he, a rough young peasant, was of some use in carrying out the Party's great plan. At the time, it was only a vague impression; he couldn't be sure. But now, Secretary Yang's warmth and affection, his obvious confidence in him, confirmed for Sheng-pao that his feeling was correct.

When Secretary Yang grasped his hand and shoulder so fondly, Sheng-pao was quite uneasy. Wasn't the Party estimating him too high? Was he really of much help in the Party's remoulding of the peasantry? Of course he hoped he could fulfil his splendid vow. He would have to be very diligent; he couldn't be unworthy of the Party's love! Sheng-pao was rather tense. He felt the weight of his responsibility. But the lively veteran comrade from north Shensi only patted him on the shoulder and, crinkling his eyes in a grin, demanded:

"What about it, young bachelor? Found yourself a girl yet?"

"Not yet. . . ." Sheng-pao replied awkwardly. He thought of his recent split with Kai-hsia.

Secretary Yang was displeased. "Why so shy? A big young fellow like you — and a probationary member of the Communist Party! What's so hard about finding a bride? You don't have to spend anything on matchmakers and gifts any more." Yang turned to the district Party secretary. "Do they still have to spend money? After the campaign to familiarize everyone with

the new marriage law, do they still have to spend money here?"

Secretary Wang answered his superior modestly. "They don't have to spend any money," he laughed, "but they do have to spend a bit of time."

"That's it!" Sheng-pao hastily interjected. "I'm just too busy —"

"Do it as a side line! You don't have to make love full time! Why be so mechanical about it? Public and private affairs can be managed together, I say. What do you think, Old Wang?"

Both secretaries laughed heartily. At Secretary Yang's friendly jesting, Sheng-pao's tension melted away. How easily their political relation as comrades and their emotional relation as ordinary people blended into one! Sheng-pao, a young man who had only recently joined the Communist Party, felt this deeply. It seemed to him that comradely feelings were the noblest and purest in the world. Emotional relations among peasants, because of the system of private property, were often reflections of the perpetual vulgar scramble for gain. When neighbours' interests happened to coincide, no words could be too sweet. But let a man take one chicken egg from his neighbour by mistake, and an argument would immediately follow. They would be on bad terms for days.

Lighting a cigarette which Secretary Yang gave him, Sheng-pao was so excited he forgot to smoke it. He held the cigarette clumsily in a hand more used to a peasant's pipe, and sat down on a low stool beside Comrade Yang, his big body leaning forward, his eyes intent on the county Party secretary.

In his grey tunic and trousers, Yang looked like a primary school physical training instructor. He was tall, powerfully built, with close cropped hair. The healthy ruggedness of his face gave the impression of a working man who grew up out of doors. There was none of the pale delicacy of an office-dwelling intellectual about him. Staring at the secretary, Sheng-pao said warmly:

"You look much better than when I saw you in the county seat the first lunar month!"

"Really?" replied the secretary. "Maybe it's because I'm a rough kind of fellow who's used to running around! Whenever I come out into the countryside, I eat and sleep well. A month

in the office and I'm all run down. Here an ache, there an ache. . . ."

"It's because you've been used to working in the villages for so long," Secretary Wang said respectfully.

Sheng-pao had heard something of Secretary Yang's history from the district Party secretary. Yang's father had died a hero's death in a battle against the reactionaries in 1935. His mother had been captured by savage enemy forces led in by a cruel landlord, and tortured to death. This son of a revolutionary family was brought up by his parents' comrades and went to a primary school for martyrs' children in Yenan. After graduating from the border area middle school, he worked his way up from township scribe to the position of secretary of a district Party committee. In 1949 he was transferred south to this county where he served as head of the Party propaganda department. Now, as secretary, Yang's special Party responsibility was mutual aid and co-operation in farming. . . .

Sheng-pao had attended several meetings in the county and had heard many responsible cadres speak. Although most of the reports were clear and vivid, there were also a few long dry ones that nearly put people to sleep. But when Secretary Yang spoke, it wasn't like listening to a formal report at all, but a real pleasure. In simple colloquial language, Yang gave a talk that was thorough yet terse and full of colour. Some of the veteran comrades spoke a queer mixture of north Shensi and Sian dialects that was difficult to understand; it would have been better if they had stuck to their own native north Shensi speech. Secretary Yang had been working in the local countryside since 1949. Although he still had a north Shensi accent, he had learned the customary expressions of the local peasants. This made it easy for him to make friends with them.

Listening to Yang's report, two hours passed in no time. Sheng-pao wished Yang would go on for another two hours, or even four, but the secretary, with a pleasant grin, had already put his notes back into his pocket. After Sheng-pao took up the challenge of Wang Tsung-chi's agricultural producers' co-operative in Toupao district, Secretary Wang had led him into Secretary Yang's office. And so meeting here again today was like a reunion of old friends to these enthusiastic Communists.

Sitting down on a chair, Secretary Yang, tapped the ash from his cigarette with his forefinger and said to Sheng-pao with a smile:

"The go-it-alone forces are making a big noise in the countryside this spring. How's your mutual-aid team? Can it stand firm?"

Moved and respectful, Sheng-pao thought: "How sympathetically the Party watches over its members! When village Communists run into trouble, the county committee knows all about it!"

He swallowed, then said boldly: "We'll stand firm, Secretary Yang! With every drop of energy that's in us, we'll hold the team firm! The go-it-alone forces may be pretty arrogant, but that's only temporary. They can't keep it up. We've got the sticking power! . . ."

Yang gave the district secretary a delighted grin. "That remark about the sticking power," he said, "that's very interesting, don't you think?"

Secretary Wang laughed, obviously pleased that his district had a comrade like Sheng-pao.

"According to your calculations," Yang asked Sheng-pao with a smile, "just how long will this arrogance last?"

Sheng-pao took a puff on his cigarette while the two secretaries were talking. Now he answered without any hesitation:

"As soon as our mutual-aid team gets its roots sunk firm, they'll quiet down fast enough."

"Right! That's exactly right!" Secretary Yang commended. To Secretary Wang he said in a serious tone: "A man's orientation must be clear! I've just been to five different districts. Everyone I met who's clear about our political line is battling actively and is very confident. Anyone who's fuzzy about it is just passively going through the motions, his head in a whirl because of the opposition of the go-it-alone forces to the low-interest grain loans."

"That's so." Wang nodded his large head. "It's like that in our Huangpao district too. Some of our village cadres still don't understand that you can't depend on squeezing excess fat out of the rich and well-to-do middle peasants to solve the difficulties of the poor peasants and hired hands!"

Sheng-pao was deeply engrossed by this talk between the two Party leaders. As he listened, he thought of Yao and Shih-fu in Frog Flat. He also thought of Comrade Chen-shan. So the problem was the same all over!

"Tell us about your mutual-aid team," Secretary Wang said to Sheng-pao. "I've been meaning to come and see you, but I just haven't been able to find the time. If it isn't one thing, it's another. I can never get over your way. I'm here only because Secretary Yang has come today and called me back from the eastern plain. He's asked me about your team, but I haven't been able to tell him anything."

"I know you're busy," Sheng-pao said forgivingly. "You're secretary of the whole Huangpao district, not just our mutual-aid team."

Sheng-pao then went on to report that not only his team members, but half the poor peasants and hired hands of Fifth Village were preparing to go into the mountains collectively to cut bamboo. Both secretaries were pleasantly surprised, and their eyes danced.

"Oh? The upstream poor peasants and hired hands are going too?" Secretary Wang queried, rising to his feet. He seemed quite familiar with the situation.

"That's right," said Sheng-pao. "The poor peasants of Kuan Creek Hamlet will carry the finished brooms out. Tseng-fu is organizing them."

"Then on the whole your village won't have any spring food shortage?" asked Wang excitedly.

"We'll even have enough money to buy fertilizer for our paddy fields!"

"Fine! Good work! That's precisely the way to do it!" Secretary Yang, who had been listening carefully, was very pleased. To Secretary Wang, he said: "If every village had a mutual-aid team like this for its backbone, and organized the needy peasants to go into the mountains, we could lick this thing easily!"

An imaginative look came into Yang's eyes. While Sheng-pao was talking he had watched the secretary closely, and had seen him rise from his chair with a pleased smile and energetically pace the brick floor.

Now Yang resumed his seat and stared thoughtfully at the cigarette between his fingers, as if analysing why burning tobacco should give off smoke. What problem was the secretary mulling over? Sheng-pao couldn't imagine what was taking place in Yang's profound brain. He admired his leaders for their tireless efforts on behalf of the people.

After a few moments, Yang's gaze shifted from his cigarette to Sheng-pao's face.

"Comrade Sheng-pao, I want to ask you a question."

"Is it something I can answer?"

"You just say whatever you think."

"Right." Sheng-pao prepared himself for the test.

The handsome Secretary Yang tapped the ash from his cigarette and said cryptically:

"There are two different views on this today. One is that without the carts and horses of the middle peasants, the mutual-aid teams can't produce much. And without rich harvests, they can't consolidate themselves. The people who think this also say that the teams must get the middle peasants to join or they're not carrying out Party policy. Party policy is to unite with the middle peasants. . . . What's your idea, Comrade Sheng-pao? Do you agree?"

Sheng-pao snubbed out his cigarette against the leg of his stool. Holding the butt in his hand, he concentrated on the question. Heaven above! This was no small question — it was a great big one! It concerned the Party line! How could he give an offhand answer?

After pondering a while, Sheng-pao raised his head and requested: "Let me hear the other view first, Secretary Yang. Then I can think some more." Sheng-pao always considered matters from every angle. He wasn't the kind to oversimplify.

Yang smiled and nodded. "The other view," he said, "is this: A mutual-aid team of poor peasants can get good harvests without the middle peasants' carts and horses. If they have to take in middle peasants who aren't very keen on mutual aid, the team either becomes a mere formality, or there's no end of insoluble problems and the team has to break up. As the peasants say, it becomes a case of:

Organize in spring, in summer, split;
Then next spring, have another go at it.

People with this view say the Party policy of uniting with the middle peasants simply means that the mutual-aid teams shouldn't attack them or harm their interests. It doesn't mean that the teams can't operate without asking favours from the middle peasants, or mustn't do anything that doesn't please them. . . . How does that view strike you?"

Even before Secretary Yang was half through, Sheng-pao's tension flowed away. The young peasant grew very cheerful. His own actions had already answered for him. He knew what Yang was driving at.

"Party policy is to rely on the poor peasants and hired hands, and unite with the middle peasants," said Sheng-pao. "If you claim we can't increase output without the middle peasants' carts and horses, then you're saying it's the middle peasants we must rely on! You're not showing a bit of poor peasant and hired hand spunk!"

Secretary Yang roared with laughter. Then his face became serious and he said:

"But some people say Party policy is to rely on the poor peasants and hired hands to unite with the middle peasants. What do you think of that?"

"Just playing with words! What's the Party for, then?" interjected the straight-forward district secretary, very annoyed with this bookish quibble.

Sheng-pao agreed with him. "Secretary Wang, you know our team?" he said. "Yu-wan is a poor peasant, Sheng-lu is a middle peasant, I'm a Communist. I represent the Party. I can't rely on Yu-wan to unite with Sheng-lu – those two always clash. Sure, I rely on Yu-wan and our other poor peasant members to keep the team going. At the same time I try to think up ways for them to win Sheng-lu over. Our mutual aid and co-operation work today, I think, Secretary Yang . . . I think. . . ."

"Throw away your reservations," Secretary Yang quipped jestingly. "Fearlessly reveal what's in your mind!"

Anyhow if I'm wrong, Secretary Yang can correct me, Sheng-pao thought. There are no outsiders here!

Gathering himself, Sheng-pao plunged ahead. "Today, we have mutual-aid teams. It's different now than in the land reform period, it seems to me. During land reform, there was no contradiction between the poor peasants and the middle peasants. They stood together against the landlords. Today, in the mutual-aid teams, the contradiction between them is a big one!"

Well satisfied, Yang nodded vigorously. His whole face – eyes, nose and mouth – looked happy.

Sheng-pao could see that the secretary approved. Sheng-pao was pleased. His studying far into the night during the Party rectification campaign hadn't been in vain.

Yang stood up and threw his cigarette butt into the spittoon, then excitedly began pacing the floor, thinking hard. Sheng-pao and the district Party secretary followed the movements of the tall leader with their eyes. Sheng-pao thought to himself: "To look at him you'd never think he has a sweet wife and cute kids waiting for him back in the county seat. He's more like a bachelor, the way he rides his bike all over the county. He puts everything he's got into working for the people. . . ." And Sheng-pao instructed himself: You must try hard to become like Secretary Yang!

The county secretary returned to his chair and sat down. On his weather-beaten face a wry smile and a regretful expression appeared.

"Have you ever noticed, Old Wang," he asked the district Party secretary, "how the worker in the factory, the soldier in the company, or the cadre in the village, when he fights whole-heartedly for our cause, is entirely in accord with Marx and Lenin spiritually and mentally? What goes on in his mind is exactly what Chairman Mao has been writing and saying. Isn't that so?"

"Yes. That's quite true." Secretary Wang cast an interested glance at Sheng-pao.

But Yang didn't look at the young peasant. In a serious voice, he continued:

"On the other hand, some comrades who are leaders, whenever something new comes up, insist on acting strictly according to every letter of the text. They refuse to go and learn from the masses! Although their intention is to support Party policy, because they're such sticklers, the result is that they go against it

and make fools of themselves! In some places they're even criticizing poor peasant mutual-aid teams. They say it's a deviation to have teams with only poor peasants and no middle peasants, that we should go all out to correct it. They say only when you link poor peasants and middle peasants into a single organization are you carrying out the policy of uniting with the middle peasants. In Stone Bridge Village in the Sankuan Temple District, four peasants pooled their land and formed a mutual-aid team. . . ."

"Pooled their land?" Wang asked in surprise.

"They pooled their land!" Yang repeated. "They wanted to call themselves an agricultural producers' co-operative, but the district Party committee there wouldn't permit it. They said: All right. There are only four of us anyway. We'll still count ourselves as a mutual-aid team. . . . But the district committee wouldn't even let them pool their land. Said it would cause confusion, have a bad influence! How do you like that? The committee wouldn't let the poor peasants go ahead with the revolution! They had to do it together with the middle peasants, or not at all! But the middle peasants aren't very revolutionary right now. What are the poor peasants supposed to do?"

"We haven't pulled any boners like that in Huangpao District," Wang comforted himself.

"Of course, it will still take some time before all the comrades can make the turn. There has to be a transition period in everything. For years we've been fighting a democratic revolution. Now we have new tasks. Old concepts and new tasks — they contradict each other," Yang said thoughtfully.

"Yes," Wang agreed. "That's the situation confronting the cadres in all our villages. This year we're finishing up our old tasks and starting our new ones, so the problem is particularly obvious."

"The lull between harvests!"

"Yes," said Wang. His attitude was modest and deferential. "There is this problem in the thinking of our cadres. In spite of their studies during the Party rectification campaign, they have a tendency to consider our mutual aid and co-operation work no more important than our ordinary administrative duties. When

they get busy with other things, they just push it aside. After all, it's a long-term job, they think, it has no time limit . . . ."

"A long-term, complicated, difficult, and glorious task! Isn't that it?"

"Right!" Wang laughed. "A lot of township cadres have learned that phrase!"

"It's too simple," said Yang irritably. "You can take any vital specific thing — once you spout that phrase, it's finished!"

Sheng-pao sympathized with the county Party secretary. He too had been subjected to the bookish airs of certain cadres, and he hadn't liked it a bit.

Sheng-pao noticed the admiring look in the eyes of the round-faced district secretary. He plainly had learned something from Comrade Yang. Wang thoughtfully rubbed his cheek with his hand. Hoping his superior could help him, he said:

"In our district, we've got this kind of situation, Secretary Yang: Although our cadres had an education in socialist ideas during the Party rectification, they don't yet fully realize how revolutionary mutual aid and co-operation really are. So they tend to over-simplify in their actual work; they don't give enough ideological education. For instance, one of our township chiefs even said this at a mass meeting: 'Would you have been able to divide up the landlords' land if it weren't for the Communist Party? The Party is calling for mutual aid and co-operation. Aren't you going to respond warmly? What's the matter — do you want to go it alone? Where's your conscience! . . .' "

Yang and Sheng-pao burst out laughing. Fan, the chief of Hsiapao Township, talked like that too. Sheng-pao had heard him express himself in just that manner.

"What use are cadres like that?" Wang demanded angrily. "They forget that all the calls the Communist Party puts out are for the people's benefit. The Party has no other interests except those of the people. And so, when our Party calls for something — whether it's land reform, or mutual aid and co-operation — it must be done on the basis of the people's political awareness. To bring about this awareness, of course, is always troublesome. It means a lot of educational work. The useless cadres don't like doing educational work; they'd rather go to the masses and demand payment. I gave you shares of land,

how can you not respond to my call? Secretary Yang, is that crude or isn't it? They never give a thought to the fact that the basis of all our Party's work is the people's political awareness, not their gratitude!"

"It's not only educational work you have to do," said Yang, taking the matter a step further. "You have to create some models of mutual aid and co-operation to show the people. With the more advanced among them, if you talk sense, they'll accept it. But most peasants want proof! It's different from land reform. Now you can paint the prettiest picture in the world, but they still want to know whether it'll mean a bigger grain harvest, whether it'll increase their incomes."

The county secretary's analysis was even deeper and more thorough than the district secretary's. It did Sheng-pao's heart good to hear him. He felt better than if he were eating a feast, or listening to a good opera. Concentrating on the conversation between the two leaders, he tried to extract the full import of what they were saying. He was careful not to interrupt or distract them. Sheng-pao wished he were more literate. If he could take notes like many of the district and township cadres, he would write some of this down. He was avid for spiritual nourishment. Sheng-pao was sorry he hadn't brought Yu-wan along so that he could also hear this reasoning. When you understood the principles of the revolution, you knew what you were doing in your work!

The young peasant was listening so intently that, entirely unaware, he crumpled the half a cigarette in his hand to shreds.

Sheng-pao was anything but narrow-hearted. But, encouraged by Secretary Yang's remarks, he couldn't refrain from saying a few words on behalf of his step-father. Agitatedly, he exclaimed:

"Heaven above! Peasants are all practical people, Secretary Yang. If they're not sure of a thing, they won't do it. What you hear is false, what you see is true – that's a favourite saying with them. They've only seen small families, small households, small affairs; they've never seen socialism! Take my pa. Though he and I eat out of the same pot, when I dream, I dream about our mutual-aid team. But when my pa dreams, according to my ma, he dreams about becoming a well-to-do middle peasant!"

"Is that so?" both secretaries asked, laughing.

"It's so, all right!" Sheng-pao replied. "It's really funny. To him, nothing could be better than being a well-to-do middle peasant. He hasn't seen anything else. I can't force him to believe. All I can do is show him and let him see. Our township chief, Fan, says my pa is holding me back, that he's ungrateful to the Communist Party, that he has no conscience, that he doesn't act like a poor peasant or hired hand. Who says he doesn't? The moment he hung our new land deed on the wall, he fell on his knees and kowtowed to a picture of Chairman Mao. Is that the act of a man with no conscience? Fan probably thinks because he isn't my own father I don't mind hearing him attacked. Actually, I feel terrible. Fan rates my pa much too low! My pa is a good peasant. Secretary Wang, you probably know Pai in our Frog Flat? He says if we brought in communism tomorrow, he'd be all for it. Do you like that fellow? He's pretty sharp!"

"Are you still angry with Fan?" Wang asked with a smile.

"Just talking about it makes me feel bad!" Sheng-pao said frankly. "It hurts me to hear anybody say bad things about my pa. In 1929, if he hadn't taken me in, even my bones wouldn't be here today, to say nothing of my being able to push mutual aid and co-operation. I always try to be good to him. We Communists can't forget past kindnesses. People would laugh at us."

Sheng-pao suddenly realized that he was letting himself get too worked up. In a calmer voice, he said:

"Of course, Township Chief Fan is only trying to help the work. He thinks he's doing the right thing. It's not that he wants to insult my pa. . . ."

The two Party secretaries were surprised to see Sheng-pao so aroused. But they didn't interrupt him. Obviously they hadn't thought that Sheng-pao was so emotional.

Quite moved, the county secretary said to Wang: "Many of our comrades don't pay enough attention to the small-holder and small-producer side of our peasants. Thousands of years of oppression and exploitation, heavy labour and a hard life, have created their revolutionary side. But, as Comrade Sheng-pao has just said, small families, small households, small affairs, thousands of years of small rural economy, have also given them a backward side. It's made them selfish, conservative, scattered, unaccustomed to organization and discipline, and so on. That was why in

1949, as soon as the country was liberated, Chairman Mao warned us: The education of the peasants is an important task. He wasn't speaking lightly. . . ."

"Would you say the peasants' revolutionary aspect is dominant in mutual aid and co-operation, or their backward aspect?" Wang asked.

Secretary Yang gave Sheng-pao another cigarette and took one himself. Forgetting to light it, he plunged warmly into the discussion.

"The way I see it is this, Old Wang. We can't look at the peasant question the same way we view the two-sidedness of the national bourgeoisie we're always talking about. We have to make specific analysis of specific situations. The peasants are the allies of the working class; they're a labouring class also. They were allies in the democratic revolution stage, and they're still allies in the socialist revolution stage. The worker-peasant alliance is permanent, not temporary.

"But when the revolution starts putting the small peasant economy through a socialist transformation, the small-holder and small-producer side of the peasants becomes a contradictory aspect. That's something we have to watch, isn't it? I think that's where the significance of Chairman Mao's words lie. We definitely cannot rely on force or issuing a lot of orders in the various stages of our revolution, or go around 'demanding payment' as you just put it. We insist on the principle of voluntariness; our method is for the masses to teach themselves. Experimenting in key spots, demonstrating typical successes, having people visit and compare — these are what will lead the peasants gradually to overcome their small-holder and small-producer side.

"What's more, in doing these things, we have to rely mainly on the poor peasants because, in the countryside, their revolutionary urge is the strongest, and the foundation of that tiny small peasant economy of theirs is the weakest. It seems to me there's nothing mysterious or frightening about it. We can handle this thing. Have you got a set of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* here, Old Wang? Good! Let me have a look at volume one!"

Excitedly, the district secretary pulled a well-bound book with a pale brown cover from his shelf. Secretary Yang stretched out

his hand and accepted the precious volume. Turning through it familiarly to page 311, he scanned the lines quickly. "Here it is! Here! Listen to this!" Very pleased, Yang read:

> Everything contains a contradiction between its new aspect and its old aspect, which constitutes a series of intricate struggles. As a result of these struggles, the new aspect grows and rises and becomes dominant while the old aspect dwindles and gradually approaches extinction. And the moment the new aspect has won the dominant position over the old aspect, the quality of the old thing changes into the quality of the new thing.

"That's the relation between mutual aid and co-operation and the small peasant economy," said Yang, as he returned the book to the district Party secretary. "Did you follow what I just read all right, Comrade Sheng-pao?"

"Yes, I did!" Sheng-pao couldn't read much, but because he constantly took part in study groups and various big meetings, he had developed a keen listening ability. He said cheerfully, "Mutual aid and co-operation is new, the small peasant economy is old. Isn't that it? The new grows, while the old dwindles, isn't that it?"

Pleased, Yang smiled. "That's not all. The same thing is true of the contradiction within your family. When your mutual-aid team succeeds, your pa won't demand that you listen to him — he'll listen to you. Right?"

"Right! Right! That's a fact!"

Yang struck a match and offered Sheng-pao a light. The young peasant courteously insisted that the county secretary light his own first. As Yang was drawing on his cigarette, Sheng-pao watched him admiringly. The secretary's face was intelligent, reasonable, forceful. An educated, experienced leader, thought Sheng-pao as he smoked. He knew so much!

It seemed to Sheng-pao that this had been a very fortunate meeting for him. If he had talked with either the county secretary or the district secretary separately, he wouldn't have heard this deep theoretical discussion. Only because the two Party leaders were talking together was he able to pick up so many words of wisdom, words more precious than gold!

"Comrade Sheng-pao," said Yang, "you fellows have evolved a good method. Do a good job of it this year, and next year at the conference of mutual-aid team leaders, you can get up on the platform again."

"Right!" said Sheng-pao simply. His voice was vigorous.

"The county is sending two agronomists to Huangpao district this year," said Secretary Wang. "I plan to assign one to the eastern plain to handle the wheat and corn there. The other I'll send to your mutual-aid team to work on the close planting of rice."

"Wonderful!" Sheng-pao's eyes flashed.

"Are you leaving anyone at home to plant the rice seedlings?" Wang asked him.

"Sheng-lu and Feng. They're both middle peasants and don't want to go into the mountains."

"That's no good," said Secretary Wang. "You ought to let Huan-hsi do it. Secretary Yang was just telling me — this year we want to produce sturdier seedlings. A whole series of new techniques is going to be introduced — not only close planting."

Secretary Yang told Sheng-pao: "We're changing our methods in the county this year. We want the two agronomists we're sending to each district to work with two different mutual-aid teams instead of running all over the district. No matter how much they lecture, the peasants don't believe them. They've got to demonstrate, let the people see. So we hope you'll go at it hard, Comrade Sheng-pao!"

"Fine! That's perfect!" Sheng-pao was nearly jumping with delight. "Secretary Yang, Secretary Wang, I've got to go now."

"So soon?"

"I have to tell Huan-hsi that he's staying behind, and tell Feng to get ready to go into the mountains. Goodbye."

"Not so fast!" said Wang. "Maybe Secretary Yang has some instructions for you."

"What sort of person is Huan-hsi?" asked Yang.

"Primary-school graduate. Poor peasant family."

"Good, good. We have to start preparing personnel for the future. Understand?"

"Sure!" Sheng-pao replied cheerily. "Start training our future agronomists!"

"You'll be in the mountains for a month," said Secretary Wang. "You must be careful about your team's safety."

"Let him go to the district health centre and pick up some medicine and first-aid equipment," the county Party secretary said to Wang. "Don't take any money from them. Charge it to the district's mutual aid and co-operation fund."

"Right. Come along with me." The district Party secretary pulled Sheng-pao by the hand.

Sheng-pao was too happy for words! What could he say? Human speech at times is inadequate to register a man's emotions. How could the mutual-aid team be called his? Could he, as an individual, have thought of so much? Done so much?

He said goodbye to Yang at the door, then went with Wang to the secretarial office of the district government for a letter of introduction. At the compound gate, he took his leave of the district Party secretary.

"Don't forget," Wang reminded him, "safety first! It won't be good if you have any accidents!"

Out once more on the street crowded with marketing peasants, Sheng-pao felt as if his heart had wings. You call this farming? You call this an expedition into the mountains? Maybe that's what they looked like — actually they were a revolution! They were a concentration of forces to overthrow the system of private property! Many of the things he had studied during the Party rectification campaign were now, step by step, becoming realities. Only the great Communist Party could have brought this about. The peasants never could have done it alone!

The more the situation developed, the clearer became Sheng-pao's understanding. So this is how we ought to do it! Dear Secretary Yang! You didn't tell me all this when we met in the first lunar month! Sheng-pao was confident now, determined. He'd never be unworthy of the Party leaders' concern!

Weaving skilfully through the crowds, it seemed to Sheng-pao that life was full of interest. How red the sun was, how blue the sky! And weren't the peasants wonderful! He was possessed by an urgent desire to drive ahead.

At the health centre he handed the letter of introduction in through the small square window of the pharmacy. As he waited in the hallway for the medicines to be prepared, he gradually

calmed down. It was only then that he saw the crumpled half a cigarette in his hand. Carefully, he blew away the paper and placed the tobacco in his pouch. A man shouldn't be wasteful!

Then Sheng-pao began to review in his mind the Marxism-Leninism he had learned that day. Because he couldn't take notes, whenever he attended a meeting in the county seat, on the road home he would go over what he had heard to implant it firmly in his memory. He wouldn't forget Secretary Yang's words. No, never! He would make use of them all his life. Heaven above! Such deep reasoning, yet so easy to understand!

XVII

Three days before Clear and Bright, peasants in the neighbourhood of the Tang Stream began visiting their family graves. After washing their hands, they set out with baskets of sacrificial gifts, incense and simulated paper money. People with a strong sense of devotion also carried shovels so as to add more earth to the burial mounds and fill any holes field mice might have burrowed into them; this would prevent the graves from suffering damage when the mountain torrents came rushing down.

By the time Clear and Bright Day arrived, white paper money had been placed on all the burial mounds on the plain. Some had not been weighted down firmly and had been blown by the wind into the wheat fields and onto the paths, where they rose up and floated with every passing breeze, adding to the special atmosphere of the holiday.

Liang the Third watched to see whether Sheng-pao would go to the grave of his child-bride. That young fellow had a heart of stone! He was just brimming with energy! Preparing to go into the mountains, he had run to Hsiapao, and then to Huangpao. After coming back to Frog Flat, he had rushed around from one thatched hut to another, busy enough to break his head. Just look at him! Everything else was important, but not to visit his child-bride's grave. What was he so busy about anyway?

"If the boy doesn't want to tell me, then I don't want to ask him!" the old man thought sulkily.

To cast all private interests aside for the sake of the public good – this was something old Liang could not comprehend. All his life he had been simple, ineffective, docilely accepting the worst his environment had given him. Liang's purpose in life was very limited. He wasn't accustomed to bold imaginativeness like Sheng-pao's. The boy really seemed to think he could beat the world!

Sheng-pao never discussed anything with the old man any more, and old Liang didn't feel like questioning him. Why should he? The boy was in the Communist Party! He could talk everything over with the other Party members. Why should he ask his pa!

That's how the old man's mind was running, and he muttered sarcastically to an imaginary Sheng-pao: "In all Frog Flat – no – in all Hsiapao Township, you're the only one with any ability! Who can compare with a young fellow like you – leading forth your army, building camp, setting up your cooking cauldron, spending a month in the mountains cutting bamboo. Huh! You'd think he was out to conquer a territory! Who ever saw a peasant behave like that?"

The old man squatted with his back against the stone roller outside the compound gate, thinking. And as his brain worked, his lips kept forming the sound: "That boy! That boy! . . ."

Blabbermouth, who was passing by, heard him. Stopping, he asked curiously:

"What are you mumbling about out here, all by yourself? Are you talking to the ants on the ground?"

Liang the Third shook his head. He didn't want to chat with Blabbermouth. He wouldn't complain about his private affairs even to someone who could curb his tongue, let alone to Blabbermouth who liked nothing better than to gossip about other people's family troubles. You shouldn't wash your dirty linen in public!

Besides, old Liang didn't want to hurt Sheng-pao's ma. In those years of disaster when he was more dead than alive, his old wife had been very kind to him. He'd never forget that, even if he were born again. Were it not for her sake – humph!

– he certainly wouldn't let the boy go dashing around kicking up a dust storm! It was no way for a decent peasant to behave! To the old man it seemed there was a terrible danger in conduct like this. Only the bold courageous few ever dared to raise such a rumpus. One day the storm would break; and then it would be too late to pull back.

But old Liang couldn't interfere directly. For Sheng-pao's ma was always there. That was where the old man's difficulty lay. Whatever he wanted to do, he had to look first at the dear smiling face of this quiet woman. In the early years of their marriage she had been a devoted wife, now she was a kindly mother. He couldn't ignore the fact that her love for Sheng-pao was deeper than his. He didn't want to hurt her! He would wait patiently until she came to understand that by defending her son she was only harming him.

On Clear and Bright Day, in the end it was the old man, representing Sheng-pao, who visited the child-bride's grave. Old Liang was very scornful of Sheng-pao for this. After all they were once married! "A day together as husband and wife, means endless devotion the rest of your life," as the old saying goes. Of course you burn paper money and incense for the dead because your emotions demand it. But sometimes you're also doing it for the living – people expect such things; you have to make the gesture! As a Communist you may not be superstitious, but the peasants on both sides of the Tang Stream are! Humph!

Old Liang squatted beside the child-bride's grave, burned the paper money, and lit the incense sticks. As he recalled their sad life in the past, tears gushed from his eyes.

At first, he kept weeping and drying his tears, which flowed in a continuous stream. Then, he broke down completely. After laying out the sacrificial gifts, his emotions were too much for him and, regardless of appearances, he sobbed loudly.

Since you're crying, you might as well really cry! A good cry will ease some of the misery in your heart, and your chest will feel better!

"My poor little girl! Oh! Oh! Oh! . . ."

A hand grasped his shoulder and shook it.

"Uncle! Don't cry!"

Liang the Third raised his head. With tear-filled eyes he gazed at his nephew Sheng-lu.

"Where's Sheng-pao? Why are you the one burning paper money for her?" Sheng-lu asked, displeased.

His throat rather hoarse from weeping, the old man replied, "He's gone to the Forestry Section in town to get a mountain permit."

"You mustn't cry!" Sheng-lu was very dissatisfied. "You'll make my family lose face!"

"How can I make *your* family lose face?" The old man stared at him in astonishment.

"We're all in the Liang clan. If a father-in-law has to weep at a daughter-in-law's grave, it's a loss of face for everyone named Liang!"

"Ah, I see. You can go. I won't cry any more."

Irritably, the old man gathered together the things he had brought and started back to his thatched hut. He cursed Sheng-lu inwardly.

"Don't you know that girl was like a daughter to me? Since we're all in the Liang clan, why did you shove the job of leader of the mutual-aid team on to Sheng-pao? You shift your lice to our heads and then you have the nerve to criticize us!"

After returning the sacrificial materials to his hut, old Liang again came out to the clearing and squatted with his back against the stone roller. He glared in the direction of Sheng-lu's compound.

Old Liang was confronted with a disturbing situation. Sheng-pao was about to lead a group of men into the mountains and there was nothing he could do to stop him. When Sheng-pao went to buy the rice seed the old man had never imagined he was the kind of fellow who could chew iron and spit steel, that he would actually organize a large group to go into the hills. In the past, Liang the Third had felt inferior only in the presence of his native villagers. Now he felt inferior in Sheng-pao's presence as well. He didn't even have enough confidence to urge Sheng-pao not to over-do things.

A mountain expedition was dangerous. Ever since ancient times, a man might take the responsibility for his own risks, but he never would answer for the risks of others. Working alone,

he had only himself to worry about, no matter what happened. Actually, what could happen? Enmeshed in traditional superstition, the old man didn't dare think too concretely. A person should think only of lucky events! When old Liang saw the medicines and first-aid material Sheng-pao was preparing to take on the trip, his heart shivered and dropped. . . .

It was all wrong! The more he thought about it, the more he felt that as an older experienced man he shouldn't wait for something bad to happen before speaking up.

Old Liang rose to his feet and squinted towards Hsiapao. Then, lowering his head, he followed the path that led past Sheng-lu's peach orchard to the grass-covered dyke beside the Tang Stream. There he crossed the single plank bridge to the opposite shore.

Not long after, he was standing in Secretary Lu's room in the township government office.

There were two stools in the room on which peasants calling on the Party secretary usually sat. As a mark of affection and respect for the father of the leader of the township's key mutual-aid team, Secretary Lu asked old Liang to sit on his office chair, while he himself took one of the stools.

"You just make yourself comfortable on this chair, uncle," said Lu in a friendly voice, "and we'll have a nice chat. I've been meaning to cross the stream to pay my respects to you, but I've been so damn busy!"

But old Liang sat neither on the chair nor on a stool. He just squatted on the brick floor a pace or two inside the door, and went over in his mind what he was going to say.

Out of courtesy for the old man's habits, the Party secretary squatted down opposite him, leaving the chair and the stools vacant. With smiling eyes he gazed at old Liang's troubled countenance.

"Are you thirsty, old neighbour? Can I pour you a cup of water?"

"No!" With a hand as gnarled as a tree root, old Liang caught the sleeve of the secretary's grey cloth tunic. "What could a peasant eat to make him thirsty?" He knew no false politeness. He could only speak the facts, whether his listener liked it or not.

Secretary Lu smiled. The old man's practical attitude pleased him.

Old Liang had already roughed out a draft mentally. Now he began:

"Old Lu, you're one of our own township people. You were a peasant yourself once. . . ."

"Right! You're absolutely right!"

"You know all about how a peasant earns his living. . . ."

"I don't know much, really. . . ."

"You know all about it!" old Liang insisted. "What peasant doesn't know how peasants live? Huh! But sometimes what you say isn't according to a peasant's way of thinking."

"According to whose way of thinking is it?"

"According to the Communist Party's way of thinking!"

"Right! Right!" Secretary Lu was delighted. "You analyse things very well!"

But Liang wasn't at all pleased. He still looked as gloomy as when he came in the door.

"When Chairman Mao divided up the land and gave it to us poor peasants wasn't it so that we could earn a living? Be honest now, Old Lu!" Liang the Third started to argue.

The Party secretary laughed. "Of course. Don't you see how we're doing everything possible to increase production?"

"But look at Sheng-pao. Does he act as if he wants to earn a living?"

"He certainly does, and in a big way. It's just that you want to do it in a small way, old neighbour. I've heard that father and son don't agree about this thing. . . ."

"You see!" The old man threw his gnarled hands wide. "I've always said you people in the Party were all one family, and I wasn't wrong a bit! Naturally, you stick up for each other! You all sing the same tune. Your family name is all Communist — right?"

The lined face of the middle-aged Party secretary became diffused with a heartfelt joy. Nothing could make him happier than this kind of discussion.

"Ha, ha! Uncle Liang! You're full of deep thoughts today. It looks like you've been thinking a lot about the difference between the Communist Party and the peasants. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to talk about it so thoroughly. Good! You've put it well! Very well! I admit it — we're all named Communist!"

"He's just trying to flatter me!" The old man warned himself not to soften.

But old Liang's unintentionally brilliant remark had given Secretary Lu an exceptionally inspiring talking point.

"You've really put it very well, old neighbour! Our Party is one big family, and we love one another like brothers! In this village there may be people by the name of Wang but none by the name of Li; in that village there may be people named Chao but none named Liu. Yet in every village there are people called Communist! This Communist family of ours is very powerful, old neighbour! The big landlords, the bandits and spies, the reactionary gangsters. . . they're all afraid of the men called Communist! But the ordinary people love us. And why? Because although we're all named Communist, we never squeeze families with other names. We unite with all the labouring people, whatever their names, to change the old society and build a new country. What do you think, old neighbour? Does that make sense?"

Old Liang couldn't keep a straight face any longer. He laughed. His good-heartedness as a labourer, the oppression which his spirit had suffered, his bitter memories of exploitation, plus all the good things the Communist Party had done in the three years and more since liberation, led him instinctively to believe Secretary Lu's humorous dissertation.

Secretary Lu had made a few strong statements, but they were very realistic. Old Liang didn't consider them exaggerated in the least. Lu had been a practical peasant before he took up the work of the Party. Liang liked such men. He knew he was close in spirit to Lu and Secretary Wang and Sheng-pao, even though he couldn't for the life of him understand why they were pushing mutual aid and co-operation. "When you can bring machines to till the land, then we can have a go at it!" he thought. "We're scores of years away from socialism. What's the good of a lot of idle boasting?"

The old man's wrinkled face relaxed. He grinned, and both halfs of his moustache lifted up like wings. It would be an idle dream to expect him, or any other honest peasant, to rid himself solely by his own efforts of the spiritual burden a private property society lasting thousands of years had imposed. But words are the keys to the heart. Whenever old Liang was stirred by

clear simple reasoning, his mind would brighten, even though later it might be clouded again by his desire to increase his property.

He was a straightforward peasant, aware of the greatness of the new society. Old Liang wasn't afraid of Communists. When Secretary Lu reasoned with him, he listened willingly. On the other hand, when the township chief said he had no conscience, he just ignored him. He didn't even greet the chief when they met.

"So you're the township chief, eh?" he would mutter. "I don't know you! Let's see you lock me up! You can't scare me! In our new society even a county chief or provincial chief has to be patient with the people! Who are you to put on bureaucratic airs? As long as I pay my grain tax you've got nothing to say!"

Secretary Lu looked at the old man's thoughtful face, then clapped him on the shoulder and asked warmly:

"Well, old uncle, is what I've said right or not?"

"It's right all right, but you won't succeed with the mutual-aid teams. And I'm not the only one who's standing in their way. Lots of other peasants aren't really in favour of mutual aid either. . . ."

"Who's not in favour of it in Sheng-pao's team?"

"My eldest brother and his son Sheng-lu — neither of them are for it! They're in the team in name only. If Sheng-lu's brother Sheng-jung, who's a Party member in the People's Liberation Army, didn't keep writing home urging them to stick with the mutual-aid team, father and son would have pulled out long ago! My Sheng-pao is stupid. He can't see what's in people's hearts. . . ."

"Oho! What's this you're saying? Sheng-pao stupid? That pair you've just told me about are middle peasants. Surely the poor peasants are all for mutual aid?"

"Some of them don't want it either. I can see it in their faces."

"Who doesn't want it?"

"You won't tell anybody?"

"Just listen to him! It's you who came to see me. You ought to trust me."

Gathering his nerve, old Liang decided to reveal to the Party secretary the latent contradiction in Sheng-pao's mutual-aid team.

"First of all, there's Blind Wang! Because his family doesn't have enough land, they depend on what Wang's son Shuan-shuan

earns working for Sheng-lu, as part of the mutual-aid arrangement. The whole family won't make a move until they see what Sheng-lu's expression is, first. As long as Sheng-lu's in the team, Blind Wang's family will be in it too. But if Sheng-lu quits, so will they. Blind Wang doesn't want to let Shuan-shuan go into the mountains, but hates to lose that money they'll earn cutting bamboo. Huh! You can't eat big griddle cake if you're afraid of tiring your teeth! The way I look at it, if he won't let Shuan-shuan go, that's fine! There'll be one less burden to worry about. Shuan-shuan isn't very bright, you know. But my boy Sheng-pao pushes hard. He wants the whole team to go. He's trying to drag them all along. . . ."

"Who else has no faith in mutual aid?" Secretary Lu queried.

"Iron Lock! When he moved here from Hsiapao he had no plough or ox. If he hadn't joined the team he wouldn't have been able to till his land. From the look of him, he'd leave it the minute he could get his hands on a draught animal and some farm implements of his own. I don't say anything, but I watch them all. Yu-wan, Huan-hsi and old Jen the Fourth — they're the only ones who're really on Sheng-pao's side. The rest are just tagging along, half-hearted. . . ."

"What about Feng?"

"Feng's a simple-minded fellow. When the team is all right, he's all right. When it runs into trouble, he changes. . . ."

"Don't be in such a hurry, old neighbour," the secretary said, very friendly. "To develop from no faith to faith takes a couple of years. Does the man who becomes a monk really 'get religion' the moment his hair is shaved off? He still has to go to the monastery and meditate, doesn't he? Don't worry, we'll gradually educate them. Just don't hold Sheng-pao back, old neighbour, and we'll be able to move right along. Here on this side of the stream the Hsiapao people say: 'Old Liang of the paddy fields has raised a fine son! His flesh and blood were formed north of the Wei, but his heart is the heart of old Liang the Third — he's a wonderful boy!' You see how highly people rate you, old neighbour. Don't make them think less of you, whatever you do!"

Ashamed, the old man hung his head. So that's what the Hsiapao folk thought of him! He hadn't known, though they were only on the other side of the stream. But how could they link his

cautious narrow peasant heart with Sheng-pao's bold free-soaring spirit? Old Liang felt miserable. His self-respect as a labouring man over-rode his pettiness as a peasant, and he asked himself: "You're past sixty; what do you expect to take with you when you leave this world?"

But again he returned to the mental refuge he had chosen after quarrelling with his old wife: "As long as I've food to eat and clothes to wear, Sheng-pao can do what he likes! It's his world now!"

When he raised his head, the expression on his seamed face was honest and sincere.

"Secretary Lu, can I tell you something from my heart?"

"Of course, old neighbour, go ahead."

"Going into the mountains is dangerous. . . ."

"I know. But Sheng-pao is prepared."

"Every spring, from the Tang Stream Gap, they used to carry out a few — " He couldn't say those awful words "dead and injured."

Secretary Lu liked the old man for being concerned. "Don't you worry, old neighbour," he said. "Sheng-pao is a careful fellow. He's not one of those rash blunderers. Besides, they're a good sized group. Nothing can happen to them."

Old Liang sighed. "People should only think of good fortune. But if anything goes wrong, we really won't be able to stand it. As leader, he'll have to go to jail. Our family will feel terrible. . . ."

The secretary burst out laughing. "What in the world are you talking about? Why should Sheng-pao have to go to jail? If anything goes wrong, the Communist Party will be responsible. How could we let Sheng-pao go to jail? Don't you worry! Didn't you say we're all named Communist?"

Relieved, the old man laughed. He rose and said: "Well, I've got to be going. If anything happens, you men in the Party mustn't be too hard on him. . . ."

Secretary Lu, restraining a smile, saw old Liang to the compound gate and helped him down the steps to the street.

"You can put all your worries out of your mind," Lu said. "In the future if there's anything you don't understand, old uncle, just look me up. We can talk it over together!"

In Huangpao, after picking up his permit to go into the mountains, Sheng-pao met Huan-hsi on the street. The boy told him that his step-father had gone to make a complaint against him in the township government. What a loss of face! Instead of going home, Sheng-pao hurried directly to Hsiapao along the county highway. Although he knew there was nothing wrong, the old man's raising a row in the township government would create a bad impression. But when he arrived at the township office and Secretary Lu told him the real situation, Sheng-pao broke into a broad grin, and he gazed at the secretary with joyful eyes. He had been prepared to carry his step-father home on his back if the old man refused to leave.

"Did you get your permit for the mountains?" Lu asked.

Sheng-pao wiped the sweat from his face with one end of his sash. "I got it. But we're in rotten luck!"

"What do you mean?"

"This whole side of the range is closed off this year to let the new trees grow up. No one's allowed to cut bamboo. We have to go to the main range, near Bitter Herb Clearing, to do our cutting."

"*Aiya*! That means you'll have to travel an extra forty *li*. It's going to be tough on the men carrying the brooms out."

"And what a forty *li* it is — straight up and down on both sides, like a ladder. Have you ever been up there, Secretary Lu? Folks say it's forty *li* of trails fit only for monkeys!"

The secretary laughed. "I've been through there at least a hundred times. Is the consumers' co-op paying the porters any extra, then?"

"I dropped in on the co-op on my way back. It's all arranged. They'll pay ten cents more for every broom. Even so, I'm afraid those shrewd fellows from Kuan Creek Hamlet won't like the idea. I've got to talk it over with Tseng-fu. If he can't convince them, I'll have to help him hold a meeting."

"Right!" Secretary Lu approved. "Explain that closing off forest areas is government policy. The forests belong to the people. If the Kuomintang hadn't always been setting fires to the forests, trying to burn out our guerrillas, there'd be plenty of bamboo on this side of the range! Would our government restrict cutting if we didn't have to?"

"That's what I'll say — because those are the facts!"

"Are you all ready? Is there anything the township can do for you? We really owe you an apology. The township government's been so busy, we haven't given you enough help."

"Not at all. Isn't this help? Teaching me is helping me." Young Sheng-pao was modest in the presence of the Party secretary, who was over forty.

He said they were ready. He and Yu-wan had checked over the tools they were taking into the mountains, as well as the men's food and clothing. Since Huan-hsi was being left at home to learn a new method of cultivating rice seedlings, they had persuaded the middle peasant Feng to join the expedition.

"Originally," said Sheng-pao, "we were going to ask the township to help us with our seedlings. But now that the county's sending an agronomist, the problem's solved." He seemed entirely satisfied.

As Sheng-pao rose to leave, Lu clasped one hand in his, and rested the other on the young peasant's sturdy shoulder. Then the secretary fondly escorted Sheng-pao out, as if seeing him off on a long journey.

"Comrade Sheng-pao," Secretary Lu said quietly, "don't you think you might work a little harder on trying to win your step-father over? After all he's not your real father. Ordinary backward peasants only see things on the surface and not their essence. They're quite liable to feel sorry for him. Of course we Communists want to move forward, but we can't ignore the impressions we make on the community."

Lu walked with his arm around Sheng-pao's shoulders. The young peasant was moved by his words.

"I've really been busy, Secretary Lu!" he explained. "It's not that I think any the less of him for being my step-father. I always feel that it's more important to do things for others, that my personal affairs don't matter. It's easy to patch things up in your own family, if there's a quarrel. . . ."

Lu nodded in agreement.

"There's another thing," Sheng-pao continued. "My pa has a craze for going it alone. Some days he's better, some days he's worse. He squats there by himself, his brows knit, thinking, thinking, thinking. But you never know what he's thinking about.

If you talk to him about being progressive, he listens all right. Then he sees others working away on their private property, and he gets mad at me. But I'm running around all day long. Who's got time to keep guessing exactly what's on his mind?"

"You're right." Secretary Lu was sympathetic and understanding. "Then ask your ma and Hsiu-lan to pay more attention to him. It's mainly a question of the impression it may give the masses. . . ."

At the Tang Stream, Sheng-pao begged the secretary to go back. With a strong peasant hand, Lu clapped him on the shoulder.

"Have a good trip! See you in a month!"

"No question about it!" Sheng-pao, at the head of the single plank bridge, said this confidently. "If there's illness or injury, we've got medicine. If we run into any tigers or panthers, Yu-wan has his repeating rifle."

The two Communists parted company and Sheng-pao crossed the bridge. Secretary Lu remained on the bank of the stream, watching until Sheng-pao's stalwart figure passed Sheng-lu's peach orchard. . . .

. . . Sheng-pao returned to the family's thatched hut by dusk. He asked his ma and Hsiu-lan where the old man was. They said he was sleeping on the small brick bed in the stable shed. They told Sheng-pao not to disturb him.

"Secretary Lu's words have really gone to his heart," said Hsiu-lan. "Pa was in a very agreeable mood when he came back from the township. He said you were doing big things. He hopes heaven will protect you and that you won't fall. He said people who do big things fall hard, while peasants walk a road that's been trampled flat by thousands of generations. So they don't fall, but live quiet peaceful lives. Don't you think pa's clever? . . ."

Pleased, Sheng-pao laughed. "There's nothing simple about our pa. He thinks all day, and his ideas are deep!"

He started for the stable shed. His mother caught him by the sleeve of his lined tunic.

"Don't go."

"Why?"

"He's feeling bad. You're going to leave home for a month and he's worried about you. He's left instructions that when you come back you shouldn't disturb him. He says he wants to sleep alone in the shed until daylight; you'll be gone by then. He says he couldn't bear watching you leave. Don't make him feel any worse! You go on about your business. Hsiu-lan and I will look after him."

But the love between Sheng-pao and his pa was strong! Sheng-pao wouldn't listen to his mother. He had to see the old man, to say a few filial words and, at the same time, explain the political significance of the expedition, so that pa wouldn't worry.

He went into the shed. Hsiu-lan stood watching from the doorway.

The old man was lying on the small brick bed, his face to the plaster wall. Sheng-pao walked over to him and called softly: "Pa! Pa!"

Old Liang didn't say a word.

"Pa! Pa!" Sheng-pao called again, shaking him gently.

The old man turned his seamed face around and opened his eyes. From the alert expression in them, it was plain he hadn't been sleeping.

"Get your mountain permit?"

"Yes."

"Everything ready?"

"All ready."

"Then go. I won't stop you. You do your big things. I'm just a timid peasant. I won't stand in your way. My only hope is that you bring your men safe and well out of the mountains again — Heaven and Earth willing! That's all I have to say!"

"Pa! Get up. There are a few family matters I'd like to talk to you about."

"Tell your ma about them. My heart's heavy. I don't feel like talking. That's a fact!"

Sheng-pao knew his pa's stubborn disposition. He gave up the idea of talking to him, and left the shed, his mind at ease.

. . .The following day at cock's crow, dogs began to bark and there was a hubbub of voices. Sheng-pao's group of bamboo cutters was setting out for Bitter Herb Clearing, deep in the Chinling Mountains.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Li Hu

Cultural Exchange

CHAO FENG

Once More I Hear the Heart-Warming Word "Paukphaw"

China and Burma have a common frontier,
Our people are friends and *paukphaw*;
We treasure our traditional friendship,
And even more our new friendship;
Sino-Burmese friendship, like the Nukiang and the Salween,
Shall flow in harmony, flowing on for ever.

On the happy occasion of the eleventh anniversary of our National Day in 1960, I heard in our majestic Great Hall of the People *The Song of China-Burma Friendship* sung by the Burmese Cultural Delegation. I was particularly struck by the word *paukphaw* which means kinsman in this song. It has a heart-warming sound! And it reminded me of an incident in the past.

Chao Feng is vice-director of the Central Conservatory of Music.

It happened in 1942 when I was travelling in a third-class carriage from Rangoon to Pegu and enjoying the wonderful tropical scenery. It was the monsoon season. Sometimes dark clouds would gather and torrential rain would pour down; then suddenly the rain would stop, the clouds would vanish, a bright golden sun in the azure sky would shine on the tall green and red-leafed trees whose names I did not know. I was enchanted by this scenery which was utterly new to me.

"*Paukphaw, Bè thwa mè lo lè?*" (Kinsman, where are you going?) The Burmese peasant sitting opposite me took the Burmese cheroot from his lips and with a glance full of friendliness addressed me with the gentleness peculiar to the Burmese language. I did not know any Burmese, but I guessed his meaning from his tone and expression. So I answered, "Pegu." In this way we became friends. By means of gestures and expressions we contrived to make conversation, and he offered me some betelnuts. This was the first time I heard the word *paukphaw.*

Now China and Burma during this joyful festival have signed the China-Burma Boundary Treaty. This is not simply a most happy occasion for the Chinese and Burmese peoples but an important international event. At the same time the Burmese Cultural Delegation has brought the rich and colourful Burmese national art and the warm friendship of the Burmese people to our country, to give performances during its visit to China. Thus when I heard again the word *paukphaw,* a word that expresses the long, historical friendship of the Chinese and Burmese people, it had a doubly warm and intimate sound.

Our Burmese friends describe this year as "China-Burma Friendship Year." The performances of the Burmese Cultural Delegation now visiting us may be called an important cultural event

in this China-Burma Friendship Year. The Burmese Cultural Delegation on the first page of the beautifully designed handbook to commemorate its performance wrote: "The Sino-Burmese boundary issue which was not solved for many years has been settled according to the Five Principles based on peaceful coexistence between our two countries. The Burmese Cultural Delegation is making this visit specially to commemorate this great achievement, to celebrate the national anniversary of the Chinese People's Republic, and at the same time to consolidate the friendship between China and Burma." The performances given in our capital Peking by the Burmese Cultural Delegation, just as said in *The Song of China-Burma Friendship* composed by our Burmese friends, embodied the Burmese people's deep friendship for the Chinese people and showed us the Burmese people's national art with its ancient tradition and the tremendous developments made in this fine traditional art in recent years.

Burmese dances are noted for their distinctive and beautiful movements of feet, waist, head and hands. The basic movements of Burmese dancing performed by students of the Mandalay Art School fully revealed this suppleness and grace. The celebrated woman dancer Nwe Nwe San and Kyaw Win Tin performed a modern *pas de deux* which has successfully renovated and further developed the basic movements of classical dancing and which shows the joy and happiness of young people in love. The name Nwe Nwe San means "Willow in the Wind" and this was the most apt epithet for the beautiful gestures in this dance. Especially worthy of mention were the Burmese ballets based on the principles of classical dancing which include not only legendary tales like *Sanda Kainayi,* about the fate of the fairy Kainayi who has a human face and the body of a bird, but also ballets with modern themes like *The Tale Told by the Irrawaddy River.* The latter describes how the Burmese inhabitants of the Irrawaddy Valley opposed the oppression of imperialism and Japanese fascism and fought for independence and freedom. The Burmese people had joined hands with the Japanese fascists to drive out the British invaders, but the scheming fascists who had pretended to be friends then tried to ride roughshod over them in place of the British colonialist wolves. When the Burmese people realized that the only difference between the British imperialists and the

Japanese fascists was the difference between a wolf and a tiger, they united to resist a strong enemy till finally they had liberated their own rich and beautiful country. This ballet indeed truthfully sums up the history of the Burmese people's struggle for national independence. At the end, when the people had driven away the enemy and hoisted their own national flag over the peaceful land, tumultuous applause burst out from the Peking audience.

As far back as the second century B.C. there were trade and cultural relations between China and Burma. It is no wonder then that when we hear Burmese music we find it most familiar. Even today Burmese music uses the five-tone, six-tone and seven-tone scales, the scales used for thousands of years also in China. A similar affinity exists in poetry. The cadence of Burmese poetry often reminds us of the Chinese poetic form with five or seven

words to a line; while impassioned verses sometimes include lines of ten syllables, very reminiscent of classical Chinese poetry. That is why in this beautiful music and poetry we truly hear the voice of a *paukphaw* or kinsman.

Burmese music possesses strong national characteristics and a distinctive national style. Classical Burmese music used four instruments only, the resounding *pat-ma,* the clear and pleasing *pat-waing,* the *kyi-waing* with its complex rhythms and the melodious *hne.* The overture played on these four instruments created a festive atmosphere immediately. When they were used as accompaniments for dances, their distinctive colour in timbre and variety in rhythm proved richly expressive, not only supplying an accurate beat for the dancers but investing each tiny movement and shade of emotion with a wealth of meaning.

We were particularly stirred by the fact that the Burmese Cultural Delegation also performed Chinese dances and songs. In *Girl Net-Weavers,* a dance presenting fishing girls at work in southern China, the performers showed remarkable talent. *A Sun that Never Sets Has Risen on the Grassland* and *Song of the Motherland* are popular throughout China, and the soloist U Aunt Byi interpreted them with genuine feeling. These items were a concrete expression of the Burmese people's love for Chinese art, and as such they drew an enthusiastic response from Peking audiences. The performance of these items has another much greater significance, namely this: though the Chinese and Burmese peoples have had cultural and friendly relations for more than two thousand years, not till our two peoples shook off imperialist oppression and won national independence and liberation could our long-standing cultural relationship develop further, like a great luxuriant tree putting out new vigorous branches.

The grand chorus performed by the Burmese Cultural Delegation was a

Dawn on Tiensban by Li Shan→

Li Shan, born in Tsingtao, Shantung Province in 1926, joined the revolution in 1948 and did art work ever since. He went to study Chinese painting in the Eastern China Branch of the Central Institute of Fine Arts in 1953. He is now working with the *Sinkiang Pictorial.*

most moving spectacle that left a deep impression in the minds of the Chinese audience. The colourful costumes of our Burmese guests were like a peacock flaunting its tail, a peacock, the beautiful, auspicious bird of Burma. *Song of the China-Burma Boundary Treaty,* composed by our Burmese friends while in Peking, praised the glorious new edifice founded on the traditional friendship of the Chinese and the Burmese people.

> We sing the friendship and solidarity of both our lands,
> May the close friendship between us endure for ever;
> We are like brothers, loving each other;
> We hail the victorious signing of the China-Burma Boundary Treaty,
> Victorious agreement, victorious agreement,
> Bringing bright hope to world peace.

The performances of the Burmese Cultural Delegation, in addition to winning the warm love and praise of the Chinese people, will make the friendship between China and Burma blossom with more beautiful flowers and bear more abundant fruit.

BURHAN

A Heroic People, A Glorious Performance

— written after seeing the Algerian Art Troupe —

Just as Peking was giving a tremendous welcome to Premier Abbas Ferhat, the envoy of the heroic Algerian people, the Algerian Art Troupe also came from distant Africa to pay us a visit and give performances here. It was with the greatest enthusiasm and the warmest friendship that Peking audiences saw a fine song-and-dance drama and a play with their distinctive Algerian style staged for us by the Algerian artists. Though China and Algeria are separated by thousands of mountains and rivers, the visit of Premier Abbas Ferhat and the performances of the Algerian Art Troupe linked the hearts of the people of both countries more closely together.

The song-and-dance drama *Forward to a Bright Future* and the play *The Immortals* gave us a deeper insight into the industry, wisdom, courage and resolution of the Algerian people who so fervently love their motherland and long for independence and freedom. In the struggle to oppose imperialism and win national independence, they have shown plenty of fight and boundless confidence. And they are a nation skilled in song and dance, with their own long tradition of culture and art, whose people use dances and songs to praise their fair and fertile land, to acclaim

Burhan is vice-chairman of the China-Africa Friendship Association.

the fighters struggling for the independence and liberation of their motherland. They sing:

> Our sons and daughters are growing up in the heat
> of the struggle;
> They have no nostalgia for the past,
> No connection with the past;
> They have taken up arms and become the free youth
> of Algeria. . . .

In this way the Algerian people, starting with little more than three thousand guerrillas, have raised the present National Liberation Army of more than a hundred thousand men.

The French colonialists in the hundred and thirty odd years of their cruel rule over Algeria, did their utmost to destroy the Algerian people's culture and art, but the enemy's attempt never succeeded. We rejoice to see the contribution made to the liberation of their motherland by Algerian artists using their own fine national music and dances with their distinctive style.

Because the Chinese and the Algerian peoples have shared a common destiny of opposing imperialism and fighting for national independence and liberation, we in China can fully understand what the Algerian people are confronted with. Thus although the people of our two countries do not speak the same language, we in China can fully understand the performance of *The Immortals,* and we rejoice to see the heroic image of the Algerian National Liberation Army fighting for the independence and liberation of its motherland, and its close ties with the local people. The Algerian artists have also given a successful representation of the glorious image of the heroic commander Kaddour. Because the Algerian people have thousands and tens of thousands of immortal sons and daughters of this heroic calibre, they have been able to deal heavy blows at the French colonialists aided by U.S. imperialism and the North Atlantic clique; they have been able to liberate more than half their country and to gain glorious victories. This short play makes a strong appeal to us; it reminds us of the hard times when we were resisting imperialist aggression, especially of the years of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. This play ends with these words: "This is how our revolution goes on — from one ambush to another ambush, from one battle to another battle; and when one man falls, another takes his place, until final victory is won." These words made an indelible impression on us.

The Algerian Art Troupe has been established for two years only. It is a young, militant art ensemble, which constantly performs for the Algerian fighters and the masses, making a contribution to the liberation of its motherland. We hope these artists will attain full growth and become strong in the fight for the liberation of their motherland, we hope they will score even greater successes in developing their own national culture and art; we hope they will make an even greater contribution to the independence and liberation of their country. The enemy confronting the Algerian people is powerful and the struggle is arduous; but the Algerian people who have stood up will certainly win the final victory. The Chinese people entirely sympathize with and support this just fight of the Algerian people. May the friendship forged in the struggle of the Chinese and the Algerian peoples live for ever!

TIEN HAN

Welcome to the Japanese Modern Drama Company

The Japanese Modern Drama Company has received a most enthusiastic welcome from the people of the capital and from Chinese literary, art and drama circles ever since it arrived at Peking Station.

The modern Japanese drama has a history of fifty-four years, reckoning from 1906 when Shoyo Tsubouchi organized the Association of Literature and Art; while our modern drama is a younger brother, having started in 1907 when Comrade Ouyang Yu-chien and others staged *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Tokyo. Though our modern drama was influenced to some extent from the start by our traditional theatre, we also learned much from Japan's "modern theatre" or "drama of the modern school." If the progressive, revolutionary Japanese working in modern drama have long waged an arduous struggle for democracy and progress in Japan, the progressive, revolutionary Chinese drama workers have even more clearly used their art as a powerful weapon in the struggle against imperialism and feudalism. Many contributed all they had to these struggles, even giving their lives. In this sense the drama workers of China and Japan are truly brothers. The victory of the Chinese revolution ensured good conditions for the

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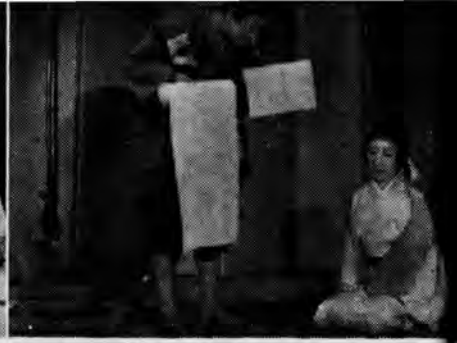
Tien Han, well-known playwright, is at present chairman of the Union of Chinese Drama Workers.

A Scene from *Dead Sea*



A Scene from *The Magic Crane*

development of modern Chinese drama under the people's government, whereas the modern drama workers in Japan still have to fight fierce battles under two-fold oppression. But as an integral part of the hard-working, courageous and wise people of Japan, these theatrical artists, despite protracted difficulties, have achieved many outstanding successes. They have produced numerous plays of a very high artistic standard; they have accumulated much experience in directing and performing; their staging and lighting effects show originality; they are adept at quickly absorbing what is good from Western Europe to enrich their theatre; they are also beginning to pay attention to their own fine dramatic tradition.

Their performances in Peking presented these merits in fairly sharp focus, giving us a taste of the richness and variety of the modern Japanese theatre and serving as a good mirror of the life and struggles of the Japanese people today. It is worthwhile for us to properly appreciate and study them.

During this visit the Japanese Modern Drama Company staged three full-length plays and three agit-prop pieces. The full-length plays were *Yuzuru* (The Magic Crane), *Shinda Umi* (Dead Sea) and *The Life of a Woman*. *The Magic Crane* is a well-known item of the Budonokai Repertory Company, while *The Life of a Woman* is frequently played by the Bungakuza Company. *Dead Sea* was written during the struggle to oppose the Japan-U.S. "security treaty"; it was directed by Korea Senda and performed by the chief actors of the Mingei, Haiyuza and Tokyo-Geijutsuza Companies with some actors from other companies as well. These three plays made a vivid and deep impression on us.

Junji Kinoshita's masterpiece *The Magic Crane* is based on a folk tale. The young peasant Yohei rescues a white crane which has been wounded by an arrow. In gratitude, the crane changes into a beautiful girl named Otsu and becomes his wife. She plucks a feather from her body each day to weave into silk in order to support them, and the young couple live without worries or cares till the husband listens to evil advice and forces her to weave more silk to make more money. When the crane has so few feathers left that she can barely fly, she sadly and regretfully leaves Yohei. That superb artist Miss Yasue Yamamoto first created the image of the beautiful and pure Otsu eleven years ago. Shoichi Kuwayama, who played Yohei, also gave a profound impersonation of a selfish and foolish peasant, while still retaining the simple honesty characteristic of the labouring people. Although Yohei in this play is a character to be censured, he is different nonetheless from those merchants whose aim in life is to seek profit; at the end he clasps the roll of silk and sadly calls his wife's name as the crane flies away; he did not let the silk woven with Otsu's blood and tears become a commodity to bring merchants large profits.

We sympathize deeply with Otsu, the guileless, honest crane who wants to show her gratitude. When she begs Yohei to love her alone and stay with her for ever but he insists on making money, she asks, "Why do you hanker after money so much?. . . Is money such a wonderful thing? . . . Is your love for money greater than your love for me?" The simple crane living in the sky does not understand the role of money under the system of private ownership – "whoever possesses it is lord of all he wants," it is "subversive of the economic and moral order." "*Τόδ' ἐκδιδάσκει καὶ παραλλάσσει φρένας χρηστάς πρὸς αἰσχρα ἀνθρώποις ἐχειν.*" (*Capital*, Chapter III, Section 3) Otsu has a naive dream of love, herein lies her tragedy.

Though the author of this play shows his view of capitalist society, he unconsciously reveals a sense of pessimism. However, he still has strong faith in the innocence of children. Since Otsu can never forget the dear voices of the children, I fancy that she must have fervent hopes for the future of human society. The performance of *The Magic Crane* was simple and neat throughout,

with a strong Japanese flavour. This play benefited much from the superb direction of the late Shiro Okakura.

Dead Sea, by the noted playwright Tomoyoshi Murayama, has as background a fishing village of Choshi in Chiba Prefecture. The fisherfolk there live by catching sardines, but after the reactionary Kishi government gives this district to U.S. imperialism for a military base, rows of anti-aircraft guns are set up on the shore and there is so much firing practice that the fish are driven away. The fishermen catch less and less; but the capitalists in control of the fishing trade pocket the public funds intended for the fishermen so that they are in desperate straits. Two Communists in the village, Toshio Kanazawa and Shinzo Yajima, meant to start a revolt when the boat-owners refuse to look after sick fishermen, but they realize they must develop these minor economic struggles into a political struggle before they can win. They warn the fishermen that if the Diet passes the new Japan-U.S. "security treaty" they will suffer worse calamities; and unless they oppose the military bases and struggle against U.S. imperialism, they will have no way out and will not be able to defeat the capitalists. So the movement to collect signatures against the "security treaty" starts in the fishing village at the same time as the embezzlement of public funds by the boat-owner Magojuro Kamiya is exposed. In this way the struggle in this fishing village flares up to become a part of the whole great anti-U.S. imperialism patriotic struggle which those lackeys cannot check. Immediately after his marriage, Shinzo Yajima also joins in the fight. The "dead sea" once wrapped in gloom becomes active again.

This play has powerful realism. By adopting the method of combining film and stage techniques, it achieves great range and breadth, presenting various aspects interlacing in one (though at times the luxuriant foliage tends to obscure the trunk). All the actors showed a strong revolutionary feeling. The veteran Japanese stage artist Osamu Takizawa played the Communist Shinzo Yajima with superb mastery and ease. Great experience and skill were also shown by Teruko Kishi as Okichi Mitokawa, Maso Shimizu as the boat-owner Magojuro Kamiya, Yasuehi Nagata as Sasajima and Sumiko Kiyokawa as Fukuko. Tsutomu Shimomoto and Michiko Otsuka brought freshness to the roles of Toshio Kanazawa and Kimiko. Such well-known artists as

A Scene from *The Life of a Woman*

Haruko Shugimura and Tanie Kitabayashi took minor parts, showing an excellent attitude worthy of emulation.

The Life of a Woman is the work of Kaoru Morimoto. Haruko Shugimura took the part of Kei Nunobiki and shows the different stages in her life: first she takes refuge in the Tsutsumi family as a maid of sixteen, then becomes the young master's wife, then the mistress of the household, and finally as an old woman of more than sixty she lives alone in the ruined house. This is a part which gives an actress full scope to show her versatility, and Miss Haruko Shugimura played it to the life.

We had a great admiration too for Makiko Kitashiro who played the part of Kei Nunobiki's mother-in-law Shizuko Tsutsumi; her performance was so natural, poised and mature. Masao Shimizu also acted Shosuke brilliantly, while Nobuko Tashiro as Fusako and Akiko Fumino as Chie were superb.

The three agit-prop pieces were excellent too. One dealt with a strike in the Miike Coal Mine, another with the movement against U.S. imperialism in Okinawa, another recorded the struggle against the Japan-U.S. "security treaty," using Tokyo as background. All three reached a high artistic and ideological level. This type of reportage play, which consists of declamations and a chorus, was introduced to Germany from the Soviet Union after the war. *Record of the Struggle Against the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty"* fully revealed the broadening of the united front of the common struggle against U.S. imperialism and Kishi. Not only were lantern slides and film techniques used, but at the end,

chanting "Fight, fight, fight! Join hands with all who love peace!" the actors descended from both sides of the stage to mingle with the audience, showing strong revolutionary fervour.

All the plays performed, directly or indirectly, had an anti-imperialist significance and were a synthesis of art and politics. As long as these two are always integrated enabling the modern drama to serve the new Japan which is fighting for peace, independence, democracy and neutrality, the modern Japanese drama is bound to become yet more splendid.

For a Joyous Occasion

SHEN HUA

Viet Nam's Brilliant *Hat Cheo* Opera

The Chinese people held large-scale celebrations in Peking and many other Chinese cities on September 2, 1960, the great day marking the 15th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. A Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Week starting from August 29 was observed in Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai, Wuhan and Canton when in addition to an exhibition of photographs showing the achievements of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in the past fifteen years, a Film Week of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic introduced two documentaries, *Episodes from the Revolutionary Activities of Ho Chi Minh* and *Bac Hung Hai,* and the feature film *The Same River.* During this time, President Ho Chi Minh also sent a cultural envoy, the Viet Nam *Hat Cheo* Art Troupe, to our country for a performance tour.

Hat Cheo is an ancient Vietnamese operatic form dating back nearly 700 years. Humour and satire are its special features. Though witty and presented in a light vein, it plays a positive educational role by singing the praise of revolution and progress and ridiculing reaction and backwardness. *Hat Cheo* originated in the Vietnamese villages and has developed into a fine, full-fledged operatic form on the basis of folk songs and dances. The music and singing are simple, melodious and attractive; the actors make much use of delicate hand and wrist motions to give authentic expression to the emotions and thoughts of different characters.

During the years of French imperialist occupation of Viet Nam, damage was done continuously to the *Hat Cheo* and many excellent traditions were almost forgotten. After the victory of the Vietnamese revolution in August 1945, under the care and guidance of the Viet Nam Workers' Party and the government, the *Hat Cheo* was revived for the people. Renovated creatively on the basis of developing fine traditions, it now shines with renewed splendour.

One of the operas performed on this occasion in our country by the *Hat Cheo* Art Troupe was the *Magic Water Bottle,* a traditional classical opera based on a beautiful folk tale. This opera with its legendary theme has a realist spirit and romantic flavour, praising labour and love and condemning, through satire a cruel and wanton feudal ruler. The love of Third Brother, a peasant, and his wife, founded on the labour they share is unshakable despite all the king's enticements and threats. Tram Thuy Lan in the role of Third Brother's wife successfully portrayed with consummate art the lovable image of a Vietnamese woman faithful to labour and to her love. Chu Van Thuc brought out in full Third Brother's admirable qualities – industry, simplicity and honesty.

With Advantages for All, which used the traditional art form to present a modern theme, successfully reflected the struggle between two roads in the movement for agricultural co-operation in Viet Nam. The individuality of different characters was amply expressed by earnest and conscientious acting. Bich Thang and Dinh Tung presented admirably the public spirit and ardent enthusiasm of two advanced characters while Nguyen Hoang Tu as Uncle Dao aptly portrayed a conservative peasant.

Thi Dieu Goes to the Monastery, Tuan Ty and *Suy Van Feigns Madness* were drawn from the traditional repertoire. All three are highly dramatic episodes and have stood the test of time. The three heroines revolt against the old oppressive feudal morality to pursue freedom in love. Vivacious, emotional Thi Dieu who falls in love with a monk, intelligent, brave Suy Van who feigns madness to get away from her unfaithful husband and seek her own happiness and Tuan Ty's wife who severely condemns her husband for taking a concubine left indelible impressions on the minds of the audiences. The actresses in these parts showed most versatile talents and their acting and singing were superb.

The repertoire and outstanding performance of the *Hat Cheo* Art Troupe are evidence of the great achievements of the artists of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic in editing and developing their national operatic heritage under the leadership of the Viet Nam Workers' Party. By bringing these excellent operas and superb actors to China at a time when the Chinese people were celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, the *Hat Cheo* Art Troupe did much to promote the fraternal friendship between the Chinese and Vietnamese people and the exchange of experience between the exponents of opera in our two countries.

Exhibition Commemorating Well-known Russian, Spanish and Japanese Painters

On September 21, the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace and cultural circles of Peking opened an exhibition to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the birth of the Russian painter, Andrei Rublyov, the 300th anniversary of the death of the Spanish painter, Diego de Silva y Velazquez and the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Japanese painter, Hokusai Katsushika.

More than a hundred reproductions of the three painters' works were on display while introductions to their life and special features of their works were also made. Noted figures from cultural and art circles in Peking took part in the opening of the exhibition.

Guests at the opening ceremony included Ablova, second secretary of the Soviet Embassy in China, Kazuo Suzuki, member of the standing committee of the Japanese Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and managing director of the Japan-China Trade Promotion Association now visiting China, Tomayoshi Murayama, head of the visiting Japanese Modern Drama Company, and some of the members of the company. Other guests were Mrs. Yolanda Perez, head of the delegation of the Cuban peace movement and secretary of the Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples, José Venturelli, Chilean painter and vice-secretary general of the Peace Liaison Committee of the Asian and Pacific Regions, and Mrs. Venturelli, Ahmed Mohammed Kheir, Sudan peace champion, and his wife, and the well-known American writer Anna Louise Strong.

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To Our Reader

With this final issue of 1960, we would like to send readers our greetings for the New Year. Next year *Chinese Literature* will continue to publish every month new writings of different forms, works of classical literature, representative writings of the May the Fourth Movement of 1919, folk literature, literary criticism, information on the developments in Chinese literature and art as well as art reproductions in colour of both modern and ancient works.

We hope that through this journal you will come to understand better the lives, thoughts and feelings of the Chinese people and the great achievements of New China in literature and art. To ensure that you will get *Chinese Literature* regularly without missing any issue, we suggest that you take out a subscription with your nearest bookseller or order direct from:

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