

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Ting Tzu-ping

Cipher Officer

In the spring of 1949 before our armed forces struck south to overthrow the Chiang Kai-shek regime, I was working in a dramatic troupe in the army. We had just finished rehearsing a new opera *Cross the Yangtse!* when I was transferred to the cipher office attached to Headquarters to learn to decode telegrams.

Many comrades helped me to pack and encouraged me. The political instructor advised me in my new assignment to learn from Liu Hsiao-lan, a model worker in that section. Her parents had been killed by the reactionaries when she first joined our armed forces at the age of fourteen — my own age at that time — but she had soon become a highly skilled decoder.

When I reached the cipher office the section chief had gone to Headquarters and it was Liu who received me. She looked me over carefully, and because I am on the short side started calling me “little devil”.

“How old are you?” she asked. “You can’t be more than thirteen.”

"Nearly fifteen," I retorted indignantly.

"Think you'll like our work here?" She eyed me dubiously. "Decoding telegrams is quite different from your job in the concert troupe. You can't chatter away all day here like a magpie."

Her blunt way of talking put my back up. "Will you tell me what our work involves?" I asked stiffly.

"Well, the set-up here is quite special. We receive instructions and orders from higher up regarding when a campaign is going to start and how it's to be conducted. We often get to know things even before our commanders." She obviously took great pride in her work.

"And what else?" I demanded, now thoroughly intrigued.

"Because our work is top-secret, we have to keep a close watch on our tongues and not say a word out of turn. When we leave the office we have to stay in pairs or in groups, for safety's sake and to keep an eye on each other."

This took the wind out of my sails. I started regretting my life in the concert troupe where I could wander off to the woods to practise singing early in the morning or do exercises all on my own, free as a bird.

"That's a bit thick," I blurted out. She simply smiled.

After lunch I went with her to wash clothes by the canal. There were quite a few soldiers there as well as women from the village. When comrades from Headquarters saw us, they paused in their work to comment, "Look, a new little devil's come to the cipher office."

As I did my laundry, Liu watched me with secret amusement. When she had wrung out the last of her own clothes, she picked up one of mine and commented: "You're really smart. You've turned a khaki uniform into a spotted one."

I looked, and she was quite right. There were dark and light blotches as well as spots and stains on my khaki jacket: it really was a sight. The other people on the bank turned to look too, and several of the village girls burst out laughing. I flushed up to my ears and made a grab at my jacket, but Liu pulled me back.

"Put it down. I was only joking," she said. "After soaping it you must scour and rinse it well; and you mustn't wash coloured

clothes together if the colour runs." With that she disentangled the clothes, laid some out on a stone to scrub them, and finally rinsed them vigorously in water. After she had done this several times, my jacket reverted to its original colour. She washed not only my clothes but also my socks.

I was so grateful for her help and so impressed by her competence, that my resentment vanished like bubbles on the water.

2

That afternoon Liu Hsiao-lan started teaching me how to decode telegrams. After several days of memorizing code numbers I felt quite exhausted. I thought we were reaching the end one afternoon when she suddenly handed me a message in code and told me to decipher it, taking out her old watch to time me. I decoded frantically. When she called a halt I had just finished the last word. Passing my decoded version to her, I clamped my teeth on my pencil, awaiting her comment. She checked the words one by one, putting a question mark against one word. I was afraid I must have made some slip, but she just teased: "Are you so hungry that you want to eat that pencil?" She took it from between my lips. Then she told me gently but firmly: "We mustn't make a single mistake in this job. It's a matter of life and death for our comrades and for the people." With that she produced a leaflet with a red cloth cover from her kit-bag. "This is Chairman Mao's *Serve the People* given me by an old comrade who copied it out for me herself. I've made another copy, so you can have this one." She turned to the passage: **"... The Chinese people are suffering; it is our duty to save them and we must exert ourselves in struggle..."** So it was an excerpt from Chairman Mao's work which she had made me decode.

As we went on working my spirits soared. That evening after she had finished decoding a telegram and was about to destroy it, I took it from her and said, "You have a rest. I'll burn this for you." As I started out she pulled me back. "No, don't burn it outside. What if some part got blown away by the wind?"



I realized that I'd made a mistake in my first contact with real work. The next day I did it in our office. After I had burned the telegram, I swept up the ashes meaning to carry them out to throw away; but once again she stopped me. "That's no good," she said gravely. "You might let out some secret. You must break up the ashes first."

I was puzzled. Since the message was burnt to cinders how could anyone reconstruct it? But when she pieced the charred paper together on the table and held a candle near it, I saw the lines and code on the ashes clearly, like white letters printed on a black telegram form. She was right of course, and I was only a greenhorn.

"Remember this," she repeated solemnly. "We mustn't leave any loophole for the enemy."

Late that night, I put my revolver by my pillow and my kit-bag under it, then went to sleep. Liu Hsiao-lan, sitting up by candlelight, was reading our opera script *Cross the Yangtse!* while waiting for telegrams. Towards dawn when the section chief and I got up to take her place, I noticed that her code-book was carefully wrapped in cellophane to make it waterproof.

3

Soon after my transfer we received instructions from the Central Committee for all the armed forces to check up on preparations for active combat. Before our section chief finished decoding this dispatch, he leapt for joy — for it was clear what this meant.

"Good!" exclaimed Liu in a low voice vibrant with feeling. "At last." Turning round to me she said: "If you were still with your troupe, you'd soon be performing for workers in the cities who've never seen our PLA concerts yet."

Catching on at last, I jumped to my feet and started making an excited comment, but Liu put her hand over my mouth to silence me. "Steady on. This isn't the stage. You must keep mum!"

Within a few days, sure enough, we received Chairman Mao's *Order to the Army for the Country-Wide Advance*. We decoded every word carefully, our hearts tense. If not for regulations, I'd have

liked to recite the order aloud as if addressing an audience, for every word throbbed like a drum-beat in my heart, gleamed like a bright star in the sky. **“Advance bravely and annihilate resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely all the Kuomintang reactionaries within China’s borders who dare to resist. Liberate the people of the whole country. Safeguard China’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.”** When we came to these words I saw Liu smiling through tears. Never before had I beheld her so moved. As soon as we finished decoding this dispatch, orders came to make a forced crossing of the Yangtse. Once we had passed on this command, a song welled up in my heart and I couldn’t hold it back:

Fell the big tree for firewood;
Kill the tiger to wear his skin;
Down with the diehards,
Share out food and land!

At once Liu Hsiao-lan and the section chief joined in:

Fight on to the end,
Till the battle’s done;
Whatever tricks and schemes they try,
We’ll fight till the victory’s won.

4

The battle for the Yangtse had begun. What an unforgettable moment! The People’s Liberation Army, a million strong, broke through an enemy front hundreds of miles in length and forced the mighty Yangtse. Thousands of barges ferried troops across. The fortifications which the Kuomintang reactionaries had spent three and a half months constructing collapsed like a house of cards under our fierce onslaught. Within twenty-four hours, 300,000 PLA men had crossed the Yangtse, occupied wide areas on the south bank and continued their victorious advance in pursuit of the enemy.

Our section had made all necessary preparations. When the order came to cross, we swiftly embarked.

The sound of gunfire was now more sporadic. We could tell that our advanced columns were pursuing the enemy some distance away. As the day grew brighter and the dark clouds dispersed, thousands of vessels shuttled to and fro between both banks, transporting troops, guards and cadres across the river.

Liu stood at the cabin door, her arms akimbo, her revolver and code-book slung across her shoulder, a broad leather belt round her waist. The breeze ruffled her hair under her army cap as she fixed her eyes intently on the distance.

“So at last we’ve recovered the Yangtse valley!” she exclaimed.

“Yes, you can go home now. Is your home far from here?” I asked without thinking.

She said nothing but bit her lips. Her face looked stern. I remembered then that her parents had been murdered by the reactionaries, and I could have kicked myself.

“Going home can wait,” she answered resolutely. “There are still millions of people going through hell in the south. Remember Chairman Mao’s orders. We must liberate the people of the whole country. We must advance and annihilate all the Kuomintang reactionaries — resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely.”

“Our commander said in his report that most bureaucrat-capital is concentrated in the south. Won’t it be grand when we confiscate all that?” I asked, deliberately avoiding any mention of her home.

“Yes. But China is so big, just confiscating a few things won’t get us very far. We must build socialism and communism with our own hands. We shall build ourselves planes, guns, warships, motor-cars, electric generators, tractors, wireless stations . . . a whole modern economy.”

“Right! Then instead of slow, top-heavy junks we shall have our own steamboats like those in the pictures, tall, big, fast and safe as houses.”

“We shall build bridges across the Yangtse too, with a railway below and a motor-highway above, so that crossing the river will be simpler.”

“That’s a fine idea. After wiping out the reactionaries, let’s put in for permission to go and learn to make engines and drive tractors.”

I had jumped up in my excitement, but Liu pulled me down and made me sit by her side. "Don't just look on the bright side," she said seriously. "As long as there are enemies left, we must never put down our guns. Even after all China is liberated, there'll still be enemies inside and outside who will try to sabotage us. The Party may send us to do other jobs, but wherever we go we must never relax our vigilance."

The further we went from the shore, the more roughly our sampan was tossed about on the waves. Alerted by Liu's warning, I felt for my revolver and kit-bag, then looked around. The boatman behind us was rowing with all his might. A westerly wind was blowing. Suddenly we heard the chug of distant motors, and by straining my eyes through the morning mist I made out some dark objects approaching. Our section chief, raising his binoculars, saw that these were warships with Kuomintang or foreign flags. Obviously some Kuomintang vessels were trying to escape downstream under protection of the foreign ships. Since they were heading our way, our guards prepared to intercept them. Liu drew her revolver, and checked the strap of her kit-bag. I also took out my weapon, ready for the worst. As we approached the south shore, the enemy ships started shelling. Shells falling near our sampan sent up spouts of water. Our artillery on shore returned fire. Our section chief, an army veteran, leapt into the waves with the boatman. Together they pushed our little craft towards the shore, then took cover in a shell-hole to direct our disembarkation. As I leapt for the bank, my kit-bag fell near the water. I tried to retrieve it, but Liu from behind pushed me into a crater and picked it up herself. After she had tossed it to me and was stepping towards the shore, a shell exploded. She spun round, clapped one hand to her waist and toppled over. The next instant she was carried off by the current, the water turning crimson with her blood.

5

The battle soon concluded. Some of our comrades in the cipher office went on with the advancing troops while we, with heavy hearts,

remained to look for Liu. Though she had been carried downstream, we hoped that she might have been swept ashore. We searched shell craters and demolished enemy positions, but though we combed the river bank several hundred yards to the east of where she had fallen, we could find no trace of her. The wind was fiercer now, the waves were tossing more violently. My heart was in my mouth. Our section chief was fearfully worried too, not simply over losing such a fine comrade but because she was carrying a code-book. It would be very serious if this fell into enemy hands.

As we continued our search of the reedy bank, we saw a streak of blood leading from the water. It looked as if some injured person had crawled ashore there. Hoping against hope, we followed this trail of blood. About a hundred metres away the trail disappeared. We searched around and found a newly made pile of straw and mud. Under this we discovered Liu's kit-bag. We all brightened. Liu could not be far away. Our section chief sent two comrades off to look for her while he quickly opened the kit-bag. But it held nothing but the script *Cross the Yangtse!* which I had lent her to read. He turned the bag inside out, but there was nothing. The code-book had disappeared. We were all frantic with worry.

Tense and heavy at heart, we went on searching. Blood in the grass and imprints in the mud led us to a hollow in a clump of reeds where we at last found Liu Hsiao-lan lying on her face. One of her hands was pressed to her belly, the other pointed ahead. When we called her she made no answer. She had fainted. While the medical orderly administered first aid, we searched her pockets, but all we found was her copy of *Serve the People*.

We were in a quandary about the code-book. Some comrades thought she might have thrown it into the river to prevent it from falling into enemy hands; others thought she might have buried it somewhere else; yet others thought she might have burnt it. The section chief decided, "She must have hidden it, just as she hid that kit-bag under straw and earth. She is utterly devoted to the Party and Chairman Mao; she would never let the enemy get hold of our code-book." He quashed the idea of her throwing the code-book into the river or burying it under some straw, for that was not safe

enough. She had no means of burning it. Nor could she have swallowed it, for the code-book was not a slip of paper but something substantial.

Just at this moment Liu came to. At sight of the comrades around her, her eyes gleamed. With an effort she indicated the wound in her belly, a big gaping wound, and from it we drew a blood-stained roll — the code-book safely wrapped in cellophane! Not one of us but shed tears when we saw this.

As the medical orderly dressed her wound, an order was brought to us to follow the vanguard. We left Liu Hsiao-lan in good hands, and set off on our march. In spite of the delay, Liu's heroism spurred us on to reach our destination in good time.

When our commander heard our report, he clenched his fist and said incisively: "Ring up the hospital to inquire after Comrade Liu Hsiao-lan's injuries. She must be saved at all costs." He continued: "Report our victory to the higher command. We have faithfully carried out Chairman Mao's instructions. We have smashed Chiang Kai-shek's defence line along the Yangtse which he boasted was impregnable. Now we are driving forward to mop up enemy remnants. We damaged a foreign warship which opened fire and it has run aground..."

The operator transmitted these messages. The rhythmic staccato tapping of his keys sent news of our fresh victories to Headquarters.

Illustrated by Huang Chia-yu

Tasting the Line (oil-painting)
by Pan Chia-tsun ►



The Commune's Choice

The county Party committee's office was at the east end of this Inner Mongolian town. A row of green pines before it, planted by the Party secretary himself, cast slanting shadows over its window-panes.

Party secretary Chokmanda had got up early. As soon as he had dressed he threw open the windows, went through some exercises in deep breathing, then sat down at his desk to continue studying the reports which he had started reading the previous night. The report on the county's efforts in animal husbandry brought a satisfied smile to his face. Then he opened an envelope from the Bureau of Education and read the list of students who had been chosen to attend college that year. As he turned the pages, a name caught his eye.

"Lu Hsiao-meng: College of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry".

The name struck him as familiar. But he saw that someone had crossed it out with a red pencil and added a note: "The commune suggests passing over this applicant. See appendix." Chokmanda promptly turned to the appendix, where he read:

"On April 7 Malagabu, in charge of cultural matters in Babriho Commune, rang up to propose the omission of Lu Hsiao-meng's name, because Lu is the treasurer for his brigade but he's more than fifty yuan out in his accounts. He has a crippled leg too."

Thoughtfully, Chokmanda took a notebook from the left drawer of his desk. In this he had copied down the names of high school students who had volunteered to come to this county, as well as the names of the communes where they were now working, their background, general level, health, special aptitudes and so forth. These youngsters, responding to Chairman Mao's call to young people with education to go to the countryside and learn from the poor and lower-middle peasants, had been working in various brigades here for two years. Chokmanda had meant to make the rounds of these brigades to find out how the young people were getting on.

Reading through his notes jogged his memory. He distinctly recalled meeting Lu the previous summer. One day in July last year, Chokmanda was caught in a storm on his way to Hailistai Commune. Since it was growing dark, he decided to spend the night in a model herding centre in Ulan Brigade in Babriho Commune. The old herdsman Aobendailai who headed this centre and had taught a number of youngsters how to herd horses was away at Headquarters getting treatment for his rheumatism, having left a few students from Peking in charge. The youngest, Tsai, was only seventeen; the oldest, Peng, no more than twenty-one.

"What! Just the five of you running things here?" asked Chokmanda.

"Not five," Tsai corrected him. "There are only four of us."

"Then who's that checking up on the sheds outside?"

"Aobendailai must be back!" The four youngsters leapt up. But Chokmanda stopped them with a wave of his hand. "No, another lad from Peking judging by his accent."

"Who could that be?" Tsai scratched his head. "You must be mistaken."

"No." Chokmanda stuck to his guns. "If he hadn't shown me the way, I'd never have found this place in all the rain. He said

he'd just arrived from Headquarters and told me to come in first while he had a look round."

"Ah, that must be our Youth League secretary Lu Hsiao-meng." Tsai was putting on his raincoat to go out when the door opened and a strapping young fellow came in, rain dripping from the fibre cape over his shoulders.

"A fine lot you are!" he quipped. "All that row you're making! What are you up to now?"

Chokmanda took an instant liking to this bunch of vigorous young people, particularly the new-comer with his sun-tanned face, thick eyebrows and big eyes. The creases on his forehead seemed signs of a thoughtful and inquiring mind.

"What's your name?" Chokmanda asked warmly.

"Lu Hsiao-meng."

"Young but tough, eh? That's a good name to live up to. Where's your father working?"

"In a factory."

"A worker?"

"Well, yes. . . ."

What he saw of Lu and his young friends delighted Chokmanda. They seemed to him well-equipped to carry on the revolution. He recalled what he had been through in the long ago past.

In 1945, on the eve of the victory of the war of resistance against Japan when the Eighth Route Army liberated the long enslaved people of the Kolchen steppe, a young company commander rescued a Mongolian boy from Prince Darhan's dark dungeon which had been set on fire. This slave boy at his last gasp was Chokmanda. His rescuer was a Han called Yuch Ta-yung. Since Chokmanda was a homeless orphan whose parents were the victims of Prince Darhan's cruel oppression, Yuch took him back to his company, where later he served as a messenger boy. When Yuch was promoted to be battalion commander, he took Chokmanda with him as his bodyguard. Yuch took great care with Chokmanda's up-bringing, determined to make a revolutionary of the young Mongolian.

After Liberation both of them served in Korea as Chinese People's Volunteers. Yuch by then was a regimental commander, while

Chokmanda at eighteen had become a platoon leader, but they were in different units. In 1951 Chokmanda was sent home on a special mission. Since then more than twenty years had passed and he had lost contact with Yueh; but to this day he still felt a deep sense of gratitude to the man who had helped him on to the revolutionary road.

At sight of these youngsters Chokmanda thought in a flash: "Now it's our turn to train the younger generation. . . ."

The rain continued. They had finished drinking their tea boiled with milk, but the young folk went on chatting cheerfully till Lu stood up to go back to Headquarters.

"Here are some books for you," Lu said, patting a raincoat-wrapped package on the table.

"I know," said Tsai. "You want to go back and tell old Aobendailai that all's well, so that he doesn't stay awake all night worrying, or even come back himself with his bad leg. But you'd better stay here tonight. I'll go in your place." However, Lu had already put his rain cape round his shoulders and dashed out.

Recalling this scene Chokmanda was very puzzled. How could a fine lad like that get his accounts so mixed up? He decided to ring up Gejelertu, head of the Bureau of Education, to get to the bottom of the business. When he got through to him he went straight to the point. "Old Gejelertu, I can't make out that note of yours about young Lu Hsiao-meng. How did he come to be fifty yuan out in his accounts?"

"Old Malagabu of the Babriho Commune insisted on leaving out his name," Gejelertu replied. "I'm thinking of going over there to find out more about it."

"Well, I want to see the youngsters in the commune myself. Why don't we both go to Ulan Brigade straightaway to look into this?"

2

Babriho Commune lay quite a distance away and their road took them through grasslands, hills and marshes, yet after three hours' hard riding they reached the office of Ulan Brigade. The gate-

keeper Old Togsen was over sixty and deaf. Even shouting at him was useless.

"You want our brigade Party secretary Bayar? He's gone to the commune. . . . Ah? You mean vice-head Bayinchang? He never stays put in the office. He's gone to fetch fodder. . . . Or is it the telephone you want? That's in Aunt Aolima's house, the fifth from here." Indicating his ears he added: "I'm a mite hard of hearing, so she looks after the telephone. . . ."

The old gate-keeper's garbled replies set Chokmanda and Gejelertu laughing. Not wishing to bother the old man, they decided to enlist the villagers' help. However, Old Togsen insisted on shuffling along with them to show them the way.

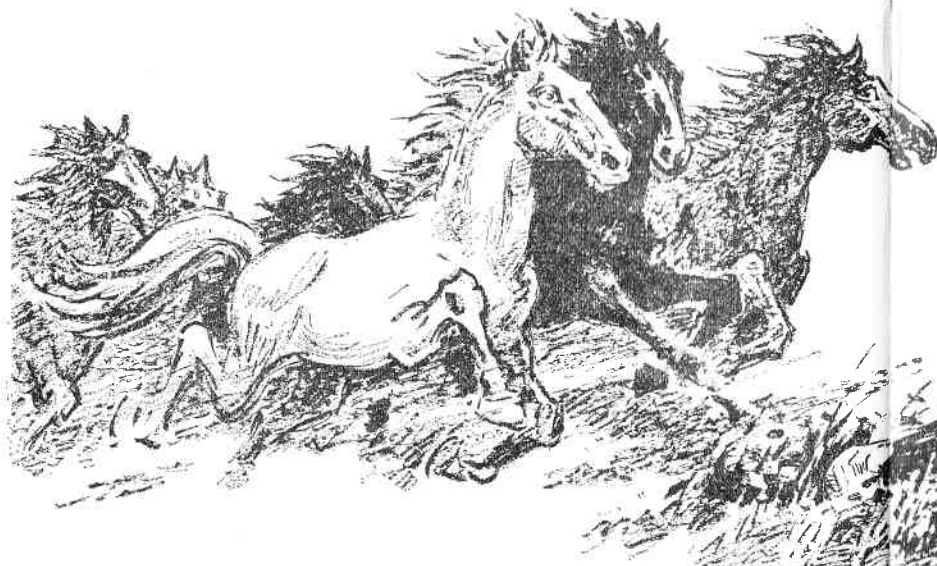
The houses of Ulan Brigade were smartly built, spotlessly clean. Tall poplars flanked the highway. Half-way down it Chokmanda saw a new seven-roomed house with a white wall on which was written in red: "**Our countryside is vast and has plenty of room for intellectuals to develop their talents to the full.**" Obviously this must be where the young people with high-school education were staying.

"Want to see those youngsters, comrade?" Old Togsen asked. "Come on, I'll lead the way. They're a fine lot." He stuck up a callused thumb approvingly. "A very fine lot. But the pick of the bunch is that young eagle Lu Hsiao-meng. . . . Did you hear what he did only a week ago? That was a near thing! If not for him, old Sambu's two daughters mightn't be alive today."

"What happened?" asked Gejelertu.

Old Togsen did not hear him but droned on and on.

"Lu Hsiao-meng? Yes, he's a hero. . . . No. 2 Farm's horses were grazing at the foot of the hill that day when a wild boar suddenly charged them from behind. At once the whole herd stampeded. Lu Hsiao-meng was just riding back from the commune. He saw two little girls picking wild flowers by the roadside — just where they'd be trampled under the horses' hooves! Lu spurred towards them and with one bound dismounted, pushed the two girls to one side and threw himself over them, in the self same instant that the herd thundered past. Our old brigade Party secretary Bayar and



some other herdsmen hurried to the spot. The girls scrambled up and ran to old Bayar. But when Lu tried to stand up, he couldn't. In jumping down to save the girls, he'd broken his left leg on a rock. . . ."

Old Togsen paused to sigh and then continued: "All our hearts bled for him. Old Bayar picked him up with tears in his eyes. The two girls, Little Dagula and Chichige, stroked his broken leg, trying to relieve the pain. . . ."

Chokmanda was very moved by Old Togsen's story. How could they let such a fine boy become a cripple? "Did you manage to save his leg?" he asked urgently.

Old Togsen for once seemed to hear this question clearly. He chuckled. "Of course we did, comrade. We'd have saved his leg even if it had meant sending him all the way to Peking. We poor herdsmen have fixed on him as the youngster we're sending to college. How can he go if his leg isn't cured? You've come just at the right time, Comrade Chokmanda. You listen to me. You must let Lu Hsiao-meng go to college. He's a very fine youngster,"

When Chokmanda nodded, the old man continued jubilantly: "Old Bayar went straight to fetch our bone-setter Old Urtu, who's over eighty this year. This story moved Old Urtu to tears. He guaranteed to cure the young fellow's leg. He reset the bones carefully, so that in three days' time the swelling subsided and the bones started knitting. Now Lu Hsiao-meng's resting in the hostel. . . ."

Feeling as if a great load had been lifted off his mind, Chokmanda strode cheerfully into the young people's compound. Old Togsen raised one hand warningly. "Don't make a noise. He may be sleeping," he whispered.

Passing a trellis of grapes, they entered the young men's quarters. To their surprise there was nobody there, only neatly made-up beds. A sound behind the wall drew them to the back-yard. There they found Lu practising walking by the wall, his face glistening with sweat, his blue trousers stained with mud.

"Stop that, you donkey." Old Togsen went over to Lu and tried to lift the youngster on to his back,

"No, grandad, I can manage," the lad assured him.

"You can't." The old man no longer seemed hard of hearing. "Come on," he said firmly. "I'll carry you back to your room."

"No, grandad, I can walk all right." Lu raised his hand and boldly took one step forward, then another, leaving a row of foot-prints imprinted on the moist earth.

Chokmanda was pleased by Lu's rapid recovery. But then with a thoughtful frown he said to Gejelertu, "We must get to the bottom of this. That report is obviously inaccurate. To start with, he's not a cripple. . . ."

Just then they heard an old woman call: "Is Comrade Chokmanda here? He's wanted on the phone."

Chokmanda went out, asking, "Is that Aunt Aolima? Is there a phone-call for me?"

"Yes, yes." She led the two cadres to her room where the telephone was. As soon as Chokmanda picked up the receiver, he heard the agitated voice of the old brigade Party secretary Bayar.

"Hullo, Comrade Chokmanda! I just went to the county office to lodge a complaint, but heard you'd come to our brigade. For fear of missing you on the way, I decided to phone you. . . ."

"Yes. What is it?" Chokmanda got ready his notebook and pen to put down the complaint. Old Bayar was obviously in a bad temper.

"Well, Comrade Chokmanda, I think old Malagabu should be dismissed at once from his job in charge of education in our commune. The doddering old fool just sits in his office, knowing nothing about the real situation. He not only deleted Lu Hsiao-meng's name from the list of students eligible to go to college, without waiting for a decision from higher up, he wants to add another name of his own choosing. This is the ruddy limit!"

Old Bayar, fuming, paused to catch his breath, then continued, "You know why he deleted young Lu's name? Because the brigade was fifty-odd yuan to the good when the accounts were made up, and young Lu was the treasurer. 'Never mind how it happened,' blethered old Malagabu. 'He hasn't balanced his books. Money isn't water, how can it increase?' What a bureaucrat! That old

man is so self-opinionated, he never carries out any investigation. He says Lu is a cripple. Bah! It's his own head that needs examining. We must give him a good criticism to teach him a lesson. Otherwise he'll go on messing things up this way. . . ."

As Chokmanda listened, his knitted brows relaxed. Though Bayar's voice came from sixty miles away, every word was clear and distinct. Gejelertu who was also listening put in now: "Cut the cackle, old Bayar, and tell us: How come you were fifty yuan out in your accounts?"

"How?" Old Bayar chortled. "Ha! There was indeed an increase in the money. We got three experienced accountants — one from the consumers' co-op, one from Fourth Brigade and one from our own brigade — to go through the accounts. Because although fifty yuan isn't much, it's a question of Lu's honesty, not a trifling matter. The thing had to be cleared up. Believe me, it was quite a tricky problem. It took us three whole days of investigation before we got at the truth. This is the story. Old man Aobendailai in our No. 6 herding centre was a slave in the old society; he had T.B. in the leg-bone and never got cured. When the brigade offered to send him to Tientsin for treatment he refused, saying he was already nearly seventy and wouldn't let the brigade waste money on him. Actually he was trying to save up a thousand yuan so as to go to hospital in Tientsin. Young Tsai knew this, so he secretly got hold of old Aobendailai's bank-book and added 104 yuan 80 cents from his own savings, which were in Lu's keeping, to make up a thousand yuan. He told Lu not to breathe a word about this, but just notify the old man that he had got enough now for medical treatment. Old Aobendailai had forgotten how much he had in his account. When he was told by Lu that he had enough, he took his money, went happily to Tientsin and was hospitalized. At the end of the year, however, Tsai found himself more than fifty yuan to the good; but when he returned this to Lu, Lu wouldn't take it, insisting that the brigade accounts were correct. Then Tsai gave this sum to the Revolutionary Committee, and people heard that some fifty yuan extra had been discovered while Lu was treasurer. What had happened, of course, was this: When Lu heard

that young Tsai wanted to help old Aobendailai, he decided to go halves; so without a word he put fifty-two yuan from his own account into Tsai's account. After we had discovered this, we called the two youngsters together to clear up the business. Tsai was flabbergasted. He scolded Lu, 'You should have told me what you were up to. You nearly got a bad name for yourself.' 'You told me to keep it quiet,' retorted Lu. 'If people suspected me, that was just too bad.'"

Old Bayar laughed boisterously after telling this story. Then he asked Chokmanda, "But what sort of attitude is this, comrade? Why should Malagabu cut out Lu's name without investigation? When I went to argue with him, know what he said? 'The report's already gone in. It's too late to change it.' Just tell me, Comrade Chokmanda, is this right?" Old Bayar was thoroughly worked up again. He went on, "Actually we hate to let young Lu go: it's a fearful wrench. You never see my old woman crying, but when she heard Lu would be leaving to go to college, the tears poured down her cheeks."

Old Bayar would have continued in this vein, but Chokmanda cut in to stop him. "All right, Comrade Bayar. We'll talk about it again next time we meet." Then ringing off, Chokmanda and Gejelertu took their leave of Old Togsen, and went back well satisfied with the results of their investigations.

3

The day for the young people to set off to college had arrived. Representatives from Babriho Commune and other communes as well as from factories and schools had gathered before the county office to give a warm send-off to the first batch of students recommended by the units at grass-root level for our socialist colleges. The old Mongolians, men and women alike, found it very hard to part with these dear young people, some of whom were the children of serfs, others educated youngsters from the cities who had come to the countryside to learn from the masses. Old Bayar's wife,



wiping her tears, stroked young Lu's head. "Go then, my fine yearling," she sobbed. "But don't forget us."

As county secretary Chokmanda hurried back from the hills to see the 240-odd youngsters off to college, a postman arrived at the bus-station to hand the youngsters letters which had just come. He also delivered a letter to Chokmanda. The writing on the envelope looked familiar, but Chokmanda did not know anyone from the factory where it came from. He slit open the envelope and started reading. It was a letter from his old commander Yuch! His amazement increased as he perused this passage:

"Another thing. Remember the baby you brought back from the Korean front twenty-one years ago? Now it's from him that I've finally got news of you. He's a student in your district, Lu Hsiao-meng. . . ."

Scenes from the past flashed before Chokmanda's eyes. In the summer of 1951 when the fighting in Korea was at its fiercest, the political commissar of his division had recalled him from the front and entrusted to him a baby and five packets of milk powder. "You're an old friend of Yuch Ta-yung, commander of First Regiment, and you knew his wife Lu Chien when she was with us as an army doctor. This is their baby, their only son. Yuch's wife has died, and your task is to take this baby safely back to the motherland."

Yuch's wife Lu Chien, a celebrated surgeon, had also served in First Regiment. When she became pregnant, Headquarters told her to return to China; but since a crucial campaign was about to start she refused to leave the front, saying she would go home after the campaign. During the arduous fighting she tended the wounded, until she was hit by shrapnel from an American bomb. Ignoring her own pain and loss of blood, she insisted on operating on another soldier who had been seriously injured. When at last he was out of danger and carried to safety, she gave birth prematurely to her child and then, weakened by excessive loss of blood, she died.

Tearing himself back from these recollections, Chokmanda hurried to find young Lu. "So you're the son of my friend Yuch Ta-yung," he cried. "Why didn't you tell me so before?"

"I meant to, Uncle Chokmanda." The young man grinned. "But I didn't have any chance to. . . ."

"What's your father's job?"

"He's the Party secretary of the factory. When I went back last year to Peking, I mentioned you to my father. I told him that the way you gestured and talked reminded me of him. Then I mentioned your name, and that really staggered him. He asked me a number of questions. Then he took an old photograph from his wallet and, pointing to a young soldier in it, asked me whether that was you. I had to look closely before I recognized you."

The bus was about to start. Gazing fondly at this young man who was the son of his comrade-in-arms and the baby he had brought back to China, Chokmanda clasped Lu's shoulder. "Go now. We expect a lot of you, remember. Study hard for the revolution, for the cause of the proletariat."

In the warm morning breeze, the bus sped east along the highway. The air was sweet with the smell of spring grass wet with dew. Chokmanda stood among the cheering crowd, waving vigorously at the receding forms of the young people starting a new chapter in their life.

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Ninety-Nine and One

The Eighth Anti-aircraft Artillery Battery was to hold a test to select its best gunner. Only two men took part, however.

Why only two?

Recently Division Headquarters had decided to run a training course for the best gunners from each battery, so that they could exchange experience and raise their standard. As soon as this notice reached Eighth Battery, according to the democratic tradition of the PLA the choice of the right man was discussed at a general meeting.

Right after the battery commander announced the news, someone stood up to recommend Wu Tung because he was a veteran gunner — and veterans were always more competent.

“No. Lei Chih-kuo is the man to send.” Wu raised his hand to voice his opinion. “He’s made rapid progress and is quick in the uptake. Besides, he’s more experienced than I am.”

“That’s not true, Old Wu,” objected Young Lei. “You know everything I do and a whole lot more. You can contribute much more to the training course.”

“You’ve learned all we old hands can teach you, Young Lei,” countered Wu. “In technical know-how, you’re way ahead of me. It’s only right that you should go.”

“No. You’re the better man.”

“No, you.”

The opinion of the meeting was divided. A heated debate ensued. Seeing no immediate possibility of a consensus of opinion, Staff Officer Meng from Division Headquarters proposed, “Suppose we let the two of them undergo an aptitude test and decide afterwards.” The battery commander, realizing that Meng wanted to see the two candidates in action, at once agreed.

The next morning after reveille, all the gunners crowded round a heavy AA gun, some standing on the coerture, others below it. Signal flag, stop-watch and training shells, all were ready. The test was about to begin.

The two competitors, Wu and Lei, were getting ready for action. But strange to say, they were doing none of the usual warming-up exercises, familiarizing themselves with the shells and the gun emplacement, or finding out which other gunners they were to team up with. Instead they had stepped aside to have a chat.

“Young Lei, who is our enemy today?” began Wu.

“The air pirates who dare cross our borders...” answered Lei, his lips set in grim lines.

“Right. Quite right.” Wu went on, “It’s true this is only a try-out, but the minute we man the gun that’s a real battle. Neither of us should defer to the other. We must put up a fearless and persistent fight.”

Young Lei snapped to attention and answered incisively, “I shall carry out Chairman Mao’s teachings and put up a good fight.”

After saying this Lei took Wu by the arm to go over to the gun. Wu patted him on the shoulder with his powerful hand and advised him, “Keep calm and steady.” Then he made sure that the young soldier’s shoe-laces were tightly fastened, his cuffs buttoned and his cap on straight.

In the meantime Staff Officer Meng and the battery commander had come to the emplacement. After glancing around they remarked, "Well, the spectators have taken their seats, yet there's not a sign of the actors anywhere, eh? Where are they?"

"Here!" answered Wu and Lei who had just returned and were standing shoulder to shoulder below the coverture waiting for the order to start. On the left of the gun was Wu Tung. His dark eyes sparkled in his tanned weather-beaten face as he stood there, spirited yet self-possessed, steady as an iron tower. On the right was Lei Chih-kuo. The taut muscles on his face made him appear somewhat tense.

The two contestants, in point of fact, had been master and apprentice when Lei joined the army six months ago. Since then, however, Lei had made rapid progress under Wu's tutorship and soon become an expert loader. He was then transferred to work on another gun. Despite this separation, their warm affection for each other remained undiminished.

Now when Meng saw that everything was in order, he said: "It's time to start."

"Which of you will go first?" the battery commander asked.

"Old Wu, you start first," Lei proposed immediately.

Seeing no necessity to decline, Wu agreed. He took off his cotton-padded tunic and tightened his belt.

It was November. There had already been several heavy snowfalls on this plateau in the border region. The frosty morning air was at least seven or eight degrees below zero. Afraid that Wu might catch cold, Meng advised him to put on his coat.

"We take off our coats even when it's snowing," remarked Lei.

"As soon as we man the gun we feel hot," added Wu.

The battery commander raised the signal flag above his head and gave the first order, "Man your post!" With one bound Wu mounted the gun. Then came the second order: "Load the gun."

Wu gripped the tip of the shell with his left hand, supporting the base with his right. To his surprise, the shell became a dead weight, so heavy he could hardly lift it. For a second, his heart sank. Then, pushing hard with his right hand he hoisted the shell

up into the powder chamber. There it slipped, however, and began sliding backward. Wu twisted it with all his might. Then, with a grating jar, it jammed.

"Tough luck!" This exclamation of dismay was on the tip of Young Lei's tongue, but he bit it back just in time. He knew the shell had caught in the feed gadget.

For a shell to get stuck in the breech is a disaster, as bad as firing from an empty chamber. This will weaken the whole battery's collective fire. The standards for training are set as if for actual combat. That morning's test was a case in point. Since a hundred rounds had to be fired in succession, one single slip was a sign of imperfect skill. And now Wu had run into a hitch at the very first charge. Mixed thoughts and feelings flashed through Young Lei's mind.

He felt sorry for Old Wu because one single failure would spoil his record as a whole even if the ensuing ninety-nine rounds were all successful... a slip at the very start would most likely dishearten the gunner and cramp his style, so that he might well make some further blunders... He felt especially sorry for Old Wu because hundreds of pairs of eyes, including those of a divisional staff officer, were now focusing on him.

In short, the exclamation "Tough luck!" which had nearly escaped Young Lei indicated the confusion in his mind. In order not to distract Old Wu he had swallowed back the words; but the quiver of his lips had been observed by the sharp eyes of the battery commander, who eyed Lei thoughtfully. The young soldier immediately hung his head so as not to betray his inmost thoughts and feelings.

The onlookers who had hitherto watched in silence now started exchanging comments. The rustle that passed through the crowd sounded like the sprinkling of sand on withered leaves. The whole atmosphere was tense. Old Wu, however, remained calm. Had he failed to spot the stoppage? Of course not. He knew what the trouble was as well as what the consequences might be. Hence he was just as tense as the others. The jamming of the first shell would weaken their collective fire, would forfeit the chance of hitting an enemy plane with the initial shot, would delay the subsequent



rounds. . . . That would never do. "I must ram the first charge home," Wu determined.

The roar of the rotating disc was louder now, as if enemy planes were circling overhead seeking a chance to drop bombs on their targets. Burning hatred for the intruders concentrated all Wu's strength in his ten fingers. Skilfully and speedily he extracted the shell, then rammed it hard into the powder chamber. Staff Officer Meng heaved a sigh of relief. Glancing at the stop-watch in his hand he found that only half a second had been lost.

Wu had taken this jamming and delay in his stride. Keeping a firm grip on the shaft of the firing mechanism, he fixed his eyes on the signal flag. No sooner did the battery commander rap out the order "Fire!" than Wu ignited his charge. Then he calmly replaced the training shell on the rack, wiping off the thick frost on its base as he did so. The men following Wu's actions with their eyes realized that, owing to somebody's negligence, this shell had not been wiped clean before being placed with the others. No wonder its coating of frost had made it as slippery as if it had been greased and it had slipped in Wu's skilful hands.

Not until Wu had succeeded in loading the second shell did the crowd quiet down again. What followed now was a rhythmic repetition of orders and signals and the swift, sustained thud and clatter of loading and "firing", all demonstrating the expertise of the gunner as well as his cool-headedness and tenacity. All eyes followed the movements of Wu's hands with amazement. As for Young Lei, he was lost in admiration. This is what we mean by an indomitable spirit, he thought. This is the courage which overcomes all enemies and a real, magnificent fight! These reflections banished Young Lei's pity and anxiety for Old Wu, making him burn with excitement from tip to toe. Unbuttoning his cotton-padded coat, he climbed to the top of the coverture to cool off. The battery commander cast a sidelong glance at him and prodded him with his flag. As two hot drops of perspiration dripped from Young Lei's forehead, the commander busy shouting orders could only sign to him to button up his tunic. By then Wu had finished loading and "firing" the other ninety-nine rounds.

When the command to halt was heard, Wu jumped down from the emplacement. Clapping burst out from all sides. The ordnance man who had prepared the training shells ran up to Wu and, gripping both his hands, criticized himself for his own carelessness. Drawing this comrade towards him, Wu rejoined, "You've taught me a lesson, in fact. We gunners must learn how to cope with a frosted or snow-covered shell in actual combat."

Someone blamed Wu for not having carried out a couple of trial loadings beforehand. To this he replied, "Well, the omission had its good side; it showed up my lack of foresight. I should have been prepared for all eventualities. It showed up my technical weaknesses as well." Pointing one finger at his head, Wu added, "I'm still not vigilant enough and underestimate the enemy. Discovering my deficiencies is one of the purposes of this drill, isn't it?"

Old Wu's refusal to put the blame on objective circumstances and his exposure of his own shortcomings won the admiration of all those present. Just as they were discussing this, the artillery command ordered Young Lei to get ready. The crowd immediately quieted down again. Like Wu, Lei took off his coat, tightened his belt and prepared for action. Wu, who had not yet had time to wipe off his sweat, came over to Lei and whispered, "Don't make the same mistake I did — steady does it!"

Lei nodded and bounded to his place on the gun. The battery commander waved his flag. The first shell shot swiftly and smoothly into the chamber. Lei was only waiting now for the order to fire. He could hear the ticking of the stop-watch quite clearly. Four seconds went by, then five, then six . . . but the flag over the commander's head stayed still. All the old hands knew that "suspended firing" like this meant that the command was waiting for the best moment to attack the enemy planes. There is nothing more nerve-racking than the suspense of this waiting. The diesel engine was roaring, the motor whirring, and the telephone operator kept up a loud report on enemy movements. Lei reminded himself that this was a test of his will. How long could he keep up his powers of concentration? How fast could he size up the movements of the signal flag? Could he react instantly to the command to fire? "Let

the enemy planes come," he resolved. "Our gun is waiting to smash the lot of them." His grip on the firing shaft tightened.

"Fire!" came the order. Crash! Wham! Like a torrent pouring from an open sluice, Lei's hundred rounds were loaded and "fired" in swift succession. No longer a new recruit but with arms like iron, Lei did not even pause for breath before leaping down at the end of his test and wiping his sweaty face.

Now it was time to make known the result of the test, but right then and there a problem cropped up.

The battery commander conferred with Staff Officer Meng in whispers for a while. Then mounting the gun carriage he began, "The result of the test. . ."

"I lost!" a voice butted in.

It was Lei Chih-kuo who strode forward now to declare, "I say I've lost with good reason, comrades. My wrong-headed way of thinking about 'ninety-nine and one' has cropped up again."

What did he mean by this "ninety-nine and one"?

Once in a combat practice the gunners were given the task of loading one hundred shells. After Lei had completed his ninety-ninth, he slackened and allowed his mind to wander with the result that the hundredth shell got jammed. According to the rules, to fulfil the requirement he should extract this shell and try again. But at that moment it occurred to Lei: "One slip is enough to cancel out all the other ninety-nine — and that means failure." Mentally disarmed, he lacked the energy to charge an additional shell. Three times Wu Tung, who was then in command, shouted "Fire!" But each time Lei stayed motionless, not even blinking.

Afterwards the Party branch organized a discussion in the entire battery of this incident. With the help of his leaders and comrades and by making a study of Chairman Mao's works, Lei came to understand his problem and on his own initiative wrote an article for the wall bulletin entitled: "Ninety-Nine and One". The key passage in the article read:

"To load one shell less may allow an enemy plane to escape. The root of my trouble lies in my lack of combat readiness. Chairman Mao teaches us that military training is to prepare us for battle. So

we should take our drill ground as a battlefield and our training as actual combat. But what did I do? My inability to load the last shell stemmed from my failure to realize that drilling is for the sake of fighting better. . . .”

This had happened four months before. But in the present test Lei had loaded all his hundred rounds not only quickly but accurately and steadily. Not the slightest fault could be found with his performance. Then why should he mention his “ninety-nine and one” mentality again! This could not but puzzle all the other artillery men, who waited eagerly to hear his reason.

“Today Old Wu started with a faulty charge but followed it up with ninety-nine good ones — that’s ‘one and ninety-nine,’” stated Lei. “Both his thinking and his skill stood up to the test, so that he removed the hitch in the nick of time and kept up his fighting spirit from beginning to end.”

The other men nodded their approval, appreciating his point. Then Lei went on, “Today none of my shells got jammed, but my brain did. . . .”

“Still you kept your mouth shut — you didn’t let on,” put in the battery commander.

“You know very well what was in my mind. It’s no secret to you. Won’t you tell the comrades about it?” requested Lei.

“All right. But first let me announce the result of the test. . . .”

“Wait a minute!” Lei caught the commander by the sleeve. “In that case I’ll tell them myself.”

He proceeded to make a clean breast of his reactions: how sorry and anxious he had felt when Wu Tung’s shell jammed, because he was thinking about Wu’s reputation and not about strengthening combat readiness.

When Lei had explained all that was on his mind, he threw out one hand and demanded, “Isn’t it true that my ‘ninety-nine and one’ mentality has cropped up again?”

Lei’s explanation cleared up the puzzle in people’s minds but made the choice of a trainee all the more difficult. Those in favour of Wu argued: “Old Wu kept the enemy in mind all the time and showed real skill. His correction of the jamming in the loading was

quick and decisive. More important still, he made strict demands on himself and didn’t put the blame on objective circumstances. He was modest enough to practise unreserved self-criticism. . . .”

Those siding with Lei claimed: “Young Lei also showed first-rate skill. Besides, he’s made a serious analysis of himself from the point of view of his world outlook. This shows a real revolutionary spirit.”

The debate grew more and more heated. Since so many men were eager to express their opinion, the battery commander and Staff Officer Meng agreed not to draw any conclusion for the time being but to hear more views from the rank and file before making a final decision, so as to avoid being subjective. . . .

As to what the final decision is going to be and which of the two gunners is to go to the training class, the members of the Party branch committee are, at the time of writing, still holding a serious discussion in the light of the views of the masses.

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

When the Party Secretary Showed Up

It was a typical autumn day of mellow sunshine with cloud flecks drifting across the far distant sky. Leaves rustled in a blustery wind.

Two bicycles were bowling along the highway. One of the riders, as she wiped the sweat from her face with a white towel and glanced at her watch, began to speed up. "Get a spurt on, Young Chang! There's only ten minutes left," she called out to the other rider.

This young woman, Miao Chun-min, was a former textile worker in her early thirties. She looked brisk, neat and full of pep as she pedalled along with a knapsack slung over her shoulder.

During the cultural revolution, she had been elected to the district Revolutionary Committee as a representative of the masses. Later she became the deputy secretary of the district Party committee. Young Chang, also a former factory worker, was transferred to work in the office of the Party committee during the same period.

The two of them were now heading for Green Pines Gardens to keep an appointment with the people living there.

A few days before, while going over the mail Young Chang had come across a short message written on a slip of paper. In rather crude characters it read:

Please tell Comrade Miao Chun-min that Green Pines Gardens will welcome a visit from her if she can spare the time. Why is it that we haven't been able to get in touch with her recently? We have tried several times.

This slip of paper had been forwarded by the neighbourhood Party committee with a note, saying that it had been handed in during a residents' meeting there.

Casually Young Chang had put it away in the file, deciding that some time later he would mention it to Miao. Actually he did not want to bother the deputy secretary with what he considered to be a trifle. Due to the absence of the Party secretary, Miao had been up to her neck in work recently and often stayed up till the small hours. Chang was concerned about her health and, wanting to do what he could to help her, he settled many routine matters himself. Moreover, he thought: "After these years of the cultural revolution, a new order has been established. Our work should follow a more regular pattern. As a leading cadre, Miao should just give general instructions to direct the affairs of the Party committee; how can she possibly deal with the masses directly?"

But in spite of her heavy load of work, Deputy Secretary Miao took particular interest in the mail — which was mostly letters from people in the district.

One morning when looking through a file of letters she noticed that little slip of paper. Seeing that she paused thoughtfully over it, Young Chang went over to her desk to explain:

"It's just one of those chits people keep handing in..."

"No. It's more than that! It should be taken as a sharp criticism of our work," rejoined Miao. "We so often miss criticism of this sort. We seldom hear it at formal meetings or come across it in reports."

"If everybody in the district wants to talk to the Party secretary, how many more secretaries should we need?" argued Young Chang.

"It's a good thing if the people want to see us."

"But you're so busy... and this is only routine..."

"The busier we are the closer we should keep to the people. Our attitude towards the masses is a question of which line we take." After saying this Miao became very thoughtful.

Green Pines Gardens was a residential centre for workers built after Liberation. When the cultural revolution started, Miao had gone there with several of her work-mates to encourage the local people to repudiate the bourgeois reactionary line which was then hindering the revolution. Together with a propaganda team formed by some retired workers living there, they had battled against the reactionary line. Now this criticism had come from there. Why? And who could have written this message?

"Since the people want to see us, we ought to visit them and pay careful attention to what they say," Miao told Chang. "Besides, this visit will help us sum up our experience of local work."

She rang up the neighbourhood Party committee of Green Pines Gardens and fixed an afternoon for a meeting with the residents.

But that particular morning Miao had been away at a meeting called by the municipal Party committee. By the time she returned it was well past the usual lunch time. She was eating a snack in the canteen when Young Chang came in to propose putting off the meeting with the Green Pines people. "There's not much time left for us to get there," he explained.

But Miao would not hear of this. "Our job is to serve the people," she objected. "How can we let the masses down by changing the time of a meeting to suit our own convenience?"

Now they were cycling fast to make up the time. Miao looked at her watch once more, and wiping her sweating face again said to Young Chang: "Let's get a move on. We've only a couple of minutes left."

Soon Green Pines Gardens was in sight: rows of red brick three-storey houses behind a fine stand of pine trees.

The meeting went on for about two hours in a warm, friendly atmosphere.

After taking a sip of tea, Miao Chun-min looked around and said in a ringing voice, "For the last two hours you've said a great deal in praise of our work. That's an encouragement to us to do better in future." She paused to look around again and then went on with a smile, "But Chairman Mao teaches us that all things have two sides. This applies to our work. To be strict with a person is for his own good. You should make strict demands on the district Party committee, the district Revolutionary Committee and above all on me as deputy Party secretary. I'm hoping to hear from you where I'm wrong and how I can correct my mistakes. A person needs to wash his face every day..."

The people listening nodded and smiled in agreement, liking her attitude. Then suddenly someone spoke up from a far corner of the room, "Well then, let me fire the first shot. If I'm wide off the mark, you mustn't take offence."

It was Grandma Tung, a retired worker who spoke. She had been one of the mainstays of the propaganda team Miao worked with. Although over sixty and already grey-haired, she was the picture of health.

"During the past few days I've several times tried to reach you but failed. I was told either that you had 'some important business' on hand or that you were too busy to 'receive ordinary calls'. I wonder whether since you've become a leading comrade you've put on bureaucratic airs and forgotten all about us."

Miao was surprised because nobody had mentioned Grandma Tung's recent calls and she herself had never said anything about "important business".

The entire room was silent but everyone was looking at Secretary Miao. The atmosphere had become a little tense. Had this happened before the cultural revolution, Miao realized, she would certainly have stood up to defend herself. But now she thought quite differently: "The fact that people criticize me openly and to my face shows that they have my interest at heart and want to help me. Since I've come here to listen to what they have to say, I must heartily welcome their criticism and then try to discover the reason

for it." So she jotted down what Grandma Tung had said, and looking at her modestly and sincerely said: "Please go on."

Her attitude encouraged Grandma Tung. "I went to your office on some important business," she continued. "We retired workers have started a group among the residents to study Marxist ideology and the correct political line. We've begun by recalling our own bitter experiences in the past and contrasting them with our good life today. You did say once that if we started any new activity I should let you know. So I wanted to see you so that you could give us some advice." She paused then and pointed at Young Chang sitting beside Miao, adding, "I told that comrade all about it."

While Grandma Tung was speaking, Young Chang was on tenterhooks. He thought to himself, "Secretary Miao is taking the blame for me."

Several days previously Grandma Tung had phoned the Party committee's office asking for Secretary Miao. It was Young Chang who had answered the call.

"Is it something important?" he asked.

"We're retired workers living at the Green Pines Gardens. We've set up a new study group and want to talk it over with her..."

"She's very busy these days because our Party secretary is away. She has some important business on hand and simply hasn't the time." Young Chang had made a polite refusal, feeling justified because he believed there was no necessity for a leading cadre to take part in such mass activities anyway.

Two days later Grandma Tung had gone to the office in person. She met Young Chang right at the gate, and knowing what she had come for he said to her again quite pleasantly: "Secretary Miao simply has no time to receive ordinary calls. You'd better go to the neighbourhood Party committee to talk the matter over if it is really important."

Now as Young Chang listened he felt more and more embarrassed. Noticing this, Miao turned to him, indicating with a glance that he should keep quiet and listen patiently to the people's criticism for his own good.

After the old woman had finished, Miao said, "Grandma Tung, I accept your criticism. There's something wrong with my style of work. I have failed to go deep among the people to see what new things are cropping up. Your initiative shows your keen revolutionary spirit. We must learn from you."

These few words like a spring breeze set the entire room astir. People vied with one another for a chance to speak, some giving their opinions and others telling about the new spirit that was emerging among the retired workers and about their political activities. Miao quickly jotted down these vivid accounts which were full of life. So the gathering turned into a real briefing. Miao was extremely pleased. That "**the masses have a potentially inexhaustible enthusiasm for socialism**", a truth revealed by our great leader Chairman Mao, was once more being proved true here in Green Pines Gardens.

On the way back after the meeting a question kept revolving in Miao's mind. Why, she wondered, had it become so difficult for an old comrade of hers like Grandma Tung to reach her now? What was the reason?

"Young Chang, what d'you think of the meeting?" Miao asked, turning towards Young Chang who was cycling beside her.

"It was good, very good, I think..." Young Chang's thoughts were in a turmoil. "It never occurred to me that a short note could involve something so important."

"The note was short but its lesson for us is big." Miao relapsed into deep thought again. After a while she took another look at her comrade and re-opened the conversation in a very frank and sincere way: "This incident has taught me a lot. As one of the leading personnel, any incorrect style of work or political ideology of mine will affect the work and the staff of the whole Party committee."

"No, no, you've nothing to reproach yourself with," protested Young Chang. "I'm the one..." Greatly moved by Miao's attitude, he was at a loss for words.

It was already sunset. Miao glanced back over her shoulder at Green Pines Gardens, now only a green blur against the crimson sky.

She said to Young Chang with feeling: "Revolution continually makes higher demands on us. It's true we were both factory workers and can be said to come from the very midst of the people, but we must be careful never to isolate ourselves from them. You know what happens to a pine tree if it is uprooted from the soil."

"Ah!..." muttered Young Chang, deep in thought.

One morning several days afterwards, Grandma Tung went once more to the office of the Party committee. The Party committee building beside the river was bathed in sunshine and the young pine trees flanking the gate stood sturdy and straight.

Secretary Miao's deep interest in the political activities of the retired workers had greatly encouraged them all. They had made a written report of their work and asked Grandma Tung to take it to Miao in person, hoping that she would give them some more advice. But in coming to the office of the district Party committee she was afraid she might draw another blank.

It was a little before office time when she arrived and while she was walking towards the building she heard someone call from behind: "How are you, Grandma Tung?" It was Young Chang who was on his way to the office.

"I'm really very sorry that the last couple of times..." muttered Young Chang, a bit tongue-tied and ashamed. But, plucking up his courage he went on: "Comrade Miao has helped me to see my mistake, especially in my attitude towards work among the people."

"If you realize your mistake and correct it, you're still a good comrade," Grandma Tung observed. "Well, here I am again to see Secretary Miao. Will she..."

"Oh, she'll be in, she'll be in today," cut in Young Chang. "In fact, she's on duty today in our new office for receiving callers."

"What office?" Grandma Tung didn't understand at first.

"Well, you see, after we returned from that meeting, she raised your point to the Party's Standing Committee. She told them that it actually concerned the problem of how to maintain close links with the people. She proposed right there that the leading personnel of both the Party committee and the Revolutionary Committee should



take it in turns to be on duty in the reception office and have direct contact with the people," explained Young Chang. Then he added with a smile, "You made a very helpful criticism, Grandma Tung." Grandma Tung's face glowed.

"Do you know how it was that Comrade Miao arranged that meeting at Green Pines?" continued Young Chang. "It was because she read your short note herself."

"Really?" Grandma Tung was even happier. "Now I've something else to say to her. Please take me to her office."

"All right," said Young Chang.

The two of them hurried on till, just outside the building, they found Miao, pail in hand, watering the pines beside the gate.

"Comrade Miao," cried Grandma Tung.

"Oh, it's you, Grandma Tung," responded Miao Chun-min pleasantly surprised. Putting down the pail she said, "I've just telephoned. I was told you were coming, but I didn't expect you so soon."

"Comrade Chang has explained to me how seriously you took our opinions. You're really close to us," said Grandma Tung, taking Secretary Miao's hand and holding it in hers.

"That's because the people have taught me a good lesson, particularly you," answered Miao modestly.

"I taught you a lesson?" exclaimed Grandma Tung, smiling incredulously.

"Of course." Secretary Miao paused for a moment, then said, "Grandma Tung, do you remember these pines?"

Immediately the old woman recalled something that had taken place several years before.

It was the day when the district Revolutionary Committee was founded. Grandma Tung and other retired workers at the Green Pines Gardens with Miao Chun-min in their midst had marched to this building in a parade. They brought with them a gift of several dozen pine saplings they had cultivated for the Revolutionary Committee. Grandma Tung said to Miao, "It's really a wonderful occasion today. We have so much to say to the Revolutionary Committee but we don't know how to express ourselves very well. These pines will speak for us. Comrade Miao, you enter this building today as a representative of us revolutionary people, you must never cut yourself off from the masses. You must carry out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and hold power firmly for us workers. We hope that in time you'll become as sturdy and strong as these evergreen pines."

After saying this Grandma Tung and the retired workers planted the pines on either side of the gate...

Grandma Tung could never forget that day. She asked Miao, "Do you remember too?"

"I'll never forget it. Nor will I ever forget the Party and the people who have raised me and educated me," answered Miao with emotion. "Grandma Tung, let's go in now. I have reported the setting up of your new study group to our standing committee. It

has been decided that I should help you sum up the experience of you retired workers. The committee members are planning to visit you and learn on the spot from your group. I gave you a ring a while ago to ask you to come here so that we could discuss how this can be arranged."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Grandma Tung, her face flushing with pleasure. From her pocket, she took out the report she had brought along and handed it to Miao. Then picking up the pail she poured the remaining water around the pines. The trees were growing sturdy and strong.

Grandma Tung looked fondly at Miao, glad to see that this young deputy Party secretary was also growing in the way the workers had hoped she would.

Illustrated by Chou Chien-fu

More Poems from Jujube Grove Village

On the Highway from the County Town

Sparrows twitter, cuckoos call,
Waking up the highway between town and country.
Carts lumber past, piled high
With fertilizer, insecticide, good seeds;
Fine roan horses toss their manes
And neigh at the sky.

Past them flash our team's bicycles,
Brand-new their tyres and frames;
Young men with jackets flapping in the wind,
Girls with gaily-coloured kerchiefs fluttering.

With a burst of gonging and drumming,
Trucks of workers overtake them;
Shouting in rhythm with the drums
They hail their peasant comrades.

Men and horses surge past like a tide —
What is all this excitement?
There's been a rally in the county town
To pledge increased production,
And now we're getting off to a flying start.

Fragrance of flowers is wafted miles away,
Peach-blossom laughs in the breeze;
Over the hills, across the streams,
Everywhere is a riot of spring.

Loud it roars, the traffic on the highway from town,
But louder still the sound of singing.

The Nursery for the Busy Season

Under the big tree a mat,
In the shade of willows a rug,
With the big tree as roof,
With cribs in the shade,
We make a nursery for the busy season.

Who started this nursery?
Two grannies had the idea
And the whole village approved.
Farming for the revolution,
We must fight hard on the farming front
For the summer harvesting and planting.

Over the willows
Swallows skim,
Under the willows
Children are frolicking;
Granny Chang and Granny Li
Are making a whistle for one child,
Picking wild asters for another,
And singing song after song.

In the boughs of the willows
Cicadas drone,
Under their shade
Our babies dream sweet dreams.
Granny Chang and Granny Li

Are giving one child a wash,
Sewing for another,
And singing lullabies.

On the threshing floor east of the village
Stone rollers whirr merrily;
In the wheat fields west of the village
Flash new sickles.
Young mothers straightening up
To brush back their hair
And wipe away their sweat
All see, yes they certainly see,
How sweetly their children are smiling.



A Doctor Makes Her Rounds

The sun blazing like a ball of fire
Licks the earth with tongues of flame;
Thousands of willows give shade,
But in the sky is not a fleck of cloud.

Fighting the drought as if fighting fire,
Peasants swing their hoes in the "fourth tilling".
A tinkle of bells —
Down the path through the tall green crops
Two bicycles come spinning.

The earth swelters and smokes,
The girl is drenched with sweat;
Hair clings to her damp forehead
And under a big straw hat her cheeks are flushed.

Ah, here comes our commune's new doctor
Who graduated just last year from college;
On her back is a case of medicine
To ward off heatstroke;
She has come to our fields, the front-line,
To make her rounds.

She treats disease, teaches hygiene,
And trains our team's "barefoot doctors".
Her cordials override the fiery sky,
Her cooling powders tame the sultry heat.
By fits and starts on the willows cicadas shrill,
Listlessly the butterflies flit by the canal;
All droop and flag till the bells,
Like timely rain,
Refresh the hearts of every commune member.

A Village School

Fleeter than fawns
And earlier than sparrows,
Satchels over their shoulders,
Sickles at their belts,
Treading on dew-drops they go off to school,
And their songs set the countryside ringing.

Clumps of sunflowers, clumps of herbs,
A small bridge half-hidden by willows,
A thatched roof and mud-plastered walls,
A classroom flooded with sunshine.

The pots here are planted with new species of crops,
The bottles here are filled with new fertilizers;
Each plant is rooted in their hearts,
Each seedling smiles at them.

A voice familiar and dear
Makes scores of eyes sparkle.
Listen outside the window and you'll hear
An old poor peasant telling how to grow paddy.

He explains in the classroom,
Then demonstrates in the fields;
When work is over they come back by the bridge,
Wash the mud from their feet
And whet their sickles again.

One brings back a load of manure,
Another a crate of fodder;
These are given to the team
To buy the school pencils and paper.

The fields are our books,
The furrows lines of words;
The corn grows tall,
The millet puts forth ears,
And we have trained
A new generation of farmers.



On the Threshing Floor

The autumn wind turns the whole country golden;
Busy from dawn till dusk
Peasants reap, plough, sow....
Open the window and see:
All the crops have gone,
The land lies bare,
Left by the fields are only
Stacks of millet
And sheaves of red sorghum;
On the highway whips crack,
On the paths iron shoulders tote grain;
Threshing floors outside the village are piled high,
The new cotton and grain stretch for miles,
And the roads are flooded with songs
Like a river in spate.

The new crops gladden men's hearts;
Grandad cannot lie still on his *kang* for joy;
Up he gets at midnight and goes to the threshing floor
To cover the crops with mats, protecting the grain.
As cuckoos spur the sowing
And green crickets spur crops to grow,
Wild geese spur us now to fill the granaries;
Another year's farming by the sweat of our brow,
Another year of wind and rain and frost,
Constant hoeing, constant weeding —
Sweet the smell of grain sweetened by sweat....

Through the mist a speck of red flickers,
The damp night wind chills to the bone —

Who is out so late?
Ah, it's the old team leader smoking his pipe,
Come at midnight to check on the crops.
He's telling someone:
"Our yield has doubled, yes,
But we've no cause to be proud,
Other teams and villages have done much better.
Look at the men of Tachai,
They have shoulders of steel..."

Autumn is the time
When men sing most,
When whips crack loudest;
The old team leader's words at midnight
Go home to the hearts of all.
Now someone answers:
"We shall never forget
What Chairman Mao has taught us;
We must see where we fall short,
Check up on our thinking,
Become men of iron or —
Better still — men of steel!"

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien



Chang Ping

Story of a Flute

Squad Leader Liang had just come back from a spell of study at regimental headquarters. Coming to the canal near where his squad was billeted, he spotted a flute lying on the bank. He picked it up and found the name Wang Hsiao-ming carved on it. So it belonged to their new recruit Little Wang who, as Liang knew, was an enthusiastic flutist. How odd, in that case, to find this flute thrown away. Just then Liang heard a booming voice calling his name. He looked up and saw Chang, his deputy squad leader. Liang and Chang had been classmates in school, joined the army in the same year, then been assigned to the same squad. Chang was nothing if not efficient and had made a good job of his work as deputy leader; his only shortcomings were a certain impatience and a habit of jumping to conclusions. Liang stuffed the flute into his pocket and strode eagerly over to shake hands with Chang. Though he had been away no more than a fortnight, each was delighted to see the other again.

"All well in the squad?"

"All well."

"How's morale?"

"We're making headway."

"How's Little Wang?"

"He's here."

"Why don't I hear him playing his flute?"

"His flute! It was because of his precious flute that I gave him a good talking to yesterday."

So that must be the answer to the puzzle. Liang knew what Chang was like. Even his mild reprimands were hard to take, to say nothing of a "good talking to".

Sitting down on the bank of the canal, Chang started to explain what had happened the previous day.

After supper that night Chang, carrying his rifle, started searching high and low for Little Wang. Where had the boy disappeared to so soon after supper? When he heard fluting from the canal, Chang was furious.

"Wang Hsiao-ming," he bellowed.

"Here!"

"Come here. Get a move on!"

Little Wang ran over.

"Haven't you played long enough?"

"Eh?"

"What did I say before supper?"

"Before supper?" Little Wang was nonplussed.

"Well? The whole squad's to do bayonet practice in three groups. We're in one group. You mean to say you'd forgotten?"

Little Wang scratched his head in embarrassment and said nothing.

"Come on. Let's get cracking." Chang tossed a gun to Little Wang.

Little Wang had acquired the habit, when told to do something while he was fluting, of stuffing his flute in his belt so that he could go on playing as soon as he finished. He did this as usual now, ready for bayonet practice, then waited, expecting Chang to bark out his orders. When nothing happened, he glanced back in surprise.

"Look at you — so sloppy?" Chang finally commented. Imagining that his stance must be wrong, Little Wang made ready his bayonet again.

"Chuck that thing aside. The ants won't carry it off." Light dawned then, for "that thing" was how Chang referred to his flute. Drawing the offending object from his belt, Little Wang laid it gently on the ground.

"Get ready!" Chang rapped out his order. Little Wang braced himself.

"Attack!" The young soldier lunged so hard that he staggered.

"Watch it! What the devil are you doing?" Chang snatched the rifle, barked out the instructions, then yelling "Kill, kill, kill!" thrust three times with the bayonet. This done, he turned and asked Little Wang:

"Got it?"

"Yes..."

The deputy squad leader handed back the rifle and stood watching while Little Wang went through the exercise so as to correct his movements. But after several tries it was still not up to standard. Chang could not control his impatience. "All you can do is to play that thing!" he fumed. His annoyance only increased Little Wang's awkwardness.

"The day before yesterday because you were playing your flute, our whole squad was late to muster and got a dressing-down," exploded Chang. "Then yesterday after lunch you played your flute and stopped everybody from sleeping. And now..." Chang's voice boomed like a gong: "Just think. What a lot of trouble you've made with that damn flute!"

Little Wang was not going to take this lying down. "What's eating you?" he demanded. "Is playing a flute a crime?"

"So you can't take criticism, is that it? Let me ask you: Should a fighter for the revolution spend all his time tootling on a flute?"

Shouts were rising now from the other side of the drill ground where Young Liu of Second Squad was doing bayonet practice too.

"Just look at him. Young Liu came at the same time as you, but he's better than you both in political consciousness and skill. Shouldn't that give you something to think about? Even if you're not worried, I'm worried for you." Chang glared at Little Wang, wondering: Why doesn't this piece of iron turn into steel?

"I'll do my best from now on, how about that?"

"All right, all right. That's what you always say, but you've never come to grips with your problems..."

After hearing this story Liang asked: "So how was the problem finally solved?"

"At the squad meeting last night, I told him he's not to play his flute except on Sundays."

"Did he take to the suggestion?"

"He had to."

Liang slowly rose to his feet, as if lost in thought.

Chang knew that when the squad leader looked like that he was pondering over some problem. Sure enough. Liang was reflecting that during his study at regimental headquarters they had discussed some important directives from Chairman Mao on building up the army, and emphasis had been laid on the need to do effective ideological work. Now here was this problem awaiting him on his return. Of course Little Wang had his faults, but Chang's handling of the business left much to be desired. How could he help his impatient deputy leader to see this? And how could they show Little Wang the correct line?

After a while Liang asked: "What are you busy with at the moment?"

"Two things: individual training and farm work."

That reminded Liang that he meant to have a look at the squad's vegetable garden. "How are our vegetables coming along?" he asked.

"Very well. Only that patch of lettuce seems not too good. I took a look yesterday. The sprouts are all right..." Chang's answer gave Liang food for thought. They walked over to the vegetable garden to inspect the different plants. Liang's main interest, however, centred in the lettuce which had been planted just before he went off to study. It was true that the seedlings had not grown very much.

"What's holding them back?" he asked, squatting down for a better look.

"They need proper handling and patience. Pulling them up by the roots won't help them grow." Chang was squatting alongside Liang.

Liang turned his gaze to his friend. "That's well said, comrade. Seedlings need proper handling and patience. We can't force them. But the same applies to human relations too. A man's ideas don't change at a moment's notice. You know how devoted Little Wang is to his flute. Can you change this simply by issuing an order?" His tone was grave but the look he gave Chang was fond.

It had never occurred to Chang to link vegetable growing with Little Wang's love for his flute. He looked at the vegetables which seemed to have freshened up in the evening breeze. He could almost hear the lettuce promising: "Just wait. We'll turn out all right."

Liang, watching Chang's expression, waited for his answer.

After a while his friend responded slowly: "Smart and snappy, that's the army style, I feel."

"Yes and no."

Chang stared in surprise.

Liang stepped closer and explained to him earnestly: "Looking smart doesn't always mean going straight into action. Chairman Mao tells cadres they can't expect quick results in ideological work. **'... Ideological remoulding involves long-term, patient and painstaking work, and they must not attempt to change people's ideology, which has been shaped over decades of life, by giving a few lectures or by holding a few meetings. Persuasion, not compulsion, is the only way to convince them. Compulsion will never result in convincing them. To try to convince them by force simply won't work.'**" After a pause Liang continued: "Take our own cases, for instance. Whenever some problem cropped up in our ideology or our work, so many people have reached out to help us win through. Endless work's been done by our leaders and comrades to make us what we are today. Why be so impatient, then, over Little Wang's problem?"

As light began to dawn on Chang, Liang continued: "You're right to make strict demands on young comrades. You must help

Little Wang to correct his shortcomings; but if your method isn't correct and doesn't conform to the actual situation, it simply won't work."

"You're right." Chang lifted his head. "I'll go this minute and talk it over with him." He stood up.

Liang took the flute from his pocket and passed it over. "All right then. You may as well take this back to him too."

Chang gaped in amazement. "Where did you get this?"

Liang explained how he had found the flute on the bank.

"So it seems my criticism yesterday didn't solve his problem, just put his back up," said Chang remorsefully. Then looking at the flute he added: "My temper's no good. I should criticize myself for that. But I still think this flute-playing does him no good. It's holding up his progress."

"That's no way to look at it," objected Liang. "Amateur art activities have always been one of the good traditions of our army. We know from experience that revolutionary art helps boost morale. Take Little Wang, for instance. If we can make him realize that flute-playing isn't just for personal enjoyment but that it can be used for the revolution, then instead of holding up his progress his flute can turn into a weapon for the revolution."

With a laugh Chang slapped his own head. "I never saw any use in playing a flute before."

When they rejoined the squad, Liang greeted his comrades and found that Little Wang was not there but doing bayonet practice all by himself on the drill ground.

Things had happened pretty much as Liang imagined. Chang's criticism had made Little Wang feel very wronged. Tossing about in bed that night he thought: "Well, I played the flute in school and I played the flute at home, but nobody ever criticized me for it. Now in the army they pick fault with my playing the flute." He got up at that and, taking his flute, went out. When he reached the bank of the canal he grumbled: "To hell with you. I don't want to get criticized for you any more." And he tossed the flute away. Back in bed, he determined that from now on he would try

to take the lead in everything, to show the deputy squad leader that he had guts. Just before falling asleep, he thought of Squad Leader Liang and regretted his absence. Liang had never criticized him for playing the flute. Indeed, during rest hours he had even said: "Come on now, give us a tune..."

Little Wang was training with all his might when he heard that Liang was back. He rushed back to his quarters, snatched his basin from under the bed and dashed to the kitchen for water to wash his perspiring face. In the kitchen he ran into Chang who was carrying a bucket of hot water and who told him, "Hey, no need to fetch any more. I've water for you here." However, pretending not to have heard him, Little Wang went straight ahead.

Chang was not the sort of man to let matters slide. He decided to get hold of Little Wang for a chat to clear up the issue which had come between them.

After Liang had washed, he looked for Chang and Little Wang. He heard them talking near the vegetable plots, and sat down quietly so as not to disturb them.

"Look, I'll accept your criticism, Little Wang," Chang was saying. "Whatever you have against me, out with it! I shall feel much better if you give me a piece of your mind."

Little Wang simply fidgeted, sorry to have made so much trouble and secretly blaming himself.

Chang took out the flute which he had tucked up one sleeve. "Did you throw this away? Come on, take it back." He passed it to Little Wang.

Little Wang hesitated, then shook his head. "No, I don't want it."

"Still angry with me?"

"No."

"Then why not take it?"

"The fact is, deputy squad leader, I've liked to play the flute since I was a child. My mother gave me this flute when I joined up. But in the army flute-playing has interfered with my work and my study, interfered with our solidarity and my progress. I see it clearly now. This flute is just holding me up."

“No, that’s not the problem. The problem is your attitude towards the flute. If you have the right attitude, then your flute needn’t hold up your progress; it can become a useful weapon for the revolution.”

Little Wang lowered his head in thought, while Chang watched to see his reactions. Then the young soldier’s face lit up and he raised his head. The two men clasped hands firmly. There was no more to be said — they had solved their problem.



Like One Big Family (coloured woodcut)
by Liu Po-yung and Ah An-hsun ▶

A Lumber Dispatcher

It was barely two months since Chi Ming had become a lumber dispatcher.

The felling of timber in the virgin forests of the Changpai Mountains was being stepped up. Since this necessitated more efficient transportation and distribution, the Forestry Bureau had selected a number of young lumber-jacks from various areas to reinforce the dispatching unit. Chi Ming was one of these. An intelligent, practical young man, in a short time he was able to handle his new job very efficiently.

He appeared to be fond of hunting in his spare time. Shouldering his gun he would go off into the mountains, especially on Sundays, when he would spend the whole day tramping through gullies and ravines, come rain or shine. Whether he was a poor shot, or for some other reason, he always returned empty-handed. Yet his interest never flagged.

One afternoon when it was raining cats and dogs, as he was returning from a jaunt across the mountains, wet through and with an empty bag as usual, he met another young worker. Grabbing

Chi Ming's gun, the latter squinted down the barrel but could see no sign that any shots had been fired.

"Well, old hunter, will you treat me to a good meal today?" the young man said as a joke.

"A meal of what?" asked Chi Ming.

"A well-cooked 'drowned rat' of course!" The youngster burst out laughing.

But Chi Ming simply grinned, quite unperturbed.

You cannot blame a man for hunting in his spare time but there's a limit to everything. The production team leader began to take objection to Chi Ming's constant wanderings and, before long, this reached the ears of the old Party secretary. But the old man simply chuckled and said, "He's only a young chap, isn't he?" and that was the end of it.

One Sunday, the provincial head office sent an emergency order for twenty thousand pit-props to be sent to the colliery at Tiger-head Cliff within the next five days. This was a tall order. The team leader was only too eager to supply the required number of good-quality pit-props in the specified time. But a forestry bureau is not like a steel mill which can swiftly switch production to fill an emergency order. You have to take your timber where you find it. Though the Changpai Mountains are full of virgin forests, the utility of each tree varies according to its type, age and size. Logs for pit-props need to be about 18 to 24 cm. in diameter. But felling is done according to working zones and the number of suitable trees for props in each zone is limited. After phoning several lumber-jack teams and not receiving very satisfactory replies, the team leader was worried stiff and went running off to seek advice from the old Party secretary.

The old man was sitting in his office reading from a notebook on the cover of which, in neat characters, was written, "Standing on the Changpai Mountains I keep all China in my heart".

After listening to the team leader's report the secretary said calmly, "Don't worry. Someone will be here in a minute who'll be able to give you some good advice."

He had scarcely finished speaking when in came Chi Ming with



his old shot-gun slung across his shoulder. Glancing at the old Party secretary and then the team leader, he greeted them both with a smile. Then, standing his gun against a wall, he sat down waiting for one of them to speak. But the old Party secretary sat quietly, looking at the young man with affection. The team leader, all at sea, also remained silent. A minute or two passed before Chi Ming said, "Old secretary, I left my notebook here. Did you find it and keep it for me?"

Instead of answering the old man pulled a long face. "Is it true that you spend all your spare time hunting?" he asked.

Chi Ming only grinned.

"Someone disapproves. Did you know?"

The young man glanced quickly at the team leader but still said nothing.

Eager to justify him the old secretary continued, "In my opinion, the one who objects to your hunting trips is the one who should be criticized, because he hasn't made any investigation whatever. If you hadn't been tramping over the mountains, how would you know the exact location of so many stands of timber, their size and condition?"

"Oh! So you've been reading my notes!" exclaimed Chi Ming.

"Well," queried the old man deliberately, "don't you think the person who disapproved should be criticized himself?"

"No," Chi Ming answered quickly. "It's entirely my own fault for not telling anybody what I was up to. After I'd made the first survey I intended to take other comrades with me to check up on the variety and growth of all the timber." Then he added, "One man can't possibly do it alone."

The old Party secretary's face wrinkled in a broad smile as he looked at the team leader who was impatiently waiting for some advice on his pit-prop problem.

"Come on then," urged the old man, returning the notebook to Chi Ming. "Tell us about your first survey. Your team leader's worried to death."

"On my way back," the young man began, leafing through the pages of his notebook, "I heard there was an urgent order for pit-

props. That's why I hurried here. Maybe I can help." He turned to a certain page and read, "On the southern slope of Ox-bow Mountain there's a fine stand of birch none bigger than twenty-six centimetres in diameter. That'll mean about fifteen thousand seven hundred pit-props." Then he thumbed over to another page, jotted down several figures and turning to the team leader said, "There are some smaller stands elsewhere that'll provide another six thousand or more. If we send a work team to fell the birch on Ox-bow Mountain first where transportation is no problem, I think we'll be able to get out twenty thousand pit-props easily within the next five days. What do you think?"

"That's fine!" exclaimed the delighted team leader, grasping Chi Ming's hand.

Chi Ming's eyes shone with pleasure. "It was the old secretary who suggested that I do this," he explained. "When I first came to work here he told me, 'A lumberman must always know where the good stands of timber are.' So far I've only taken the first step. I've a long way to go yet."

"Good for you!" cried the old Party secretary. "You've only taken one step yet already you're 'standing on the Changpai Mountains and keeping all China in your heart'." Then he turned to the team leader, "You'd better get him to tell you all he knows so that you can sum up this work."

Taking Chi Ming's notebook again the secretary showed the inscription on its cover to the team leader. With genuine appreciation the latter said, "This lad really has his head screwed on the right way."

The following day, the team leader ordered work to begin according to Chi Ming's suggestion. Within five days the twenty thousand pit-props were cut and transported to the mine at Tiger-head Cliff. From then on with Chi Ming in the lead, a number of young workers made a systematic survey of the standing timber so that felling, transportation and distribution were carried on according to plan and all operations speeded up.

Not long afterwards, however, Chi Ming was off on a new track again. When he was not wandering in the mountains, he spent

his spare time roaming among the stacks of lumber in the rail-yard and at the saw-mill. As if this were not odd enough, he appeared to take a great interest in the weather. Wherever he went he carried a book on meteorology in his pocket. Whenever he was among old foresters he asked them to tell him the folk-sayings about local weather conditions. So immersed in this did he become that he even neglected his meals. Some thought it a waste of time for a lumberman to study meteorology. But quite a few others believed that Chi Ming must have some more smart ideas up his sleeve.

One hot day, just before noon, lumber from the saw-mill was being loaded onto a train of flat-cars. In spite of the heavy work and the sweat that poured down their faces, the men worked with a will and had nearly filled the cars. Suddenly Chi Ming came running from the office shouting to the men to stop loading.

"Stop loading?" they asked. "Why?" Still in fine fettle they wanted to complete the job. Some quick-tempered youngsters surrounded Chi Ming to demand, "What's up? Why can't we finish loading?" Others said, "You'll have to take the responsibility for holding up our work!"

The old Party secretary arrived just as Chi Ming was wondering how to explain. A few angry young men hurried over to complain to the old man. But he stood there without a word till the hubbub subsided. Then he said, "Why don't you let Chi Ming have his say?" With that he winked at Chi Ming.

Chi Ming held up a telegram, saying, "This is from the Chicheng Oil Refinery. They're in urgent need of lumber for a new building project."

"You don't have to tell us that! Who would order lumber unless he needed it urgently?" retorted one of the youngsters. "Why are you stopping us from loading then?"

Disregarding the question Chi Ming continued calmly, "This morning I noticed there was moisture on the water jar and a dense mist on the highest peaks. When I asked some old hands about this, they all said it meant rain tomorrow."

"So what? How does that affect our loading now?" someone grumbled.

"Is this lumber dry or wet?" Chi Ming asked.

"Good and dry of course," someone answered.

Chi Ming glanced around him and said deliberately, "Of course we can finish loading now. But when the train is on its way tomorrow, if it does rain, the lumber will be soaked. Wet lumber is much heavier than dry and there's always the danger of an accident if a train is over-loaded. If that happens, not only shall we fail to deliver the lumber but the whole transport system may be affected."

The men, won round to Chi Ming's way of thinking, expressed their agreement and appreciation.

The old Party secretary and the team leader joined in. Patting the young man on the shoulder the team leader said, "Chi Ming, your concern for our work has reached a new high."

Embarrassed, Chi Ming just grinned.

"Good for you!" put in the old Party secretary. "You give thought to all the details of our work here as well as to state affairs. We need more lads like you, who keep the overall situation in mind and have all aspects of socialist construction at heart."

One youngster raised his thumb, indicating Chi Ming.

"Let's see what else you've been putting down in your notebook recently," said the old Party secretary. Chi Ming immediately handed over his notebook.

The old man carefully turned one page after another till he noticed these lines: "Lumbermen like us must always keep in mind the needs of the consumers. **We must oppose the tendency towards selfish departmentalism by which the interests of one's own unit are looked after to the exclusion of those of others.** We must devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the great cause of socialist revolution and socialist construction."

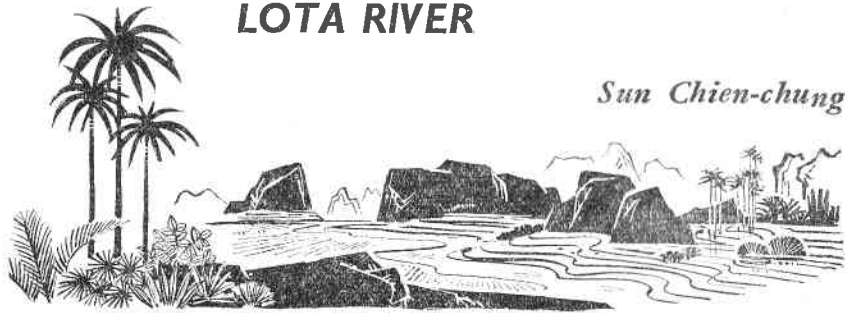
"Old secretary," interrupted the team leader enthusiastically. "You asked me to make a report on our work. Well, all I can say is that Chi Ming's notes are the best summing up we can have."

"I've done nothing worth talking about," protested Chi Ming, breaking into a sweat and not knowing which way to look.

But the old Party secretary gazed at him fondly and nodded.

Illustrated by Huang Ying-hao

LOTA RIVER



Sun Chien-chung

The Lota river is something out of the common. You can tramp a hundred *li* through the mountains here without finding a trace of it. I was there in the early fifties during a spring drought, and saw the gaping cracks in the parched fields. If by luck it rained in the middle of the night, the Tuchia people would hang lanterns on their oxen's curved horns and lead them up the mountains to plough the fields, making the most of every drop of water. If only they had a river, a clear sparkling river to irrigate their land!

But the only river they had was a figment of their own imagination. One summer night, I remember, as we sat on a boulder enjoying the cool of evening, an old man told me a tale.

... Many many years ago, there lived a Tuchia hero whose name was Pang. For days and nights he sat at his loom, his shuttle flying as he wove a length of white cloth. The stars revolved in their courses: Virgo gave place to Libra, then to Leo and at last our hero finished his task. With the dark green essence of the *shapao* tree, he painted on the white cloth ripples of water, carp and water-weeds. Then he climbed to the top of a mountain and hurled this cloth at the opposite peak. In a flash it turned into a river, a river of crystal water where lively carp darted through delicate water-weeds! On both sides of the river the mountains turned blue, the grass green,

the cattle and sheep grew plump and strong. The once barren region became rich fertile land.

But it was not long before the wicked Dragon King got wind of the news. Resorting to his magical powers, he sucked the water into his underground cave. The river dried up and only pebbles and gravel were left in the river bed. Pang picked up a matchet, dived into the Dragon King's cave and engaged him in a fierce fight. But our hero never returned from that journey. As for the river, ever afterwards it flowed along unseen in the depth of the earth.

This legend kindled my imagination. Had a river really flowed in and out among the rocks, its silvery waves billowing? Was it still rushing turbulently underground?

One morning when the air was fresh after rain, the Party secretary of the commune set off to inspect the work of several brigades and I accompanied him. His name was Peng Kuan-shu. On the road he asked, "Have you ever seen a river in Lota?"

I said no and told him the legend I had heard. This set him laughing.

"How the people here long for a river!" he said, checking his mirth. "As a matter of fact, there is a river in Lota. Would you like to have a look at it?"

Of course I assented with alacrity. We went uphill and down dale, skirted a mountain peak and there we were. Standing with his arms akimbo, Secretary Peng abruptly stretched out his right hand. "Look, isn't that a river?"

Below I saw a wide valley strewn with gravel and dotted with weeds. There was not a trickle of water flowing through it. Even the last puddle of rain had disappeared completely. Was this the location of the legendary river?

Noticing my puzzled expression, the Party secretary explained, "It's a dried up river. This place is just like a big sieve. As soon as the rain stops, all the water drips away."

We walked on and finally found a real river deep in a ravine. Its source was a fountain, thick as a barrel, which gushed out of a cave. But it did not flow very far, as we soon discovered, for reaching a pit it cascaded down it and was lost to sight.

I left the lost river and followed Kuan-shu up a mountain slope overgrown with shrubbery and creepers. The Party secretary took his matchet out of a wooden sheath fastened to his waist and cleared a path. Soon we came to the edge of a chasm. Peering into the darkness below, I soon felt dizzy. But Kuan-shu lay down there to look and listen intently. Suddenly his face lit up. "Do you hear it?" he shouted.

I simply shook my head.

"Such a loud sound — surely you can hear it?" he insisted.

Then, indeed, I caught the faint splash and gurgle of water.

"Sound of water flowing, isn't it? I've heard it several times, always the same sound," he went on excitedly. "Can't you feel the moisture coming up from down below there?"

Before long I left Lota Commune to work elsewhere. During the cultural revolution friends there wrote to me that the submerged river had now spurted out of the ground, the barren hills had been turned into terraced fields. For several years in succession they reaped bumper harvests. Stirring reports about Lota in the papers awakened pleasant memories of my days there and made me more eager than ever to go back for a look.

At last my chance came to return to Lota. As my bus sped along a newly-built highway, the splendours of spring outside the window unfolded like a scroll. The mountains veiled in misty pink clouds were girdled with a light green ribbon which twisted and turned innumerable times. This ribbon was the River Lota which flowed now eastward, now westward, sparkling under the bright sun. In terraced fields encircled by the river early rice seedlings had been planted in serried ranks. The reflections of palms and cayenne trees shimmered in the translucent water. A small tractor, puffing black smoke, turned up straight furrows as it chugged along. The river, embedded in the earth for thousands of years, had surfaced at last to make Lota's barren mountains blossom like the rose.

On the very day I arrived, the Party secretary Kuan-shu again led me up the mountains, following the river which twisted and turned under a steep cliff to see the water pouring out of a cavern.

Many tales were told about these caverns. People said that a mighty python lived here, that the gurgling sound was its breathing, the spray the exhalation from its poisonous fangs.

Kuan-shu told me a moving story on the way: A commune cadre by the name of Chen Yen-min, with a pine torch and a rope round his waist, had plunged into the Chinchai pit which was 80 metres deep. Only thus was the secret of the pit discovered. There, deep underground, ran a fine river which flowed into a remarkable limestone cave. The peasants of Lota People's Commune worked 450 days and nights to build a retaining dam for this underground river, so that the cave was turned into a great reservoir.

I stood a long time there lost in thought and scooped up water in my hands for a drink before we turned homewards after a last lingering look at the vast reservoir.

"Do you still remember the dry river-bed at the foot of that mountain we climbed?" Kuan-shu asked me on our way back. "It's got a new name now, 'Silver River'. We grow cotton along its banks."

"What about that lost river?" I asked, stirred by what I was told.

"We're harnessing it to serve the people too."

He told me they were making use of the force of the water falling into the cave to construct the commune's fourth — and largest — hydro-electric station.

As the sun dropped behind the mountains, all over the hillsides frogs croaked for all they were worth. We quickened our steps, crossed a number of ditches and hurried down to the valley. Before long the commune office, a stone building, came into sight. From the river bank came the monotonous drone of the electric husking machine and the wheat grinder. By now the lights in the villages were lit, twinkling like the stars in the sky. These were no ordinary lamps but blossoms watered by the river, pearls brightening the dark mountains. As a result of their appearance, the little oil lamps made of bamboo as well as the wooden pestles for hulling rice had now been consigned to the small commune museum as mementos of the old times.

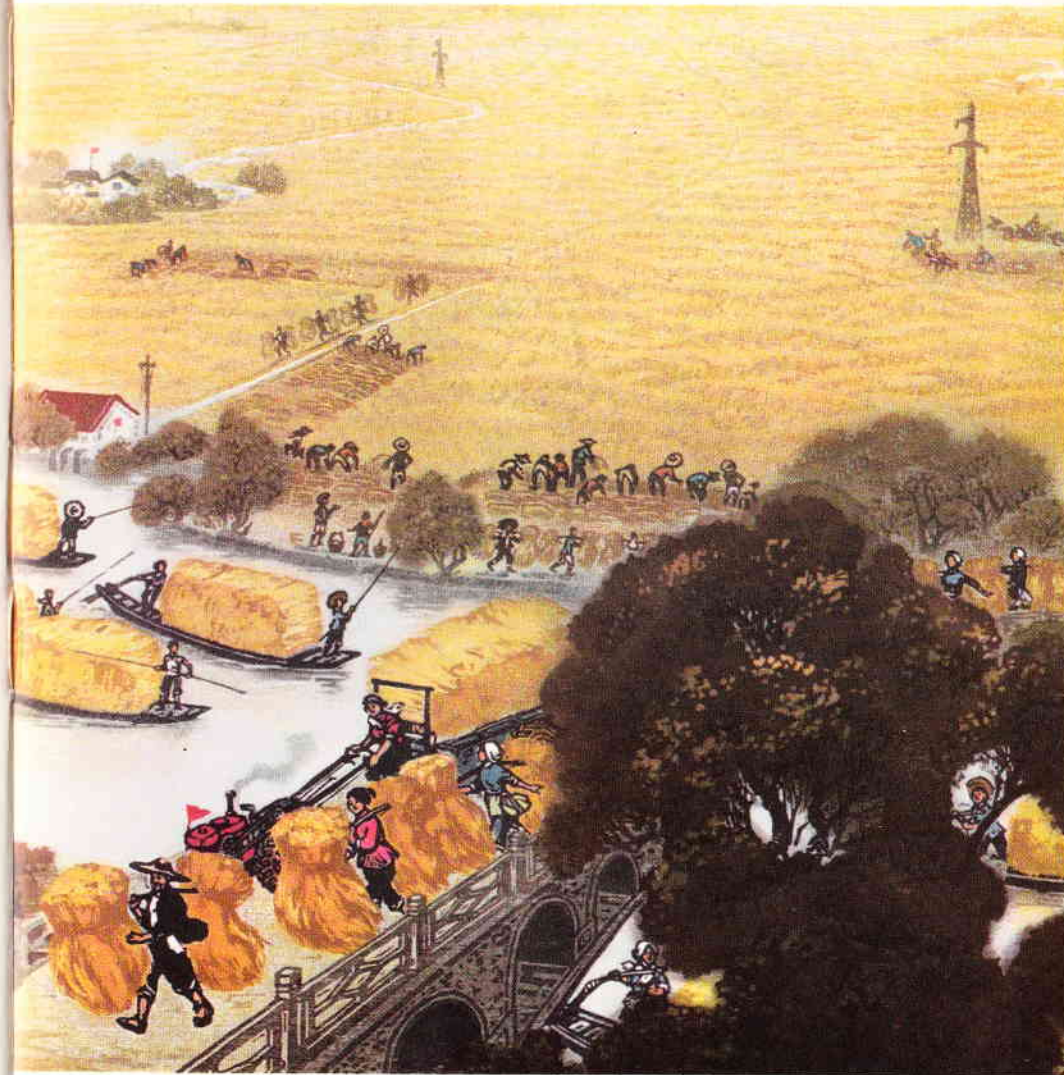
We stopped on the slope to feast our eyes on the night scene.

"Lota has certainly changed!" said I, speaking from the depth of my heart.

"Do you still remember Pang the hero?" Kuan-shu asked after a pause to ponder my words. But without waiting for my reply, he went on, "There are not just one or two heroes like him, but a whole host of them. I know quite a number myself."

I too was carried away by fancies roused by the legend. . . . Our dauntless commune members had defeated the legendary python and made a dream come true. Today's reality was more beautiful and fascinating than any legend.

Illustrated by Ho Chen-chiang



Summer Harvest (woodblock print)
by Chiang Chun ▶

*Wang Fa and
Chu Ya-nan*

One Big Family

(A clapper-ballad)

(In front of the orchestra sit actors holding clappers. A lively prelude.)

Chorus: The sun shines bright over our motherland,
New things are happening on every side.
Whistling to rend the air,
Trains thunder their approval.

(The train broadcaster stands up.)

Broadcaster *(speaking)*: Passengers! We've reached our terminus,
Huhchot Station.

(The broadcaster sits down.)

(Aunt Chao stands up.)

Aunt Chao: With joy in my heart,
Smiling I leave the train.
My home is in Szechuan Province;

Now I've come to visit my son Chih-kuo in the army.
Last month he wrote me a letter,
Asking for vegetable seeds from home.

Chorus: When the brigade heard of this,
At once they helped her choose seeds,
Seeds of every kind.

Aunt Chao: Plus more than two pounds of Szechuan paprika!
Our old brigade leader told me to bring them myself,
And wired Chih-kuo to meet me at the station.
Soon I'll be seeing my son —
How happy I am!

Chorus: Now Aunt Chao has left the station;
On the road the crowds stream by.

Aunt Chao: I look right and left
But see no sign of my son.

(Calling): Chih-kuo! Chih-kuo!

Chorus: As Aunt Chao calls her son,
Along comes a factory worker, Old Kuo.

(Old Kuo stands up.)

Kuo: Are you looking for someone, auntie?

Aunt Chao: I'm looking for my son Chih-kuo.

Kuo: What's your son's job?

Aunt Chao: For three years he's been in the army.

Kuo: Where is his company stationed?

Aunt Chao: The address on his letter
Ended with the word "hot".

Kuo: Let me have a look.

Aunt Chao: I feel in all my pockets.
Oh dear! I'm so scatter-brained,
I've left the letter at home!

Kuo: I'll tell you how it is, auntie:
Many place names in Inner Mongolia end in "hot".
There's Huhehot, Silinhot,
And to the north Erlienhot.
Which of these is where your son lives?

Chorus: Tell him quickly, auntie.

Aunt Chao: *(speaking):* Who'd have thought it? So many places
ending in "hot"?

Kuo: *(speaking):* That's how it is, auntie.

Aunt Chao: *(speaking):* All I remember's the number 1199. Every-
thing else has slipped clean out of my head.

Kuo: *(speaking):* That makes it difficult to find him, auntie.

Aunt Chao: Mercy on me! This fair takes my breath away,
Like a drenching in cold water.

Kuo: Don't worry, don't get flustered.
Come and stay with my family
While I make inquiries.

Aunt Chao: That will be putting you to too much trouble.

Kuo: Don't say that, auntie.
We should all help the army and army dependants.
The sun is setting; soon it will be dark;
Let me help you to the bus.

(They sit down.)

Chorus: Once Aunt Chao comes to Old Kuo's home,
The whole family do their best to entertain her.

(Mrs. Kuo stands up.)

Mrs. Kuo: I'm Mrs. Kuo. I heated the *kang* for her,
Then to cheer her up
Because her son didn't meet her
I fetched some Szechuanese friends to chat with her.

(Mrs. Kuo sits down.)

(Kuo's daughter Hsiao-hung stands up.)

Hsiao-hung: I'm Hsiao-hung. To keep granny amused
I danced and sang,
Took her to a film.
Turned on the radio for her;
Every morning I fetch her hot water
And in the evening I warm her bedding for her.



(Hsiao-hung sits down.)

Chorus: The whole family's warm concern
Shows the fine spirit of the working class.

(Old Kuo stands up.)

Kuo: I have been asking everywhere,
But no one has heard of Unit 1199.
I've sent off three telegrams
But received no reply.
In a flash three days have gone. . . .

(Aunt Chao stands up.)

Aunt Chao: My heart's like a hornets' nest,
I'm so upset
I can neither sleep nor eat;
The Kuos' great goodness to me
Warms my heart,
Yet it makes me feel even worse. . . .
I'd better buy a train ticket and go back.

(She sits down.)

(Old Kuo stands up.)

Kuo: Auntie's talk of leaving
Really worries me.
I didn't want to trouble our armed forces,
But now I shall have to go and report this problem.

Chorus: When the local garrison hear this,
They send over Staff Officer Li.

(Staff Officer Li stands up.)

Staff Officer: My orders are to fetch you
And Headquarters has sent a car
To take you right away to our army hostel. . . .

Chorus: But the Kuo family won't hear of this.

(Mrs. Kuo and Hsiao-hung stand up.)

Mrs. Kuo: I start pulling her back. . . .

Hsiao-hung: And I won't let her go. . . .

Chorus: They won't let Aunt Chao leave.

Staff Officer: It seems there is nothing I can do.

Suppose you stay here, auntie,
While I go back to make contact with your son;
Though I've never met Chih-kuo,
The hearts of comrades-in-arms are one.
Don't look on me as a stranger
But as your own son.

Aunt Chao *(speaking)*: Oh, that would never do!

Staff Officer *(speaking)*: Indeed you must!

Aunt Chao: His words bring such warmth to my heart
That I smile through tears.

(Having seen the staff officer off Aunt Chao, Old Kuo, Mrs. Kuo and Hsiao-hung sit down.)

Staff Officer: I return to my office,

Take up the phone and dial number after number,
All the garrison headquarters in Inner Mongolia.

Chorus: But he failed to find Unit 1199.

Staff Officer Li didn't sleep a wink all night;

He ate not a bite of food, drank not a sip of water;
As the east turns bright at dawn,
He starts studying a map of China.

Staff Officer: Our great motherland is so vast,
My heart leaps up at the sight.

Could it be that Chih-kuo is not in Inner Mongolia?

(Speaking): That must be it!

Chorus: Now he's on a new track.

(Music plays as Staff Officer Li makes a telephone call.)

Staff Officer (speaking): Exchange, exchange! I want Ulanhot,
I want Ulanhot.

(All the actors chime in.)

Calling Ulanhot!
Calling Ulanhot!
Calling Ulanhot!

(The telephone operator in Ulanhot stands up.)

Operator (speaking): This is Ulanhot, this is Ulanhot.

Staff Officer (speaking): Please put me through to Unit 1199.

Operator (speaking): Unit 1199? Long distance call from Huhehot.

(The officer on duty in Unit 1199 stands up.)

Officer: Hello, this is Unit 1199.

Staff Officer (speaking): This is Huhehot. . . .

Officer (speaking): Is that Staff Officer Li?

Staff Officer (speaking): Right, right.

Officer (speaking): Just now your commander called up. Comrade
Chao Chih-kuo is here. Our commander wants me to thank
you. We must learn from your example of serving the people.

Staff Officer (speaking): No, we must learn from you.

Chorus (speaking): We must all learn from each other.

Staff Officer: Though we are hundreds of miles apart,

Officer: We are linked by loyalty to the revolution.

Chorus: The people's army serves the people;
Together we sing of unity and victory.

(Unit 1199's officer sits down.)

Staff Officer: I rush to tell Aunt Chao the good news.
Auntie!
We've found your son's garrison.

(Aunt Chao and Hsiao-hung stand up.)

Aunt Chao (speaking): Where is it?

Staff Officer (speaking): In Ulanhot in the northeast.

Aunt Chao (speaking): That's right, that's right. It's Ulanhot,
not Huhehot.

Hsiao-hung: What a laugh!

Granny,

That's on the other side of China.

Aunt Chao (speaking): Just think what a big country we have,
Hsiao-hung. With so many places in it and such fine people!
That means we needn't be afraid of any difficulties!

Chorus: The next day is sunny and cloudless;
We see auntie to the train.

(Old Kuo, Staff Officer Li, Mrs. Kuo and Hsiao-hung see Aunt Chao off.)

Aunt Chao: Standing at the carriage door

I look at Old Kuo,

Look at Staff Officer Li;

Holding Hsiao-hung's hand,

My heart is full to bursting.

How can I express my thanks?

A few days ago I was anxious to be off,

But now I can hardly tear myself away.

(The others sit down.)

Chorus: The bell rings for the train to start;
The wheels begin turning.

(The train attendant places Aunt Chao's seat in the middle of the stage.)

Train Attendant: I find her a nice soft seat

And bring her hot water to drink;
I bring her some tablets too
In case a train journey upsets her.

Woman Passenger: One passenger gives her an apple,

Man Passenger: Another a pineapple.

(The actors move their seats forward as if they were in a train.)

Chorus: All gather around Aunt Chao
To tell her how well things are going in our country.
Auntie will not eat or drink.

Aunt Chao: Tears flow down my cheeks.

Chorus: Auntie,
Don't be sad.
Tomorrow you'll see your son.

Aunt Chao: I'm not sad,
I'm crying for joy.
In the old days life was hard for us poor folk;
As refugees and beggars we roamed the country;
If we died on the street, no one cared;
We had no home, no family anywhere.
Now in New China led by Chairman Mao,
People everywhere are one big family,
And everything warms our hearts.

(All the actors stand up.)

Chorus: Now in New China led by Chairman Mao
People everywhere are one big family,
And everything warms our hearts.

Broadcaster *(speaking)*: Passengers! We are arriving at Ulanhot Station.

Chorus: Time marches on,
The train whistles loud in triumph.
What so good as socialism?
What so happy as the age of Mao Tsetung?

(Music. Curtain.)

Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng

*Chang Feng-chao and
Tiao Cheng-kuo*

Camping in the Snow

(A comic dialogue)

- A:** To be prepared against a war of aggression we must train hard and master all kinds of skills.
- B:** Quite right. That's the only way to cope with all sorts of complicated situations.
- A:** We must learn to fire small arms and artillery, pitch camp, march, stand guard, patrol, eat, sleep...
- B:** Learn to sleep? I've known how to sleep ever since I was a baby.
- A:** Can you sleep under poor conditions?
- B:** No amount of noise worries me. I drop off the moment I close my eyes. Never have to take sleeping pills.
- A:** Let me ask you if you can sleep under the following conditions....
- B:** Didn't I just tell you I can sleep under any conditions?
- A:** Suppose you're asked to sleep out in the snow in a temperature of 37 degrees below zero.

- B:** Of course... I couldn't. Say, don't you know that we have fine barracks at all our garrisons, and good billets during manoeuvres? Even if we're camping we have padded tents. Why go and sleep in the snow?
- A:** Because our troops must train out in the grassland during howling snowstorms too, when it's icy cold. As our commanders have told us, we train ourselves to be able to fight in the event that some enemy invades us. That's why we must practise camping out in the snow...
- B:** I see. Have you practised it?
- A:** Sure. Out there on the rolling grassland, white snow below, blue sky above, and a temperature of 37.5 degrees below zero, I slept so well that I broke out in a sweat.
- B:** A cold sweat, eh? From shivering all over?
- A:** Nothing of the sort!
- B:** I don't believe it.
- A:** You don't believe it? Neither did I to begin with. But one day our company commander said, "Comrades, we must follow Chairman Mao's instructions to **'Heighten our vigilance, defend the motherland!'** We must make a good job of camping out in the snow. How about it? Can you do it?"
- B:** And what did you all say?
- A:** One said: We fighters have the red sun in our hearts; sleeping on snow or ice, we'll guard our frontiers.
- B:** Good for him. That shows guts.
- A:** Another said: A revolutionary fears neither hardships nor death; our courage will melt whole wastes of snow and ice.
- B:** Fine! That's the spirit.
- A:** When the others had all spoken, I expressed my determination too.
- B:** What did you say?
- A:** We revolutionary soldiers have plenty of pep. One or two days without sleep is nothing to us.
- B:** Nothing, eh? What about three or four days?
- A:** Three or four days, I could take.
- B:** Five or six days then?

- A:** Five or six, I wouldn't break.
- B:** What about seven or eight days?
- A:** Seven or eight... my head would really ache.
- B:** Quite a headache, eh?
- A:** Our company commander said: "When we train to sleep in the snow, it's not to try going without sleep. We want you to sleep well so that you can fight well. We must find out from practice how to sleep well in the snow."
- B:** Quite right. Practice makes perfect.
- A:** After several days of preparation our company commander took us out. We were to be a pilot squad. That day we covered some fifteen miles before the commander decided we would halt there for the night.
- B:** So you went to sleep?
- A:** Sleep? How?
- B:** Why, unpack your kit and lie down to sleep, of course.
- A:** In that case in less than two hours...
- B:** You'd be sound asleep.
- A:** We'd be frozen stiff.
- B:** What do you mean — frozen stiff?
- A:** It was 37.5 degrees below zero. If we'd stretched out to sleep there we'd soon have frozen solid.
- B:** What did you do then?
- A:** The company commander pointed ahead. "Look, what's that?" We looked. It was a Mongolian yurt.
- B:** Ah! A yurt is snug and warm. Lovely.
- A:** Lovely, yes. But if we slept there would you call that camping in the snow? We'd be sleeping in a rest-house in the snow.
- B:** Then why did your company commander point at the yurt?
- A:** He told us that it belonged to Grandpa Tumenbayin who pastured the commune's herd. In the old society he herded sheep for the herd-owners on these storm-swept grasslands for over thirty years, often sleeping in the snow. He must have plenty of experience in camping out.

B: That's right. Just the man you should see.

A: So we went into the yurt. Grandpa Tumenbayin really gave us a warm welcome. After offering us piping hot milk tea, he told us about his experience of sleeping in the snow.

B: What did he say?

A: Grandpa spoke in Mongolian, using gestures too: bent his elbows, curled up his legs, then closed his eyes.... Ah! I caught on at once. He pillowed his head on his arms, curled up his legs and slept with his eyes closed.

B: Don't talk nonsense. Have you ever heard of anyone sleeping with his eyes open?

A: But the commander explained what grandpa was really saying: "To sleep well, you must keep your feet warm." He had really roughed it in the old days herding sheep for the herd-owners. In the bitter winter, as he roamed the snowy grass-land with his flock, he'd find a hollow, make himself a nest of straw, stretch his feet under a sheep and nestle close to the animals. In this way, he came through the coldest winter.

B: Fine. Grandpa not only told you his experience of sleeping in the snow, he gave you some really moving class education.

A: Well, that gave me an inspiration. Why, there behind the yurt was the sheep-fold. If each of us took a sheep and tucked our feet under it, we'd be sure to sleep well.

B: What an idea! If you did that on the battlefield, would you be "battling wolves" or herding sheep?

A: Yes, the others said that wouldn't do in a real battle. What I proposed, though, gave our commander an idea. "Why shouldn't we keep warm by sleeping close to each other?"

B: How, exactly?

A: Sleep two to a quilt, with the feet of one on the shoulders of the other.

B: Hey, I get it. That should work.

A: Underneath spread a felt rug and a sheepskin coat.

B: To keep off the cold and damp.

A: On top spread a thick quilt and another coat.

B: To keep out the icy wind.

A: Pillow our heads on our padded pants; cover them with our padded jackets.

B: Sounds fine.

A: Fine, did you say? I didn't quite believe in it. That night I was to sleep with Wang, so I told him, "Let's put on more clothes tonight."

B: Put on more clothes?

A: Sure. To sleep "snug as a bug in a rug". I wore my padded clothes over my underwear, and put on my fur cap, woollen socks, leather gloves and a big mask.

B: The whole caboodle, eh?

A: I thought since the others wore only their underwear but we kept on our padded clothes, we'd surely be much warmer.

B: And were you?

A: Not a bit of it. Came midnight and we two were still twisting and turning.

B: Still not asleep?

A: Couldn't sleep. The commander asked me, "Are you two cold?" "Commander," I said, "it's just the least bit . . . chilly." The commander produced his thermometer. The temperature under the other men's quilts was eighteen above.

B: And under yours?

A: A bit lower.

B: What was it?

A: Three below.

B: Whew! A regular ice-house. But weren't you two wearing your padded clothes?

A: That was just the trouble. The commander said, "You're both wearing so much, you can't warm each other with your body heat. That's the first point. And then, with all those clothes on, you can't cover yourselves snugly with the quilt and overcoat. So wearing more doesn't really keep out the cold."

B: I say, there's dialectics in this too.

A: Wang and I quickly shed our padded clothes. And sure enough that did make us feel much warmer.

B: So you settled down to sleep.

A: Sleep? We'd barely warmed up before I had to put on my padded clothes again.

B: Still too cold?

A: Reveille had sounded.

B: So you had no sleep all night.

A: I was very pleased all the same. Because thanks to our commander's stress on practice, thanks to his good work in mobilizing the masses and thoroughgoing investigation among the herdsmen, the very first time our squad camped out in the snow we made a go of it.

B: Wonderful.

A: That same night our whole company marched to an appointed place to try sleeping out in the open. The commander made our squad speak on our personal experiences.

B: Yes, you should tell them all about it.

A: One of us said, "The less heavily you're dressed, the better you'll rest."

B: Correct. That's the only way to keep each other warm.

A: Another said, "Exercise last thing at night will ensure you sleep all right."

B: That's true. Exercise warms you up and helps your circulation.

A: I told them my experience too.

B: What was that?

A: My experience was very much to the point. The more you wear the more you'll freeze.

B: You were certainly frank.

A: Finally the company commander gave us two new tips.

B: What new tips?

A: The first was to build walls of snow and add a roof.

B: Walls of snow are easy, but where would you get a roof?

A: Just use some sheets of tarpaulin.

B: Of course. Tarpaulins on top would raise the temperature a big notch.

A: The second tip was to put makeshift radiators in our quilts.

B: Makeshift radiators? Our army has no such equipment.

A: Oh yes, we have.

B: You mean a boiler?

A: No, a canteen.

B: Canteen?

A: Every soldier carries a canteen. Fill it with hot water, wrap it up in a towel and put it under the quilt. It not only warms you when you lie down, it helps to keep the quilt warm. What's more, if you're thirsty you can take a few sips.

B: Quite a multipurpose gadget.

A: After making these dispositions, the commander gave the whole company ten minutes to settle down for the night. I was paired off with the commander this time. I undressed at top speed and burrowed into my quilt. In less than three minutes I was lying down.

B: You had experience by then.

A: Well, I'd bedded down but I didn't dare stretch out my legs.

B: Why not?

A: My feet were like blocks of ice. I didn't like to touch the commander with them.

B: Pretty considerate, weren't you?

A: But the commander didn't mind at all. He clasped my feet to his chest. Warmth flooded all through me.

B: Class feeling triumphed over the bitter cold!

A: What's more, the canteen of hot water gave off heat too. In less than an hour I was actually perspiring.

B: Not really!

A: Oh yes, I was snug and cosy. I got warmer and warmer until...

B: You started snoring.

A: Just as I was dropping off I remembered something.

B: What was that?

A: If this had been real warfare, we'd be warm and rested while our enemy would be shivering in the cold. When the time came

and the commander gave the order, I'd raise my hand-grenade, unscrew the fuse cap.... Ha!

B: You'd really give it to them, eh?

A: I got so excited at the thought that the grip of my hands tightened. Then I heard the commander say, "Don't unscrew that cap...."

B: Why, what had happened?

A: I'd mistaken my canteen for a hand-grenade.



A Vignette of Hsisbuangpanna (painting in the traditional style) by Li Hu ►



Chi Szu

New Items on the Peking Stage

High-spirited we textile workers,
The golden sun in our hearts,
Follow where Chairman Mao points the way,
Weaving bright clouds to cover the sky.

This is a song sung by twelve girls of the Peking Vinylon Factory as they pirouette lightly to work to the accompaniment of lively music. Whirling spindles reflect sunlight streaming in through the windows as the girls deftly operate imaginary spinning frames, constantly changing their ballet formations to mimic various processes of their work. In the end, like a peacock flaunting its tail, they spread out the colourful woven fabric in a final spectacular dance.

This realistic dance *Women Textile Workers* produced by amateurs was well received by Peking audiences. This is one of the many items in the variety shows put on to celebrate the twenty-third anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. These pieces include a wide variety of forms ranging from modern singing

and ballet to traditional entertainments; while the contents are equally rich and varied, reflecting the new spirit of the Chinese people since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Some of these variety shows have recently been staged again in Peking, appeared on television or been made into documentary films, evoking an enthusiastic response from the people throughout the country. They stand out with their special features as a brand-new art on the contemporary Chinese stage.

The life of the masses is the inexhaustible source of our art. The spare-time art workers from the ranks of workers, peasants and soldiers are participants in real struggles as well as creators of art who draw their inspiration from the heroic exploits of the people. This is how the shows recently performed in Peking came into being, and they have since been further revised and improved.

The dance is an art form well suited to depict the splendid images of workers, peasants and soldiers, to reflect their life and struggles and at the same time to express their spirit. Thus the precise yet vigorous movements of the girl textile workers reveal their enthusiastic drive and make us feel we are in their busy workshop amid the whirring machines.

Sunning the Surplus Grain, a dance produced in Tahsing County south of Peking, presents distinctive features of the north China countryside and has a strong atmosphere of real life. Through dancing



movements depicting the sunning, sieving, winnowing and sacking of grain, this dance shows us the enthusiasm with which the peasants prepare surplus grain for the state after a bumper harvest, shows the love of the former poor and lower-middle peasants for their socialist motherland and the active part they take in productive labour. Here again the dance does not merely depict different work processes but the spirit animating them as well. For example, the dancers deftly sieving grain pat the sieve with one hand and blow lightly on the grain, revealing very graphically the high sense of responsibility of these peasants who will not leave any chaff in the grain for the state. Similarly, when filling the sacks, the one holding the sack shakes it hard before setting it down fair and square on the ground — another significant touch of realism.

Another short dance-drama *Like Fish and Water* appeals to the audience because of its deep ideological content and skilful artistic expression. It tells the story of a contingent of troops which comes to a mountain village during field manoeuvres. After long marching, one soldier's shoes are worn out. The mistress of the house in which he is staying wants to make him a new pair but is uncertain of his measurements. The other villagers suggest that she should sweep the path clean just before the soldier goes to fetch water for her; and so from his footprints on the path she finds out the size of his





feet and makes the new shoes that same night. As for the soldier, the first thing he does after coming to this village is to fetch water for the villagers; but because he tries to carry more than two buckets in one trip he breaks the carrying-pole. Since this pole belongs to the village woman, he decides to make her a new one and sits up late to do this...

It is very quiet at night. Moonlight shining on the left side of the stage shows the soldier whittling the new pole under a tree by the wall; while on the right side, inside the room by the window, the old woman carefully stitches a pair of shoes. This staging brings out vividly the profound class friendship between our army and our civilians. The ending, too, makes a very deep impression. As the soldiers leave the village and march towards the morning sun, half-way up the mountain the soldier discovers the new shoes and, holding them in his hands, looks back with emotion at the village by the fluttering red flag. This scene shows the people's army's reliance on the masses. Meanwhile the villagers after seeing off the troops find the new carrying-pole left by the young soldier and gaze with affection at the men marching away. With the old woman in their centre, they form another moving tableau of the love the masses feel for their own troops. These two scenes appearing on the stage at the same time form a splendid organic whole, illustrating the truth of Chairman Mao's great teaching that when army and people are united as one such an army is invincible.

In developing revolutionary variety shows we must on the one hand make a clean break with the content of the old song-and-dance items, and on the other hand take over and transform the traditional forms and dance movements. Those which cannot express our life under socialism must be discarded. Others can still be utilized, but in most cases these must be modified to express our life today. Revolutionary songs and dances must also critically assimilate useful features of other art forms to guide the work of innovation. The most important thing is to create a new dance vocabulary based on the content, striving to achieve the unity of a revolutionary political content and the best possible artistic form. Many of these new items have carried out useful experiments in this field. We can take as examples three new dances, *Women Textile Workers*, *Women Militia on the Grassland* and *On the March*. In all three, the chief dance vocabulary is evolved from typical movements in the work and struggle of workers, peasants and soldiers. However, they have also critically assimilated certain foreign or traditional dance movements. Thus in *Women Textile Workers*, the deft movements of the weavers are expressed through ballet; *Women Militia on the Grassland* adopts characteristic movements of Mongolian folk dancing to conjure up lifelike portrayals of people in Inner Mongolia; while *On the March* uses somersaults





and other acrobatics from Peking opera to emphasize the vigour and agility of the armymen. The choreographers have dealt correctly with the relationship between innovation and critical assimilation of traditional features, according

to the principle that art must stem from life but should be higher than life.

These variety shows present singing of various kinds: solos, duets, singing with acting and so forth. The women singing *We Are Tibetan Workers* reflect the historic change in Tibetan women who are growing to maturity in the ranks of the proletariat, and the pride of liberated serfs who have become members of the working class. Another song *The PLA Is Fine* shows the Tibetan people's deep class feeling for our Liberation Army. Both songs have adopted melodies from Tibetan folk-songs and also introduced innovations. The melodies are clear and expressive, the movements concise and natural, the style of singing simple and dignified. Among the solo items are arias from the revolutionary Peking opera *On the Docks* and songs and scenes from *The Red Lantern* and *Song of the Dragon River* presented as Hopei clapper tunes, Shansi clapper tunes and Honan opera tunes. The soloists who sing Peking and local operas have not only studied the valuable experience of the revolutionary model operas in portraying proletarian heroes, introducing a greater variety into their repertoire, but have also learned special techniques in elocution and singing so as to make constant improvements, enabling the acting and singing to supplement each other well and produce a more splendid effect.

Traditional Chinese instrumental music is very popular in our country. Thus an important problem in the composition of new music of this type is how to introduce innovations which will better reflect the spirit of our socialist period. *The Bumper Harvest Gong and Drum*

Music recently performed is traditional instrumental music with a cheerful lively rhythm which has absorbed special features of eastern Chekiang folk music to convey the jubilation of peasants reaping a good harvest in our socialist countryside. Another good piece of instrumental music *Our Army and People* is a concise and classical composition. The central section presents a solo on the *erb-hu* fiddle with orchestral accompaniment; the main theme changes and develops with tender and lyrical melodies pouring out the deep class feeling and flesh-and-blood relationship between our army and our people. This composition combines revolutionary content with distinctive national features.

The basic task of our proletarian art is the creation of images of proletarian heroes, and this is the main object of many ballads in these recent performances.

For instance, the chorus singing accompanied by a one-string fiddle, *The Man with Iron Will, the Standard-Bearer*, tells the moving story of Wang Kuo-fu, a production brigade leader of a rural people's commune. By describing one incident in the struggle between the bourgeois and the proletarian lines, the ballad eulogizes this heroic character's high political consciousness and determination to de-



fend Chairman Mao's revolutionary line by continuing to make revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The ballad singer steps forward from the choir on the stage to describe the action in a most lively manner, with clear elocution and a thoroughly appropriate musical accompaniment. The narrative, actions, fiddle accompaniment and singing are well co-ordinated so that the impact of the whole is intensely moving. Another fine ballad *Learn from Norman Bethune* describes the utter selflessness of this great communist fighter who considered the liberation of the Chinese people his own task, giving praise to his internationalist spirit.

Balladry is a traditional art form loved by the Chinese people. Some Chinese ballads are long, others as short as only some dozen lines. The singing is accompanied by action and one performer can play several parts; hence the performance is relatively simple, requiring neither scenery nor stage properties. These short items, often used to present exemplary people or actions among today's workers, peasants and soldiers, make effective propaganda. Thus the Honan *chui-tzu* ballad *Ten Eggs* tells how two PLA men find ten eggs during a march and try to return them to their owner. This small incident exemplifies the strict discipline of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, holding up to admiration the fine tradition of our people's soldiers who sincerely care for the people.

The items mentioned above are only a few of many which were performed during the National Day celebrations in Peking last October. Guided by Chairman Mao's directives to let a hundred flowers blossom, weed through the old to bring forth the new, to make the past serve the present and foreign things serve China, new ground is being broken in the Chinese theatre. It is clear that the revolution in Chinese literature and art is making steady headway.

*Illustrated by Li Keh-yu,
Fa Nai-kuang and Liu Jen-ching*

How We Produced "Women Textile Workers"

Some time ago we formed an amateur art troupe in our factory. Being textile workers ourselves, we are quite familiar with the life and activities in our factory. Under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line the workers have been going all out to make revolution and promote production. Their hard work and enthusiasm inspired us so much that we felt we ought to render the rich materials of the life around us into a dance in praise of the lively spirit of the textile workers. This was how the idea of composing the dance *Women Textile Workers* came to us.

The question was how to make use of these rich raw materials to create something on a higher plane than actual life. Our first idea was simply to go through all the motions of spinning and weaving, the more specific the better. As a result, the whole manufacturing process was brought onto the stage. But while this was all-inclusive, nothing whatsoever stood out in prominence, the image of the textile workers was dim and there were merely machines, no characters. The whole thing failed to show the new spirit of the textile workers. The workers commented, "It's only a dance of

This article is written by the spare-time art and propaganda troupe of the Peking Vinylon Factory.

yarn and thread, with human beings imitating the running of the machines. There's nothing to show our drive and spirit."

The failure gave us food for thought. Then we turned to Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art* in which he says: "... Life as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal, and therefore more universal than actual everyday life." This pointed out to us the root of our problem. It is true that without knowing life we cannot do creative work, but our knowledge of life has to be concentrated, summarized and typified before we can produce a work of art. Revolutionary literature and art do not mirror life passively but reflect it actively and consciously. Thereafter, with Chairman Mao's teaching as a guide and by studying how the revolutionary model operas had come to be created, we made some improvements on our work and centred our efforts on a lifelike portrayal of the textile workers. We designed new dance movements to depict the workers reading and studying. This not only gave prominence to their active interest in the writings of Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao, it showed the richness of their life.

In addition, we deliberately relegated the operation of the machines to a secondary, subordinate position, whether in choreography, stage direction, decor or musical accompaniment. For instance, in portraying spinning and weaving, we now emphasized the workers' enthusiasm and concentration and kept the machine-running movements in the background.

At the close of the dance, we shifted the stress from displaying the finished products to the portrayal of the workers themselves and their feelings for the Party and Chairman Mao. In music, while using gay melodies with a strong beat to convey intensive work going with a swing, we put in vigorous songs to show the high aspirations of the textile workers and throw their heroic images into relief.

Women Textile Workers originally adopted folk-dance movements, but later we switched to ballet steps. For ballet with its wide range of beautiful and rhythmic movements is more suited to portraying spinning and weaving, which is largely done by women and characterized by the precision of the machines, the uniformity of their operation and the strong rhythm of the whole work process.

Popularizing the New Revolutionary Operas

Recently various well-known companies have presented episodes from new revolutionary operas and ballets. Among the episodes from operas are: the trip to Tiger Mountain of Yang Tzu-jung, hero of *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*; the account of her past given by Granny Li in *The Red Lantern*; the surprise attack towards the end of *Shachiapang*; and the Party secretary's attempt to set young dock worker Han on the right path in *On the Docks*. Scenes from ballets include Hung Chang-ching's encouragement to Wu Ching-hua to take the revolutionary road in *Red Detachment of Women*; and the heroine's return to her own people when her village is liberated in *The White-Haired Girl*.

The performance of distinctive episodes or scenes which can be enjoyed as separate entities has always been popular among opera audiences in China. A variety of short items of this kind makes an appropriate repertoire for dramatic troupes touring the countryside and lends itself to performance by amateur artists. This is therefore an important way of further popularizing the new model operas.

To enable more workers, peasants and soldiers to enjoy revolutionary operas and ballets, the China Dance Drama Troupe, the Peking Opera Troupe of Peking, the Central Philharmonic Society and other companies have recently given touring performances in different parts of China.

New Shell-Pictures

The art of using sea-shells of various shapes and colours to make pictures has a history of over two thousand years in China.



Since the cultural revolution, this handicraft has been further developed with a greater variety of themes and ways of expression. Many notable new works have been produced in different coastal regions. One is *Dawn Over the South Sea* made by the Peihai Shell Workshop in Kwangsi Province, which shows fishermen armed with rifles rowing out towards the morning sun. *Glorious Future* from the Talien Shell Workshop presents minority women at work after Liberation and highlights their happy life. Tsingtao craftsmen have produced a shell-picture *Green Plumage and Spring Flowers* with the time-honoured theme of a peacock and peonies treated according to the rules of traditional Chinese painting. The full use made of the natural colours of the shells produces the effect of a traditional painting of flowers and birds heightened by the intrinsic lustre of the sea-shells. The vivid green peacocks which take up most of the picture are magnificently set off by red peonies and dark-green leaves; and this classical composition is animated by a vigorous youthful spirit.

Selections from Popular Stage Shows

The People's Literature Publishing House of Peking has recently published a selection of ten popular stage shows, including short Peking operas, local operas, modern plays and ballads.

Most of these works are by workers, peasants and soldiers. Short, concise, fresh and vigorous, they have a strong flavour of real life and are effective theatre, depicting new model workers or exemplary actions on various fronts in China today. For example, the Chekiang opera *Half a Basket of Peanuts* presents the contradictions involved in disposing of these peanuts and shows how eagerly the Chinese peasants are studying the philosophic thinking of Chairman Mao. The action is thoroughly gripping and vividly reflects the new spirit in the countryside.

A large proportion of this book is devoted to ballads which make a mass appeal.

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