

CHINESE LITERATURE



9

1963

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CHINESE LITERATURE

monthly

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Published by Foreign Languages Press
Pai Wan Chuang, Peking (37), China
Printed in the People's Republic of China

SUN LI

Stormy Years

In our last issue we published the first thirteen sections of *Stormy Years*. The story starts in 1937 in a village on the central Hopei plain after the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan. The villagers led by the Chinese Communist Party put up a determined resistance. The young hired hand Mang-chung leaves the landlord's service to join the revolutionary army while his sweetheart Chun-erh, a village girl of eighteen, takes up patriotic work among the women in the village.

In this issue we are publishing two later episodes from this novel. Mang-chung has gone through his baptism of fire and become an experienced fighter. Chun-erh has organized the village women to support the soldiers at the front and struggle against the landlords who try to sabotage the resistance. Sections 40 to 45 describe an active phase of guerrilla warfare on the Hopei plain in 1937.

Sections 70 to 79 deal with the period after October 1938, when the Japanese invaders launch an attack against the liberated area and our main force is ordered to withdraw to the mountains, leaving only some cadres to carry on the work in the plain. Chun-erh has been studying in a training school for cadres. She and some class-mates are sent by the school to greet the heroic 120th Division commanded by General Ho Lung, who has come to the banks of the Huto. This is where Section 70 begins.

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Spring, clothing the flowers and trees in fresh, gay colours, quickened girls' heart-beats too. Chun-erh, hurrying home from the county town after the review of all the village defence corps, slowed down when she found she could not catch up with her unit. Water-wheels were creaking on both sides of the path. A

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girl slightly younger than Chun-erh had just made a gap in the low dike round a field and was leaning on her spade lost in a dream. When the irrigation ditch started overflowing, the donkey slyly stopped turning the wheel, waiting for the next word of command from its young mistress.

"Hey, there! Want to flood the place?" cried Chun-erh, halting.

With a start the girl looked round and, smiling sheepishly, made haste to fill up the gap. As she called to the donkey she eyed Chun-erh's rifle and hand-grenades and asked:

"So the review's over, is it? Which village came first?"

"Ours did. Tzuwuchen in the fourth district."

"Where did we come? Small Wang Farm?" The girl indicated a cluster of houses behind her.

"Small Wang Farm?" Chun-erh tilted her head reflectively. "Can't remember exactly. Nowhere near the top, anyway."

"What a shame!" With a few swift, vigorous strokes the girl cut another channel for the water. "They set off gonging and drumming. But they'll slink home ashamed to show their faces!"

"Why didn't you go?" asked Chun-erh. "Haven't you joined the defence corps?"

"What d'you take me for? If I'd gone, they mightn't have done so badly. But dad wouldn't hear of it—nothing would do but I must water the fields. A real old die-hard he is, and everyone knows it."

"Well, you must go to the next review. It's grand!"

"I will," the girl assured her eagerly. "I'll be seeing you in a few days at the next big meeting. My, it's sweltering! Like a drink of water from our new well? Rest a bit before you go on."

"I could do with a drink." Chun-erh made straight for the well and slaked her thirst with its cool refreshing water. Then she straightened up, wiped her mouth and slapped the donkey's rump before moving on.

The russet branches of date trees along the road were all in tender leaf, while gourd vines had just climbed their trellises and were putting out their first flowers. A hare lolloped along the ridge of a wheat field, and a bird with blue plumage from the hills dipped up and down over a patch of golden rape.

A sudden drowsiness overwhelmed Chun-erh, who sat down with her back against a roadside willow, hardly able to keep her eyes open.

This was not far from Huangtsun, and some children in a nearby field were after a bird. They reckoned that it would alight on this willow, the only tree in the immediate vicinity, and a small stocky boy came panting up to the willow with a net, attached a large mole-cricket to it as a bait, then planted it in the earth almost on top of Chun-erh.

"What d'you think you're doing?" She opened her eyes with a start and grabbed for her gun.

"Find somewhere else to sleep, will you?" said Stocky. "I'm fixing up a snare here."

"Am I stopping you?" she retorted, rubbing her eyes. "Waking people up and ordering them off like that—what's the idea!"

"This land belongs to our village. If you want to sleep, go home and sleep on your *kang*. Nobody will disturb you there."

"Just listen to the boy!" exclaimed Chun-erh. "What way is that to talk? Aren't we all Chinese? All out to fight Japan?"

"Don't try to lecture me," said Stocky, wiping his nose. "Get a move on, won't you! That bird's coming down!"

Chun-erh struggled to her feet and hitched her gun over her shoulder just as the bird arrived. It would have alighted if not for her sudden movement, which made it spread its wings in fright and skim off like an arrow to Tsui Family Graveyard. The boy stamped his foot while his friends, who had joined him, sighed.

"There's a war on," scolded Chun-erh, "but instead of studying properly at school you run wild all over the place!"

"Who says we're running wild?" demanded Stocky. "We're training to fight guerrilla warfare. We'd have hemmed in the enemy force and mopped it up here, if you hadn't spoiled everything. What village are you from? Where did you get that gun? Have you a pass?"

Smiling, Chun-erh searched her satchel and pockets. "No!"

"Come with us to headquarters then!" ordered the boy calmly.

"What headquarters?"

"The headquarters of Huangtsun, Children's Brigade!" Chun-erh was surrounded now by boys and girls.

Amused and vexed, she made haste to explain that she was on her way home from the review.

"Why aren't you with your unit, then?" demanded Stocky. "You're a straggler or a slacker, one or the other!"

Chun-erh had just resigned herself to going with them to the village when they heard the thud of hoofs and a soldier came galloping along the highway, rising and falling in the saddle. As the children turned to look, Chun-erh's face lit up, for she saw it was Mang-chung.

Mang-chung dismounted and soon grasped the situation.

"Don't you kids know who she is?" he asked. "She came first of all the women in the review of the defence corps this morning!"

"How were we to know that?" retorted Stocky, looking at Chun-erh with a new respect.

"I'll answer for her," cried Mang-chung. "Hand her over to me."

"That's all right," said Stocky. "We know you. But we'd like to say this to the woman comrade. Of course, coming first in the review is good, but judging by what's just happened, you've two faults."

"What two faults?" asked Chun-erh.

"First, you left your unit to wander about alone: that shows you haven't much sense of discipline. Secondly, you slept by the road when you were carrying a gun: that shows you're not very alert. We're pointing these things out in a comradely way. Are you humble enough to take criticism?"

"I'm humble enough to take it!" With a smile at them all, Chun-erh left with Mang-chung.

As soon as they were out of earshot, he asked:

"Were you waiting there for me?"

"Don't be an idiot! How was I to know you were coming? I got held up talking to County Head Li, and then there was this mix-up with those kids. Where are you going?"

"I've a letter to deliver for army headquarters. You must be tired, have a ride!" He reined in the horse.

"Wait till we're past the village," said Chun-erh, dimpling.

Once past Huangtsun, at Tsui Family Graveyard, Mang-chung helped Chun-erh to mount from the back of a stone statue. But when she tried cantering, the jolting she got made her pull up short in dismay.

"You ought to learn riding," said Mang-chung, striding over to hold the reins. "You never can tell when it will come in useful. It's handy to know and not hard to pick up."

"That frightful jerking and jolting!" cried Chun-erh, frowning. "I can hardly stick on."

"After a few rides you'll get the knack of it. Relax. Don't just expect the horse to adapt itself to you — some give and take is needed."

As they neared Tzuwuchen, Chun-erh told him with a smile:

"I'll get down here. You ride on and deliver your letter."

She jumped down from the saddle and was limping towards the village when she was overtaken by an old neighbour with a basketful of herbs.

"Where did you get all those fine herbs, aunty?" asked Chun-erh.

"By Tsui Family Graveyard. And besides fine herbs, you can see fine sights there too."

"What did you see? Children snaring birds?"

"No, a pair of love-birds!" The elder woman's eyes twinkled. "Flying along the road they were!"

"I didn't see them."

"Of course you didn't. You were too busy riding his big horse!"

"Oh!" Chun-erh blushed. "What a tease you are, aunty!"

"That shop in the West Village has scrapped all its bridal sedan-chairs. Did you know that?"

"No. Why should they do that?"

"Seems brides won't be fetched by sedan-chair any more. Now you've set the fashion, they'll be riding big horses to their husbands' homes."

"Let them ride whatever they please!" Chun-erh giggled. "I've nothing for supper, aunty. Will you let me have a handful of your herbs?"

"Take as much as you want!" The old woman put her basket on the ground. "Well, the two of us always find something to laugh about, don't we? What would life be without a bit of fun?"

Chun-erh hurried home clasping a bundle of herbs, their roots milky white, their leaves still wet with dew.

Chun-erh slept badly that night, still dazzled by the stirring events of the day, her ears ringing with the orders shouted at the review. Her room seemed uncomfortably close, she felt pent in. For the urge to do battle had fired her blood and was making it race through her veins.

A dog barked in the street, hoofs clattered, bugles sounded the order to fall in. Chun-erh sat up in bed.

There came a knock on her gate. Throwing on her clothes, Chun-erh ran out to the fence and saw Mang-chung with his big horse, which was stamping one front hoof impatiently.

Hastily opening the gate, she asked:

"What d'you want, so late at night?"

"Headquarters is moving," said Mang-chung. "There's going to be fighting here tomorrow morning!"

"What about us? How can our women's defence unit help?"

"The army's discussed that with the local government. The district office will take charge of you. Better get everything ready in good time. I'm off to the city."

"Off you go, then. See you tomorrow on the battlefield!"

Mang-chung vaulted on to his horse as shadowy figures filed out from every street to assemble in the big square west of the village.

Each unit had a local man to guide it. The peasants were coughing and clearing their throats as they always did when they set out from home before dawn. One produced a flint to strike a light for his pipe, but some soldiers stopped him with a quiet caution.

"Of course!" The man stuffed his pipe back into his belt. "Those swine have sharp eyes!"

The commotion brought all the villagers from their beds. Children got up too when they saw their parents dress. Families who had put up troops turned out in force to see them off, chatting as they tagged along.

"You've had to rough it, comrades, in our poor lodgings," said one man. "But we're all one family, you won't hold it against us. Next time you pass this way, don't you forget us! Mind you

drop in for a chat. You'll be welcome to a drink of water and a piece of sorghum bread, so long as you don't look down on our simple fare!"

"Of course we'll come, uncle," the soldiers whispered back. "Go home now and sleep. It's still early."

"You go through all the hardships of war, can't I miss an hour's sleep for once?" replied the peasant. "You didn't have much peace with us, I reckon. My old woman's tongue never stops wagging, and that boy of ours is always up to some mischief."

"She's a heart of gold, has aunty!" retorted the soldiers. "And your boy's a fine little chap. Mind you send him to school!"

"We'll make shift to do that somehow." The peasant chuckled. "Yes, in times like these, of course he must have some schooling. When he's big enough, we'll send him to fight the Japanese with you."

"We'll have thrown them out long before that!" The soldiers grinned.

Even after they had reached the square and formed ranks, the peasant kept loping over for another brief whispered exchange before darting back to the side. His wife came panting up too and thrust a piping hot egg into a soldier's hand.

"Take it!" she gasped. "Such a flurry as I was in for fear you'd be gone, I don't know whether it's boiled long enough or not. Eat it while it's hot!"

The civil transport chief at the head of the column had just announced that any damage done to villagers' property must be made good.

"Aunty, we smashed that glass bowl of yours," said one soldier. "I'll go and get you money for a new one!"

"The idea!" she retorted softly. "We'll pretend our young rascal broke it."

"Quiet now, folks!" called the operations chief. "When we moved on from any village before, we left without any warning; but that upset people and they started complaining. I'll tell you briefly what the position is, so that you'll be prepared. The enemy's heading this way from Paoting and Hochien, and has moved reinforcements to the Tsangchow-Shihchiachung Railway. The main thing is that the force from Paoting has occupied our three county towns, Poyeh, Lihsien and Ankuo, and means to

strike south of the Shaho. The Shaho and Huto Rivers are dry just now. We know we can repulse the enemy attack, but for the next day or two we've got to give them the slip and keep them on the move. You people do what the district office and self-defence corps say. They've made plans for hiding provisions, keeping you out of harm's way, and helping our men to fight. We'll say good-bye for the time being, folks. In a few days we'll celebrate our victory together."

The troops marched off by two different routes. All the villagers watched from the dike until the last soldier had vanished from sight before going home to make preparations for battle.

Chun-erh's first action on reaching home was to add fresh oil to her lamp so that it burned up brightly. Then from her chest she took her clothes and a length of cloth she was weaving, wrapped them up and hid them in a hole long since dug in readiness. She concealed the loom in a haystack, put her grain in a sack and carried it out to a wheat field. Having finally assured herself that nothing of consequence was left in the room, she sat down on the *kang* to inspect her rifle and hand-grenades, then put some food in her rucksack and went off to assemble her unit.

The troops, in fine fighting spirit, were marching full speed ahead in order to reach the enemy rear before dawn. They poured along the winding paths over the plain like rivers in spate in spring. Once out of the village, they took a different guide, skirting a grove of date trees and the big trench. Mist hung heavy over the fields and the Dipper was so low in the sky it seemed you could reach up and grasp its handle.

Kao Ching-shan's contingent had orders to march from the county town to Five-dragon Temple and prepare to do battle there.

He made his headquarters in his own home — their cottage had a militant history! His father and wife were both out doing jobs in the village when he called a meeting of the district Party committee. The district cadres hoped he would put up a tough fight here to raise the prestige of the anti-Japanese forces, for that would make their own work much easier.

Kao Ching-shan explained that the enemy still had military superiority. Our tactics were to choose the most advantageous time to strike, to build up our strength in the course of the fight-

ing. A series of small and then larger victories would keep up and steadily improve the morale of soldiers and civilians alike. He explained to them:

"We've a saying in these parts: A tiger cats locusts piecemeal. And that's our strategy in fighting the invaders!"

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That night the district Party committee called a meeting of branch Party secretaries and chairmen of resistance committees in all nearby villages to arrange for co-ordinated action in the coming fight. Old Kao Ssu-hai was made head of the scout team, and one of the scouts under him was Chun-erh.

"What d'you want me to do?" she asked as they left the meeting. "Are you sorry I'm in your team?"

"Go home quick and dress up as a shepherdess, then we'll go out together and see how the land lies." He grinned. "You're a smart girl, I know."

Dawn was breaking as the old man and girl left the cottage on the dike. Old Kao, a crate for firewood and grass on his back, had a white wallet tied to the belt round his ragged jacket and was carrying a pistol. Chun-erh, herding her sister's goats with a red-tasselled whip, had two hand-grenades and some unleavened bread in a shabby patchwork pouch at her waist.

Expecting the enemy to approach from the county town, they made as fast as they could for Tsui Family Graveyard, Chun-erh drove the goats along the sunken roadway while the old man walked on the bank, keeping a sharp look-out.

It was early in the fourth month and the wheat was in flower. A chilly wind blew through the fields yet Chun-erh was all of a glow.

"Can you see any movement ahead, uncle?" she asked.

"Not a thing. After last night's meeting there's not a soul about!"

"How good are your eyes?" demanded Chun-erh, smiling. "Don't let me walk smack into the enemy, will you?"

"If you mistrust my eyesight, go and get me some glasses!" retorted the old man in a huff. "Young people have no call to laugh at us greybeards!"

Presently he stopped at Tsui Family Graveyard, saying:

"We'll make this our observation post. Up with your goats!"

The sunken way lay ten feet or more below ground level, so that not even mountain goats could climb out. Chun-erh had to lift each one up in turn to the old man, who pulled them up by their horns. Shaking off the dust on their coats, the goats rushed into the graveyard to crop the grass.

Then Old Kao helped Chun-erh up.

This was a sizable graveyard. Two stone tigers by the roadside, half buried in the earth, had their mouths smeared with axle-grease and mud. There were some stone horses half covered by earth too. The goats jumped skittishly on and off their backs, for it was nearly a year now since they had last enjoyed being among rocks and hills.

The lush grass in the graveyard grew as high as Chun-erh's waist and rows of tall willows were rustling although the wind had dropped. A pair of eagles perched on the grave flew slowly off as the two of them approached. Cracking her whip, Chun-erh drove the goats deep into the herbage.

Kao Ssu-hai set down his crate at the side of the road and started cutting grass, straightening up from time to time to scan the highway.

Chun-erh was rather on edge. When a breeze ruffled the grass, she pricked up her ears. She heard a thudding on a big poplar near by and, looking up, saw a woodpecker spread its pied wings and fly away. Slipping off her shoes, she shinned up the tree and sat on a fork commanding a good view. The grenades from her pouch she stuck into the woodpecker's nest. . . .

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. . . Chun-erh strained her eyes towards the town. Apart from the sand and straw swirled across the road into the wheat fields by the wind, there was not so much as a bird in sight. The villages around looked completely deserted. No smoke was rising from a single cottage.

Her eyes on the road, Chun-erh mused: If not for the enemy, this highway would be thronged with carts hauling dung and

earth, carters shouting at their horses and cracking their whips, children scampering off to cut grass or herd goats. On a fine day like this, there'd probably be women dressed in their best on their way to a temple fair, traders with money and baggage whose wives would see them all the way to the highway. And a common sight, too, was colourful bridal sedan-chairs accompanied by old musicians blowing gay, stirring tunes on their flutes.

None of this would be left, she thought, if the enemy were to occupy our land.

Suddenly Chun-erh caught sight of two Japanese trucks. This was her first glimpse of these strange machines filled with enemy soldiers lurching so savagely over her native soil.

The trucks were driving beside the sunken road through the flowering wheat, crushing the dense plants and leaving a long, cruel trail behind them.

Chun-erh's heart missed a beat, she bit her lips and clung tightly to the tree. The enemy trucks and horses seemed to be lumbering and trampling over her heart. . . .

"The Japanese soldiers are coming, uncle!" she called. "What shall we do?"

"Keep cool!" Kao Ssu-hai tucked his pistol under his girdle and took off his shoes. Then he climbed up the slippery poplar as nimbly as a monkey, hand over hand, as if walking on the highway.

"There's no time to get word to our people." Chun-erh was worried. "Shall we throw a hand-grenade to warn the village?"

"Wait while I count them." Kao leaned out, clinging with one hand to the tree. "There aren't too many of them. We'll let them pass."

"What if they go into the village and start burning houses?"

"Our troops are ready for them. We'll wait until they're in the bag before we pull the strings!"

Now the Japanese trucks were lurching past the graveyard, escorted by several dozen horsemen on either side. The invaders were dust-stained and sweating. Each step they took was one step nearer to hell. Old Kao and Chun-erh kept well out of sight. Not until the enemy was half way across the river flats did the old man fire three shots into the air.



There was no cover on the gleaming white sand and the Japanese in the sunlight looked like fish laid out on a high bank to dry. Our troops moved swiftly into action from the sunken roads all around.

The enemy contingent was just a scouting party. Kao Ching-shan directed one of his battalions to wipe it out on the spot.

The fight took place just outside Five-dragon Temple, and the fighters were all sons of peasants. The whole village gathered behind the dike to cheer them. As our men darted past them, the old folk whispered messages of encouragement and advice.

The women's catering team, headed by Chiu-fen, stood in two rows facing each other behind the dike like the stage attendants

in a theatre. One row held eggs wrapped in pancakes, the other jugs of drinking water. But the fighters had no time to eat, the women had to wait till the action was over.

Our forces had to occupy the high ridge planted with willows.

This task was carried out by Mang-chung's platoon, who charged across the sand with a light machine-gun.

The enemy on the flats started milling about wildly. One truck overturned, while the other broke through our cordon and hurtled back towards Tsui Family Graveyard. But Chun-erh blew it up with her two hand-grenades.

Then all the villagers rushed out to help clean up the battlefield, while the soldiers, after a hasty meal in the village, marched off again to the north.

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To the north, however, things were not going so smoothly. Kao Pa had orders to station his regiment in the vicinity of Stone Buddha Fair to intercept the enemy, but to withdraw quickly if the Japanese force proved too strong. For some time now Kao Pa had been jealous of the other regimental commanders. It bored and irritated him when Kao Ching-shan talked about politics or policy. To his mind, a soldier proved himself in battle and he was waiting for a chance to show the others what a good fighter he was.

Because it was lively there and the food was good, he had taken up his position with one battalion on the main road of Stone Buddha Fair. At noon, news of the victory of a brother battalion at Five-dragon Temple made him all the more eager to prove his mettle. The Japanese were approaching now from Ankuo by the side of the road which had been destroyed, taking no precautions against any Chinese troops there might be in the neighbourhood. This was because they had come out in force, but Kao Pa interpreted it as a sign of bad judgment. Swearing angrily at them for this mark of contempt, he could hardly be restrained from leaping on to a roof to shout defiance. He made two of his company commanders post men on the roof tops and as soon as the enemy came within range he gave away their position by opening fire.

Kao Pa's troops had hitherto fought several defensive actions on the roof tops. In fact, in Sulu County they had held a town for nearly a month that way. But that was in the period of general confusion when rival bands were fighting among themselves. The Japanese, only too pleased to discover a target, speedily set about surrounding our troops. Soon their big guns were reinforced by planes, many houses were destroyed by shells and bombs, and fires broke out all over the little town. Kao Pa's men could not stand up to such an onslaught. They cursed their commander for a reckless fool and had no faith in his orders. Some scurried off with the villagers to the fields. And the local people saw with dismay that, unable to beat off the attack, Kao Pa's soldiers were retreating in disorder, leaving the civilians to their fate, even knocking down women and children in their head-long flight. Now the Japanese had reached the north street of Stone Buddha Fair. The whole village would soon be surrounded, with no escape for soldiers or civilians.

Kao Ching-chan, as the chief commander, had to save the situation. He led a force under cover to the enemy's flank and sent a battalion to cut the Japanese cordon.

Mang-chung and his platoon joined in this action. He was still buoyed up by the glorious success of their last operation, which had been well directed. The sight of terrified women and children, their faces streaked with mud and sweat, went to his heart and he felt it his duty to protect them.

Having marshalled his men in the swamps, he led them at a run down the sunken way and across the dike. They were to pass some fields and a graveyard and then skirt the bank of the Chulung to occupy the big stone bridge at the south end of Stone Buddha Fair.

The spring wheat was growing well, but was not high enough to cover their advance completely. The Japanese converging on the bridge spotted them and were thrown into momentary confusion. Mang-chung seized this chance to dash, head down, behind a water-wheel and then charge through the graveyard.

An enemy tank had just passed this way, uprooting elm trees with trunks the size of bowls and luxuriant foliage. One of the ancestral grave mounds had been ploughed up. Crouching behind

the stone tablet of the grave, Mang-chung opened fire on the enemy as he waited for his comrades to catch up.

Before them lay the Chulung River, its banks so overgrown with reeds and grass that the water was hidden from sight. Heavy enemy fire forced Mang-chung and his men to advance on hands and knees. They fired as they went, taking advantage of every tree, bush and ditch that could serve as cover. It seemed to them as if everything on their great country's soil, even the sun which was sinking now in the west and the turgid river water, was closely bound up with their lives and their combat mission.

They hugged the ground, their hearts pounding, and felt the earth tremble beneath them. The knowledge that their motherland was in deadly danger lent her children strength. In this hour of humiliation, she had the right to urge her bravest sons to advance!

In a last swift dash they gained the river bank and hurled their hand-grenades at the enemy. By capturing the bridge they succeeded in cutting the Japanese force into two. But Mang-chung had been wounded.

As dusk fell, artillery fire raked the plain. Not a village but was drawn into the turmoil of war. The young and able-bodied offered their services as guides, stretcher-bearers or porters. The villages along the highway set up communication posts and dimmed red lanterns hung in the streets that night. The moment they were lifted on to stretchers, casualties felt they had reached home, for the bearers would rather bruise or gash their own feet than jolt a wounded soldier, and they kept their charges well covered against the evening dew and the cold night air.

Women working in shifts waited at the ends of the streets to receive the stretchers and carry them in to the post, where warm drinking water was ready and boiled eggs.

All the way, in every village they passed, the soldiers heard the same words of encouragement. When a man aroused by a soft voice raised his head and was offered a raw egg or noodles wrapped round chopsticks, he felt himself back with his own sisters or mother.

Mang-chung, wounded in the leg, was entrusted by Kao Ching-shan to the stretcher team headed by Kao Ssu-hai, who carried the lad to Chun-erh's cottage in Tzuwuchen.

Chun-erh, shouldering two rifles, followed the stretcher as the sun dipped behind the hills and a wind sprang up in the fields. Worried as she was about her sweetheart's wound, her heart was singing too.

She ran on ahead presently to clean up her room and spread a thick quilt on the *kang*. When she had settled Mang-chung comfortably and seen the stretcher-bearers off, she went to find the doctor.

Tzuwuchen had a western-style doctor named Shen, an outsider who had married one of the village girls and opened a small pharmacy in his father-in-law's house by the well in the main street. Previously a dispenser in a Paoting hospital, he was naturally not a skilled physician, but he always did his best for patients. Living with his mother-in-law, he took pains to be on good terms with all the villagers. If anyone was ill they had only to send a child to fetch him and he would go without a murmur, at no matter what time of the day or night. So the doctor was a general favourite, and at New Year or other festivals he was always invited to a number of feasts.

Chun-erh found him just back from a visit to another village. He was unstrapping his medicine case from his cart in the yard, while his young wife sat by the stove plying the bellows to cook supper. At Chun-erh's approach, Mrs. Shen sprang up, patting the dust from her clothes, and went to greet her.

"Come inside and sit down, sister. So you won a victory! Let me cook you something good to celebrate."

"Thanks, but I can't wait," said Chun-erh with a laugh. "I'm here to ask Dr. Shen if he'll come over."

"Who're you calling doctor?" The young woman giggled. "He may have a beard of sorts, but by country reckoning he's your brother-in-law, so why not call him by his name? You live all on your own — who's ill?"

"A platoon leader from the army. My brother-in-law asked me to look after him because I'm close to your house, with a doctor handy."

"You mean Mang-chung? Hurry along then!" she ordered her husband, twinkling. "Stop unstrapping your kit. Go on and see this patient. I'll have supper ready for you when you come back."

The doctor fastened his case in place again and pushed his cart towards the gate.

"Don't treat us as strangers now, sister!" called Mrs. Shen from the steps. "Don't you go boiling water or cooking a meal for him!"

"Right you are!" responded Chun-erh.

Home again, Chun-erh trod softly, and the doctor left his cart quietly under the window before following her inside.

"He must be asleep," whispered Chun-erh, lighting her small oil lamp and going over to look. But Mang-chung's eyes were wide open.

"So you're awake. Does it hurt?" she asked. "I've brought the doctor to see you."

"Well, let's have a look." Shen gently raised the quilt and sat on the edge of the *kang* to examine the wound. "Hold that lamp closer, will you, Chun-erh?"

The girl leaned forward with the lamp in one hand but hastily averted her eyes at the sight of the clotted blood on Mang-chung's leg, and gulped hard to hold back her tears.

When the doctor had cleaned and dressed the wound, she brought out her newly spun cloth from its hiding place and tore off a strip as a bandage.

When Chun-erh saw the doctor home, she approached his mother-in-law, a woman of fifty whose husband had gone to the northeast the same year as Chun-erh's father, and asked her to keep her company.

The elder woman readily agreed, for she always gave unstinted help to those in trouble. She brought over her quilt that night and, pointing to the *kang*, asked in a whisper:

"Has he eaten anything?"

"Not yet," said Chun-erh. "Everything's so topsyturvy with the fighting, I've nothing good to give him."

"I've brought a packet of noodles and three eggs." She produced these from her quilt. "Boil them for him!"

When the meal was ready, Chun-erh took it to Mang-chung on the *kang*.

"You've been on the go all day, lass, you lie down too," said the elder woman from the *kang*. "I'll keep an eye on him for the first half of the night."

Chun-erh moved the lamp to the window sill and lay down behind her neighbour. But although she closed her eyes tight she could not sleep. After turning over several times she suggested:

"Suppose we change over, aunty? Let me take the first watch!"

"There's no need for that. I may be old, but I've plenty of energy, I can go without sleep for three or four nights and not feel it. You shut your eyes now. Young people need their rest."

"I can't sleep." Chun-erh sat up.

"Well, then, let's have a little chat."

"Wouldn't that disturb him?" Chun-erh pointed to Mang-chung. "Why keep two people up? You sleep first, aunty!"

"Well, if that's the way you want it. But as soon as you start nodding, mind you call me!"

The elder woman stretched out, closed her eyes and was soon snoring. She dreamed that Mang-chung's wound had healed, he had shouldered his rifle and was saying to her:

"Aunty, I'll never forget what you've done for me. You made sure I wasn't too hot or too cold, you gave me food and water, sat up all night by my bed, and didn't even mind emptying my dirty slops. From now on, I'm going to be like a son to you!"

"Don't you worry about that," she told him. "Who are you fighting for anyway if not for me? Just tell me where you're off to now and when you'll be back."

"I'm going to the northeast," he replied with a smile. "I shall fight all the way to the Yalu River till all the Japanese invaders are wiped out!"

"Wait a bit then!" she cried eagerly. "Wait till I've changed my shoes. I'm coming with you!"

"It's a long, long way across mountains and rivers, aunty. Why should you go?"

"I want to find my old man! When he left home I wore a red flower in my hair. Now my hair is white but still he isn't back. I'm going to tell him: Now that we've got the Party to lead us

here and the Eighth Route Army to fight for us, all the poor have found a way out. Young men don't have to leave their wives and children in the lurch any more and go to the northeast. Come home and we can have a good life together."

"Come along, then, aunty!" Mang-chung took her arm and they followed the column of troops. A long way they travelled, across countless rivers, through the pass and across vast forests. At dusk one day, in a landlord's outhouse, they found her husband.

Tears started running down her cheeks.

"I wonder if our troops have found billets for the night!" said Mang-chung, turning over.

"Are you awake or talking in your sleep?" Chun-erh chuckled.

"I'm awake."

"Aunty keeps talking in her sleep."

"She's had a hard life," said Mang-chung. "Her husband worked as a hired hand like me when he was a boy, and at last he was forced to trek to the northeast. We were born in much better times than their generation."

"My dad's in the northeast too. Don't you forget him!"



"How could I forget him? I'm going to fight my hardest till we've fought our way up to liberate the people there. We'll fetch back all the folk from these parts who've been scattered east and west because times were hard or they were hounded by the landlords and gentry! We'll give them land to till, houses to live in!"

"Is that your ideal?" asked Chun-erh, dimpling.

"The first one."

"And the second?"

"The second's too big to put into a few words. The Party will help me to carry it out. I want to keep in the vanguard all my life, and never fall out of the ranks."

"Are you a Party member?" Chun-erh leaned forward eagerly.

"H'm. Do you have an ideal too?"

"Of course I do!" She straightened up. "Don't you look down on me!"

"Let's hear it then."

"Wait while I collect my ideas." Chun-erh threw back her head. "My sister says the village Party branch is going to admit me as a member. My ideal is to be a good Communist!"

She grasped Mang-chung's fevered hand as she spoke, and gently stroked his hair.

Moonlight illumined the *kang* as the enthusiasm and hopes of the three of them pervaded the little room, usually so quiet.

The next morning Chun-erh's neighbour went home to have breakfast. The girl carried the hen coop into the yard, threw the hens a handful of grain and told them softly:

"Have a good feed and go out to play. Mind you don't squawk even when you lay an egg. Don't disturb him with your noise! Do you hear?"

The hens seemed to be nodding assent as they lost no time in pecking for the grain.

She cut out cloth soles the same size as Mang-chung's old shoes and sat down in the courtyard. A magpie alighted in the yard with a cry, but she quietly shooed it away. Then along came a lively girl with a bundle of washing and squatted down by the flat grey stone in front of Chun-erh's eastern room to beat the clothes. Chun-erh hastily dropped her sewing and hurried over.

"Go somewhere else to wash, sister. I've a patient in the house."

"Fancy me forgetting that overnight! What a scatter-brain I am! Is he any better?"

"He's better. Just now he's sleeping."

"When he wakes, tell him I asked after him." The girl rolled up her clothes and went off. At the threshold she turned to ask softly:

"Who are the shoes for, sister?"

"For the wounded soldier. He can wear them when he's well enough to join his unit again. Don't you want to see the invaders driven out as soon as possible?"

"What d'you think?" The girl smacked her lips. "My, aren't you pleased with yourself!"

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At dawn, Chun-erh and her friends were excited to hear that the troops they had come to welcome were the 120th Division led by General Ho Lung, a well-nigh legendary division which they longed to meet.

Better still, the division headquarters was to be in Chun-erh's own village, Tzuwuchen. General Ho Lung received them in the home of a poor peasant at the east end of the village. And at this first encounter Chun-erh devoured him with her eyes, for to her he personified the splendid Red Army tradition and the heroic fighting men who had won such miraculous victories.

They also met the chief of staff Chou Shih-ti, who, standing by a large military map on the wall, explained to them in some detail our troops' disposition behind the enemy lines. For all their lack of military experience, they realized that the presence of this crack division heralded a fresh and fierce struggle in that area. Chou Shih-ti also told them that since the enemy was apparently aware of our main force's arrival, and the situation was changing from hour to hour, they had better not leave headquarters but form a civil transport team and move away with the troops. That same evening, however, he calmly called a meeting to exchange experience and was particularly eager to learn from them something about the customs and people of central Hopei.

This meeting with veterans of the Red Army made this a red-letter day for Chun-erh, who was sure that her village too must be glorying in the opportunity to entertain such fine revolutionary commanders.

Some villagers asked Chun-erh on the sly who the high commander was. Since this was a military secret, she simply told them with a smile that he was a brilliant general who had never been defeated. None of them knew who this general was, but they fully understood that this was a veteran Eighth Route Army contingent.

Then started a gruelling march. It was Chun-erh's first experience of such marching. They set off each day at dusk and made camp the next morning. The girls, at the rear of one column, found it hard to keep up with the men. The troops swept along like a dragon rushing north, south, east and west, so that sometimes even Chun-erh and the local people lost all sense of direction and could only follow blindly. Not until the next morning, ascertaining the name of the village, did they realize that they had covered well over a hundred *li*.

Day after day they marched. And Chun-erh, footsore and weary, was afraid for the first few nights that she might drop behind. Later, she was able to take it in her stride. Falling in at dusk in fine trim, she found no difficulty in keeping rank. Only towards dawn did she begin to nod and dream as she trudged along.

The sun would be rising as they reached their destination and sat down in the village square, reluctant to move. But that was precisely when the girls' work began. The local people could not understand the dialect of many of the soldiers, whose customs often differed too. Chun-erh helped the quarter-master to arrange billets, borrow what was needed, and procure grain and fodder. She had to explain matters to the country folk. Not till the men had found lodgings and the cooks had put on the rice, was there any rest for her.

The enemy was converging on this base from east and west, having mobilized a mighty force to pin down the 120th Division.

But the 120th Division had no intention of fighting a pitched battle. It simply slipped through the gaps in the enemy lines to attack his weak points, circling the base and fighting as it went.

Moreover, in addition to campaigning, this division played an important political role and exercised a powerful attraction. Upon its arrival in the central Hopei plain, it comprised two regiments only; but in the course of this campaign it more than doubled in strength.

Chun-erh covered the whole central Hopei plain with the troops. In the region of the Peiping-Hankow Railway, villages clustered close together and there were water-wheels in many courtyards. The villages of Tingsien were surrounded by little runnels of clear water, and you could reach down to catch the fish in hiding below the rushes. The Tientsin-Pukow line ran through a more sparsely populated area, where the peasants lived in scattered cottages built of tamped earth. Clumps of bulrushes grew in the marshes outside their farms, and kites circled overhead.

Chun-erh crossed rivers of very different kinds. Marching with the troops one night through a market-town bright with lights, she crossed the wooden bridge over the Tzuya. Further east, they skirted the canal built for shipping tribute rice, both its banks covered with plump cabbages. More than once they forded the clear, shallow Shaho and went as far west as the railway almost at the foot of the mountains before circling northeast again to camp on the misty banks of the Taching. Times past counting she picked her way gingerly over a swaying pontoon-bridge across the swift-flowing river, when her silhouette was reflected beside the moon and stars in the jade-green water. On other occasions she stood waiting quietly on the shore for one of the ferry-boats which were shuttling to and fro.

Across your broad, rich acres, dear motherland, flow the unruly Tangho and untamed Huto. These rivers are your swiftly-coursing blood, your racing pulse, emblems of your fervent passion, the sons you have brought forth. Your daughters are the quiet-flowing Tzuho and the translucent Liuli. They flow gently, almost noiselessly through soft meadows, lavishing all their care on the crops on either side, nurturing the region to ensure a good harvest. Who knows the whole tale of their loving kindness to men as they sway the dense reeds and bear small boats through the night? The sight of them brings home to us your beauty, your potential greatness and wealth.

Chun-erh passed through "golden" Sulu and "silver" Lih sien, two fine cotton-growing regions. She saw Shengfang, known as a smaller Soochow and famed for its lotus, water-chestnuts, fish and rice. The peasants brought out their new autumn rice for the troops.

While on the march, she heard folk songs in every district and learned how rich our country is in music, with magic flutes able to convey the whole range of emotions. All she had heard before were gay wedding tunes or the sad songs of parting, but now the melodies were stirring and proud, inspired by the passionate resolve to defend our homeland.

At dawn Chun-erh saw in the distance the old pagoda of Tsinghsien, the Great Buddha of Chengting, the undulating twelve-arched bridge across the marshlands.

She saw the flickering lights of great cities, and heard the groans of those living there in despair.

Dear land of ours! Troops who won through the countless perils of the Long March, and showed their might by smashing so many "mopping-up" campaigns, are marching swiftly and tirelessly over your fertile soil.

Late at night Chun-erh often caught glimpses of the commanders. Sometimes they alighted from their horses outside a village and studied the map by the light of a dimmed lamp before issuing fresh instructions. When they rode in the middle of the column, Chun-erh tried to guess how many soldiers there were before and behind them. Sometimes they drew to one side to let the troops pass, calling words of encouragement to each in turn. When the army made camp and the rank and file were asleep, the officers met to study the enemy position and draw up their plan of action.

On and on they marched, changing course and covering vast distances. Every night as they passed through village after village, Chun-erh heard the fitful barking of dogs, the squawking of hens, or women working through the night to cure leather, plait crates and baskets, or make copper sieves, according to what the locality produced.

They found the militia assembled wherever they passed, and the village cadres hard at work late in the night. Young and old in the base area came to their doors to give the troops a warm

welcome, for they placed their trust in victory in the people's own regular army.

She heard hammers clang on anvils, and in a secluded lane saw sparks from a blazing furnace spatter the big black bellows. In the light of the flames, blacksmiths from southern Hopei and Shantung, in tattered oilskin aprons, were making the peasants shovels and picks to destroy the road before the enemy's arrival, making rifles and mines for them too. Even on nights of steady rain, the fires in those furnaces did not go out, nor did the hammers fall silent.

Beloved country, whose children are legion, what sacrifices you have made in the war! Holding your honour dear, you will not brook the least insult but have arisen now, terrible in your fury!

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When conditions were ripe, the 120th Division used one battalion to decoy the enemy's main force into an impasse, then surrounded them and launched a fierce annihilative campaign. Never had the Japanese invaders met with such strong opposition. Not even poison gas, resorted to in desperation, could save them from destruction.

As a result of this battle, although the enemy still occupied some of our county towns, the position in the central Hopei plain was stabilized and the people gained in confidence. The local troops had learned enough in the course of this arduous campaign to adapt themselves little by little to new circumstances, enlarge their forces and defend the resistance bases. Soon after this, the 120th Division received orders to take to the mountains.

Chun-erh was drafted back to her district to work. When she went to the regional office for fresh instructions she hoped to see Mang-chung again, but he was not there. She returned alone to her county.

This year the whole winter and the lunar New Year, so much enjoyed by young people, had been passed in fighting. Now spring was back again and, apart from the shabby padded army jacket over Chun-erh's shoulders, few traces of winter could be found in the fields. Rich green wheat was shooting up, flocks

of wild-geese searched for food and passed the night in the wheat fields, leaving prints like clustered bamboo leaves on the sand. A small peach tree was already in bloom, sheltered under a tall willow beside a big well. Water-wheels turned by donkeys and horses were creaking in all the fields around, while girls opening and closing irrigation ditches leaned on their spades in every conceivable posture, and yellow orioles trilled as they flitted in search of elm seeds. Bare-bottomed children turned somersaults on the sand dunes, and girls felt hot even in thin summer clothes. In the respites between battles, the people of the base went about their daily tasks as usual, and at dawn or dusk lovers still sought each other out by the stacks of grain or the ridges of the wheat fields.

That morning Chun-erh walked to Wujen Bridge, a well-known market-town twenty-five *li* south of Ankuo. While still some distance from the north gate, she could hear the noisy tumult of the market. The shouts of grain merchants weighing rice could be distinguished from the disputes over horses' speed and haggling over prices in the cattle market. Salesmen and customers alike seemed engaged in a ruthless struggle rather than met to do business. A tactless word from a customer, who had already agreed to the price, might make a merchant cling to his sack of grain and refuse to sell after all; or a cattle dealer might seize a calf by the horns and drag it away from the would-be purchaser.

After the enemy occupation of some county towns, the authorities in the bases encouraged merchants and tradesfolk to come to the market-towns. So the anti-Japanese markets grew larger and larger, and the fair at Wujen Bridge on the fourth and ninth days of the lunar calendar was so tightly packed that it was hard to squeeze your way through. Stalls of goods of every description stretched right down to the dikes.

The most popular Ankuo eating houses and snack bars had become mobile too and moved here with the peasants on market days to do business. On the side of the south dike, a beancurd stall under a mat awning was doing a brisk trade. This shop had moved from the South Gate of Ankuo, where it had been opened by a famine refugee from Shantung, who, arriving with no more than two shabby crates, had succeeded in making money and settling down here. Now the old man was dead and his sons

had joined the army; it was his wife who managed the business, while her daughters and daughters-in-law did the cooking and waiting. They were all good-looking girls. The eldest daughter, who served beancurd under the awning on market days, had neatly combed luxuriant black hair and wore a spotless white apron over her new blue cotton trousers and tunic. She bent over the stove as she cooked, stealing frequent glances from big, limpid black eyes at all the passers-by.

Chun-erh stepped in here and sat down. She was hungry but could only afford a bowl of beancurd and cabbage. The cook studied her eagerly as she filled a bowl and gave it to her small sister to carry over.

The neatly dressed little girl held the blue, flower-patterned bowl carefully in both hands, for it was filled to the brim and there were rich globules of fat and beancurd floating on the soup. She set it down with great care, only to spill some of the soup by bumping into the table.

"There you are, comrade! My sister specially added some pork stock for you," she confided softly, smiling.

"Why should I get such special treatment?" asked Chun-erh, as she lowered her head to taste the soup.

"Why?" The little girl squatted beside her to explain. "We saw you coming along the dike. My sister said to me, 'There's a woman comrade from the Eighth Route Army that's just won another battle. Wouldn't it be nice if she stopped here for a snack?'"

"How pretty your sister is," remarked Chun-erh. "Is she married?"

"Oh, yes. I've two little nephews. The Japanese burned our house by the South Gate, so we had to move to this dike here."

She ran off then in answer to her sister's call, coming back with a dish of freshly made sesame cakes.

"Why don't you try one of these?" she asked.

Chun-erh's only reply was a smile.

"I know you haven't much money." The child picked up a cake and slipped it into Chun-erh's bowl, making another splash. "That's on the house — a present from my sister and me!"

As Chun-erh left this likable family and hurried down the dike, her step was gayer and lighter than before.

Ahead of her rumbled an ox-cart, drawn by a short, sturdy girl. She was wearing a baggy, faded red coat and trousers rolled up to her calves.

Some enormous round cabbages were rolling about in the cart. There were fine big turnips too, which kept threatening to pitch off the back. The girl turned and, catching sight of Chun-erh, called:

"Here, comrade! Come and have a ride!"

Chun-erh wondered if the crisp sweetness of her voice came from eating fresh vegetables.

"I don't mind walking," she answered with a smile.

"I can't keep the cart from jolting on my own," said the girl. "It'll be much steadier if there are two of us."

Chun-erh got up and sat beside her on the front shaft. The brown bullock pulling the cart was plump and glossy with short, curved horns. He flicked his tail indignantly at this increase in his load, but soon steadied down again.

The girl tucked her red-wood whip under her legs, picked up a knife and started carving a turnip. Presently she had made a charming flower basket.

Baskets like these are usually made as gifts for the lunar New Year. Girls sow wheat inside and hang them from the beams, so that the wheat sprouts just as the turnip flowers. For New Year they sometimes stick a candle inside, making a gay little lantern. But this year all that had been spoiled by the Japanese invaders.

"Which village are you from, little sister?" asked Chun-erh.

"It's just over the river," said the girl, pointing ahead.

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Perched on the cart, Chun-erh reflected how good people were to her, not only today but ever since she'd joined the revolution. Surely it wasn't just because they liked her face?

Their cart soon reached the suspension bridge over the Shaho. Thanks to the fair, the approach was crowded with carts waiting to cross, and the old toll-keeper standing at the door of his hut was calling out greetings to carters whom he knew and collecting toll from those from far away. The ice in the river had melted

and the current was swift. Both sides of the bridge were piled with sandbags and stone rollers had been propped up against the piers to hold the superstructure steady, but each time a heavy cart trundled on to the bridge it started swaying and creaking. Telephone wires for army use were attached to tall cedar trees at either end of the bridge, and through these the wind from the river set up a shrill whining.

Carters were disputing over the order of crossing when a soldier in full battle equipment appeared, his face streaked with mud and sweat, a small signal flag in one hand. He bounded up the dike and threw back his head like a tiger or panther mounting a peak at dawn to gaze down below. The contingent behind him was advancing in strict order along the dike. Their firm yet elastic tread made it seem as if the very hills were marching, as if the rushing waves had speeded up.

The man at the head strode up to the bridge and said something to the toll-keeper, who shouted to the carters:

"Move back there, fellows! Let these comrades cross first!"

The cart Chun-erh was on was behind a good many others, which obstructed her view of the troops. And since the girl driving the cart was in no great hurry, because her home lay just across the river, she sat there stripping the spoiled leaves off some cabbages and feeding them to her bullock.

On a sudden impulse, Chun-erh stood up on the shaft to look at the troops. Clutching their rifles and ammunition tight, they were crossing the bridge at a run, directed by their commander from a pile of sandbags. The moment Chun-erh saw who he was, she jumped off the cart.

"I'm crossing on foot, sister," she cried. "I can't wait."

Before the girl could reply, Chun-erh was darting through the carts and horses to the bridge and calling:

"Mang-chung! Mang-chung!"

The commander turned.

"We've been drafted to the mountains," he told her in a low voice. "I never expected to see you before we left!"

"I went to the district government for news of you," she said, panting. "They told me your troops had been reorganized."

"After the last campaign I was promoted to the rank of instructor," said Mang-chung. "We're organized now just like a regular



army. There's a job waiting for us up there in the west. Are you on your way home? Tell them in the village that I've gone."

All his men as they passed stared curiously or winked to see him talking to Chun-erh. The girl's cheeks burned, but Mang-chung paid no attention.

"Can't I go to the mountains too?" asked Chun-erh eagerly.

"You'll have to ask your higher command! We may be coming back." With a last look into her eyes, Mang-chung turned and raced to the front of his troops again. Chun-erh crossed at one side of the bridge, clambering over sandbags and millet stalks

that threatened to trip her up. Once on the south bank of the river, the soldiers headed west. By now the sun was veiled by evening clouds.

Chun-erh stood on the bank staring after the swift-moving column. The river swirled down from the west, buffeted the bridge and swept on. A large ferry-boat, having completed a trip downstream, was battling its way up against the current and straining to negotiate the bridge. In her distress she put herself in its place and felt she too was grappling with a fierce current.

Mang-chung had not looked back. Only the soldier at the rear of the column, whom Chun-erh belatedly recognized as Old Wen, kept turning to wave her back, but whether in fun or in earnest she could not tell.

The carts were crossing in turn now. Once over this tricky stretch, men and horses brightened up and made briskly off with no thought to spare for Chun-erh. Only the girl in the bullock cart swung her legs from the shaft and teased:

"So you couldn't wait, eh! It'll soon be dark yet you're still standing there. You can't fool me! Who was that talking to you just now?"

"A comrade I know." Tears stood in Chun-erh's eyes.

"Come home with me." The girl tactfully pulled up. "You needn't go on tonight. I'll be glad of your company."

But Chun-erh said she must hurry home and walked on alone towards the southeast. The sun just before setting was a glorious red, but when next she turned to look west it had disappeared completely behind the mountains. "If Mang-chung and his men make good time," she thought, "they'll reach the mountains tonight. They won't cross the Peiping-Hankow Railway without a skirmish." It seemed to her they were drawing apart all too fast.

Her steps began to drag, her heart yearned towards the west. The road was almost deserted, the fields and villages hidden in smoke and mist. The hazards of war made her reflect with a pang that she ought to lose no time in clarifying the relation between herself and Mang-chung.

With the rest of the troops, Mang-chung and Old Wen struck into the mountains, making for the northwest. The climb was a stiff one, as steep as a ladder to heaven. When the men looked back, their old camp in the plain seemed to have sunk to the bottom of a bowl.

In accordance with the regular practice, Mang-chung was marching at the rear of his company. Just in front of him, as it happened, was Old Wen, now second in command of the third platoon. Old Wen always had plenty to say for himself and liked to crack jokes when the other men were tired. Although he constantly reminded himself that they had left One-eyed Tien's stable, Mang-chung was his superior officer, and army discipline must be upheld, he saw no reason to forget that they had been work-mates as close to each other as brothers, for that relationship had not changed today. So he never missed a chance for a good yarn with Mang-chung. He could see quite clearly how much his friend had changed, developing in a direction totally different from the one Old Wen would formerly have predicted. The lad seemed older and graver than his years, and Old Wen understood that this was due to the heavy responsibilities he had taken up while little more than a boy. It was rare now to see a mischievous smile on his face or catch him indulging in horse-play.

Old Wen remembered a day when they were reaping one of One-eyed Tien's fields. It was still very hot, that field was some distance from the house, and they had taken along an old pewter jug of water, mainly to whet their sickles but also to quench their thirst. Mang-chung put all his energy into reaping, keeping close at Old Wen's heels, not falling a pace behind. Old Wen reflected grumpily that if he were not a skilled hand the boy would have outstripped him. Old Chang, who was leading the way, turned back and called:

"Easy there, Mang-chung! What's the hurry, you young fool?"

"He wants to take over my rice-bowl!" Old Wen gave a sarcastic laugh. "Use your head, kid. You can work yourself to death for One-eyed Tien, but he won't buy you so much as a willow coffin!"

The next moment he felt he had spoken too harshly, so cresfallen and deflated did Mang-chung look. The lad obviously had

very little idea of what being a hired hand meant or of the hard times ahead. He slouched off to the end of the field to whet his sickle.

He did not come back for some time, and Old Wen found him emptying their jug of water into a field mouse's hole. He was lying on his stomach, one ear to the ground, as if to catch the sound of the field-mice scurrying to escape from this flood.

Old Chang's sickle needed sharpening too, and Old Wen was parched. But Mang-chung had emptied all their water away.

"You useless fool!" swore Old Wen. "That hole's much too deep for ten jugs of water to fill. How are we to get through our work, I'd like to know, with no water to whet the sickles!"

His eyes on the hole, Mang-chung paid no attention, clutching his sickle in readiness for the field-mice to dart out. But the water drained away and no field-mice appeared. Only a bloated mole-cricket crawled fearfully out. Mang-chung whacked it with his sickle and cried with a laugh:

"This mole-cricket is the living image of One-eyed Tien! Why should we wear ourselves out for a creature like that?"

At that Old Chang and Old Wen had to laugh. . . .

The troops toiled up and up. When those in front halted to brush the sweat out of their eyes, it splattered the faces of men behind or fell on the rocky path. There was not a breath of wind in that ravine. The small patch of sky overhead was as blue as freshly dyed cloth.

"How high are we going?" demanded Old Wen. "We'll soon have reached the Southern Heavenly Gate."

Mang-chung made no reply, his eyes strained ahead. He was watching to see if any of his men looked fagged out, in need of a rest.

"Instructor!" tried Old Wen again, changing the subject. "Which is hotter in mid-summer, hoeing the sorghum or marching?"

"They're both equally hot," said Mang-chung. "But there's a big difference."

"What big difference, instructor? A fellow sweats just the same."

"You sweat just the same. But we sweated before so that One-eyed Tien's family could have a soft life. Now we're sweating to liberate the whole Chinese nation."

"That's true," said Old Wen. "We must look at everything from the point of view of resisting Japanese imperialism. But

tell me this, instructor: Do you count swine like One-eyed Tien in, when you talk about the liberation of the nation?"

"Anyone who resists Japan is counted in. One-eyed Tien is against resisting Japan, so of course he's out."

"Yes, leave him out! What's the use of our fighting Japan all this time if he cashes in on it. Right?"

"That's right. And because the war of resistance has liberated us, we must study hard and do our best to make progress."

Old Wen asked no more questions. There was no sign ahead that a halt was to be called, so they went on climbing. But when Old Wen was not talking he had to amuse himself some other way. He started kicking stones over the cliff and listening to the clatter they made far below.

"Don't raise such a din!" said Mang-chung. "What if there are people or goats down below?"

"On the north side of a mountain like this? I bet you there's nobody here but us," said Old Wen. "This is really what you call the back of beyond."

"You find people everywhere," protested Mang-chung. "When folk are hard pressed, they can't pick and choose where they'll live."

"Maybe," conceded Old Wen. "But I bet we're the only ones from outside to come this way. Only men tired of living would venture up here to be eaten by the wolves."

"How can you be so sure?" Mang-chung had no patience with such talk. "Men will go anywhere to make a living. If the Japanese can't stop them, neither can wolves."

"The Japanese can't stop us," retorted Old Wen gravely. "And neither can any mountain, no matter how high, any river, no matter how wide. All I'm saying is, this is a desolate place with no smoke from hut or cottage."

"There's smoke for you!" Mang-chung pointed upwards with a grin.

They had halted now to rest. Some soldiers were sitting on the path gazing down towards the valley; some were leaning against the rocks looking at the peaks around; others were resting back to back, or sitting in small groups. They struck lights and lit their pipes. Tobacco was scarce but flints were plentiful here — any pebble on the road would serve. The men talked and

laughed or sang. A cheerful medley of accents from all over China re-echoed through the deserted mountain valley.

The sun struck deep into the ranges of hills stretching out in neat folds towards the west. Dense clouds of white heat vapour were billowing up from the fathomless valleys below. It was as if invisible fires were raging beneath, or magic geysers throwing up jets of steam.

"That's not smoke," said Old Wen to Mang-chung, pulling on his pipe. "Those are clouds. Didn't we often say, down in the fields, that the Western Hills produce clouds?"

They set off again, up and down through the endless mist which grew denser and denser as thunder started rolling.

"Without lifting a finger, we're going to get another shower and a chance to wash our clothes," exulted Old Wen.

Wind and rain held no fears for troops on the march in those days. In fact, they welcomed a downpour like waterfowl, glad to have their sweaty limbs doused by driving rain. Besides, the mountain paths here were so rocky that there was no danger of slipping.

They looked up, but impenetrable mist hid everything from sight. There was no way of telling how far it was to the top. Except for a few occasional big drops, the rain held off. Presently, as they rounded the right flank of the mountain, the stone path became wider and flatter and trees of a deep emerald green appeared on both sides. The scenery here was fantastically lovely. The slopes all around this dell hemmed in by peaks were thickly wooded with trees unknown to them, on whose broad, fleshy leaves wind and rain drummed softly. The massive bronze trunks were overgrown with moss, and the boulders on either side of the path were virtually swathed in moss too. Separated from both sides of the road by tinkling brooks, stood a number of cottages. And countless little waterfalls were cascading down from the hills above their roofs to flow into the great lake further down. As the soldiers marched on, surrounded by streams and trees, they could hardly tell whether this water and greenery had its source above, all around, or in the pool below, deep as a well but covered with foam and floating water weed.

"Well, see any sign of life?" Mang-chung teased Old Wen.

"Why, this is a fairy land!" exclaimed Old Wen.

For the people living here this was no fairy land, as Old Wen put it, for life high up in the mountains was very hard. The troops had not intended to have their midday meal until after the next pass, but now they were accosted by some old men from this remarkable village, who blocked the way and urged them to stop and rest. Women and children pressed excited, smiling faces against their thick window bars, but the water cascading down from their caves prevented them from seeing the soldiers clearly, and this made them all the more eager for their menfolk to bring these visitors into their homes.

The order came to halt in the village for a meal.

The troops drew up in the "road" before being assigned to different homes. Old Wen and his platoon went to a house overlooking the southern hill, whose builders had made the best use of the terrain. An overhanging boulder served as its roof, and the sheer cliff behind as its back wall. From the rafters hung large gourds filled with lentils and red pepper, switches of mountain bramble from which the bark had been peeled, and golden clusters of maize cobs. Two large orange pumpkins, one on each side of the door, were like the crimson lanterns hung up at New Year.

The cabin itself was a small place to house three generations, but the grandfather made the men welcome. Having told his wife and daughter-in-law to move his grand-daughter, who was sleeping on the *kang*, to one corner, he cleared away the tobacco leaves that were being cured by the stove to make room for the men to sit down.

Since this, was a small village and had no grain officer, the soldiers produced some of their own ration of millet. There was no lack of fuel, for the pine and cedar wood stacked by every door burned well even if slightly damp. Although Old Wen was assistant platoon leader, he had taken over the job of lighting a fire to cook during a march, having earlier on discovered that this was easy work during which he could smoke, while on cold or rainy days he was able to dry himself by the fire and get warm.

The old man told them that villagers had only recently heard about the resistance to Japan when a cadre from Chuyang passed

here on his way to Fanshih. This cadre, a former mason, was one of the very few visitors to have come there from outside. And this was their first sight of the Eighth Route Army.

"That mason gave us a good account of the Eighth Route Army," he said. "But we little thought you would come up all this way!"

"There's nowhere we can't go, uncle!" they assured him.

"It's seldom we leave the village," said the old man. "I'm sixty-seven this year, but I've never been out of the mountains."

A look round the room confirmed this. Everything the family ate, wore or used bore the imprint of the mountain. Their clothes were made of furs, skin, bark and straw. The only cotton jacket was worn by the daughter-in-law, sitting in bashful silence by the window. It was dyed a patchy black, and no doubt the dye came from acorns, cotton-grass, or the indigo plants that grew wild in the hills. The old man's pipe, his wife's hairpin, and the pegs their daughter-in-law used to plait ropes, were all carved from the bones of wild animals. Many of the utensils in there were made of stone, while handsome horns and skins hung next to plump pods on the wall. The necessities of their life were its ornaments too.

The cabin was very dark when first they entered. As the resinous pine faggots sputtered and sizzled in the stove, the room was filled with aromatic smoke. Just before the soldiers' millet was ready, the clouds and mist scattered and the sun shone in, flooding the room with light. An appetizing odour came from the millet bubbling in the pan.

The little girl, who had seemed asleep, sat up now and opened her eyes. Throwing off her black goatskin cover, she pointed one small hand at the pan and murmured:

"That smells good!"

"She's better!" The mother smiled at the grandmother. "Beginning to be hungry."

"The child's been ill three days and not eaten a bite," her grandmother told the men. "Your coming's brought us good luck—now she's taken a turn for the better."

"We'd no idea the child was ill," said Old Wen, "or we wouldn't have made all this noise."

"Never mind," said the grandmother. "She's only a girl. No call for you to worry."

The child had just noticed the strangers. Drawing back the hand she had stretched out, she nestled up to her mother. Her mother smiled at her grandmother, who said:

"You mustn't be offended by an old woman. My granddaughter wants to eat some of your millet."

"Of course!" Old Wen whisked off the lid of the pan, took a rice bowl from the *kang*, filled it up and passed it over.

Her grandmother fed the little girl, who ate with evident relish, her merry eyes roaming over the soldiers' faces.

"It's not often we eat good grain like this," the mother told them shyly. She left the *kang* to fetch a big dish of pickles as a way of expressing her thanks.

"What's wrong with the little girl?" asked Old Wen between mouthfuls.

"A fever," her mother said.

"She ought to see a doctor. I'll go and get one." Old Wen put down his bowl and hurried to company headquarters. After hearing his report, Mang-chung told the medical officer:

"Go and have a look at the child. And don't just use aspirin or mercurochrome — give her something that works!"

The medical officer went along with Old Wen and gave the child an injection from his small but precious stock of medicine.

When the villagers heard of this, all those with ailments came to ask for treatment. Some had suffered for years from ulcers, heart disease or eye trouble which could not be cured overnight; but the medical officer did the best he could for them and told them what precautions to take. This made the people feel much closer to the army.

"We'll never forget how the Eighth Route Army cured our folk," they declared. "It's years since we last had a doctor up here."

The little girl's mother was distressed because she knew no way to show her gratitude. She insisted on washing the soldiers' pan and bowls, then swept the *kang* and urged them to sit down and rest. When Old Wen went out she stood watching at the door as if one of her own dear ones had just come home. This

did not escape the attention of Old Wen, who decided to leave the mother and child some small memento. But the men of the Eighth Route Army had few personal possessions — what could he give? As he tidied up his kit before falling in, he drew from the bottom of his pack a portrait of Chairman Mao wrapped in several layers of paper which Pien Chi had painted for him before he joined up.

"Here's a portrait of Chairman Mao for you to hang on the wall," Old Wen told the mother. "We're his troops. He's the one who tells us to help poor folk in every way we can."

The whole family gathered round to look at the painting. The mother held it up with both hands and, laughing softly, exclaimed:

"So this is him? This is Chairman Mao!"

By the time the troops assembled, their propagandist had written an anti-Japanese slogan in big characters on the great boulder at the entrance to the village. And from this time on, from that village perched high up the mountain the words spread:

"Chairman Mao's troops passed this way!"

"Yes, to resist Japanese imperialism, they go wherever Chairman Mao tells them!"

These troops of ours were not simply trail-blazers who marched thousands of *li* to swoop down on the enemy. It was their task as well to prepare the soil for revolution. At each step forward they took, at each new place they reached, they sowed the seeds of revolution in the hearts of the people there.

Campaigning here was hard in the extreme. The local people were too poor to provide the army with grain and cotton. Winter came early, but the extra clothes issued to the men were cut down from old uniforms and too short to cover the wrists and ankles of most of them. Their shoes and socks were made from old clothes as well, and day and night the women plaited hemp cords to make shoe soles for them, besides giving the fighters the thick soles they had put aside for their husbands.

These parts had always been sparsely populated, and after several of the enemy's "mopping-up" campaigns they became even lonelier and more desolate.

But the troops marched on, over wind-buffeted mountain tops, past the massive, crumbling Great Wall, along rocky river banks and stony tracks.

At dusk they would assemble among the boulders of a narrow bank, then climb to the summit of a hill and sweep down to storm an enemy stronghold. The stars in heaven glimmered faintly as they climbed up dizzy, twisting goat tracks, so high they could almost reach out and touch the sky. The going was rough and one false step would mean a fall thousands of feet to the valley below. More than once, on the march, they heard a clatter and slither as a heavily loaded mule slipped over the side and was lost.

Sometimes it was all the men could do to keep their footing in the teeth of a gale.

One night Mang-chung's company camped in a sheep-fold up on the hills. Now shepherds and sheep had gone. But the thick layer of dried sheep dung there made a warm, comfortable billet. Leaning against the fence, the soldiers cracked a few quiet jokes before lying down.

"People say our war of resistance is a peasants' war," remarked Old Wen to Mang-chung. "That's absolutely true. Apart from marching and fighting, we are still poor peasants."

"Yes, and it shows how close we are to the peasants. They're our own flesh and blood," replied Mang-chung. "We depend on them for food and clothes, for billets and help on the march. Even deep in the hills here, we're sleeping in a sheep-fold some peasants sweated to make."

That night there were cold gusts of wind and a sudden squall of rain, but the soldiers did not even turn over in their sleep. They went on dreaming blissfully. Some laughed softly in their dreams.

Mang-chung and another man did sentry duty for the first part of the night on nearby peaks. A biting north wind tugged at the padded overcoat worn by all the company in turn. In the distance a pack of wolves howled. But Mang-chung's head was

clear, his heart at peace. He stood with his shoulders thrown back.

He stood guard over those rugged hills as resolutely as he had once guarded his home in the Hopei plain. All his concern was for his comrades, now sound asleep. It was two years and more since he had joined the army, and each winter had been spent in gruelling fighting. In this time, he had made outstanding progress. He could give all his devotion now to this wild mountain region so far from his own native village.

That was why, above the howling of the wind, he seemed to hear every least sound from the neighbouring countryside: the scurry of a hare in flight, the bleating of a new-born lamb, the lullabies that mothers were crooning to their children, the endearments murmured by a young husband and wife as they woke from sleep. To him, so steadfast and true, the whole of life had become sheer poetry.

His watch over, Mang-chung went back to the sheep-fold and lay down beside Old Wen. Bitterly cold though it was, Old Wen was sleeping soundly, his contented snores rivalling the wind that blustered over the terraced fields and hillsides.

But his skimpy uniform could not cover him as he lay sprawled out, and half his long limbs were exposed. Mang-chung pulled his jacket over him before lying down at Old Wen's side to sleep.

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For months now they had been cut off from news of home. Each time they camped in a new place, Mang-chung would take his platoon leaders up the nearby hills to reconnoitre. Sometimes he went up with the men to collect firewood or pick herbs.

The guide for their reconnaissance today was a peasant who worked on the local monastery's farm. He was getting on in years, but these seasoned campaigners in their prime could hardly keep up with him when it came to climbing. He knew the whole district like the palm of his hand. He could describe every



stick and stone on each mountain, and they found all his information accurate. He told Mang-chung with a smile:

"Inspector, why d'you suppose they sent me to you instead of a shepherd or a woodcutter? It's because shepherds only know the hills with good pasture, while woodcutters stick to the hills with trees. I'm a living map, I know every path out of here. I've been up and down these mountains since I was a boy. We're pretty high here, aren't we? But I could slide down to the bottom in next to no time!"

The soldiers were eager to see him make good this claim. Mang-chung leaned out from the summit to have a look. No crops were planted on the mountainside, but the early morning sun was shining on a golden mass of wild chrysanthemums and clumps of fine trees and shrubs, some bearing purple bell-shaped flowers. Familiar insects were shrilling in the grass, and past them flashed birds they had never seen on the plain.

The old farm hand tightened his belt and started his descent. Down he slid, now sitting, now standing, unimpeded by the trees and vines, but taking advantage of them to keep his balance.

Mang-chung and the platoon leaders followed his example, to the detriment of their hands, feet and uniforms.

Although the foot-hills still lay in the shadow, they were a lovely and impressive sight. This central mountain was flanked by two others, covered with cedar saplings, which stretched in peaceful beauty to right and left like the two sides of a double door guarding this peak.

So many brooks wound down these hills, it was hard to know where they all had their source. Covered with a thick tangle of withered branches and dead leaves, the water tranquil as a girl sleeping in her lover's arms flowed with the faintest of murmurs.

They took off their shoes and socks to bathe their feet in the cool caressing water.

"You should feel at home, instructor," said the farm hand. "This is the source of your River Huto. Anyone who's homesick can give this brook a message and it will carry it home to your wives and sweethearts."

"Doesn't look much like it to me!" Old Wen was kicking the drift wood high up the bank. "The Huto's broad and big as it flows past our village."

"Of course, what's to stop it widening out down there? But I'll show you how it starts." The old farm hand led them to the foot of the central peak where a spring welled through a crevice in the red rock and gurgled over the sand.

This was the main source of the Huto, which was swelled by other springs rising in the two nearby mountains.

The soldiers let themselves be convinced by the old farm hand.

"After I heard you come from those parts," he told them, "I wanted to bring you here to have a look. We live so far apart, but all these years there has been this link between us."

"We're as close as folk drinking the same well's water!" Old Wen chuckled.

"When I was young I walked along the bank of this stream out of the mountains, then took a boat down all the way to the sea," the farm hand continued. "I remember your parts well, your people and their ways. How sturdily the sorghum was growing in well-spaced rows on both banks! Young fellows lugged great sheaves out from the fields, sweat pouring down the sorghum flowers sprinkled over them. Greybeards trudged with nets along the bank and cast them wherever they saw bubbles. Clods of soft earth from both banks kept plopping into the river. Fishermen holding nets stood stockstill in the eddies, looking for all the world like a winnowing fan not seeming to care if there were fish or not. Our boat sailed on down the Huto past Jaoyang and Hsienhsien to join the River Fuyang. Where it widens out and flows northeast, it's called the Tzuya. But all the water in it comes from up here. Each time I looked at the river over there, I felt I was seeing somebody from home. In the lake district whopping mosquitoes came after us; so did sampans selling water melons, musk melons, sesame cakes and salted eggs. One evening the moon had risen and we were thinking of turning in when, at a bend in the river, we saw some girls bathing—stark naked! Hearing the boat, they ducked down and called out, as bold as you please: 'Look the other way!'"

"Yes, to be sure, it's a fine place, that grand, broad plain of ours!" Old Wen looked up at the small patch of sky above and felt he was at the bottom of a well.

"I wouldn't care to live there," said the farm hand. "Too many roads for my liking. Up here there's only one path leading anywhere—you needn't worry about losing yourself. Mind you, I'm only joking."

They waded along the brook down the sultry valley, where the decaying leaves underfoot were steaming. A huge black cloud loomed in the sky and bore down upon them like some enormous pestle.

"That's a bad look-out!" said the farm hand. "We must get on to higher ground before the storm breaks."

He sprinted out of the valley as if someone were chasing him and started up a mountain path, bounding quickly over the rocks. Old Wen, still barefoot, called after him:

"Who're you trying to fool? Even if it rains, you won't get the sort of flood that sweeps away houses."

"You don't know what you're up against, if you talk like that. Hurry up, or we'll not be able to ford the river!"

The peaks all around were muffled in dark clouds, and they could hear the swish of rain pouring down, yet not a drop fell where they were. They scrambled over a ridge and the farm hand hurried them across the river. Here in the upper reaches of the Huto the water barely reached their knees, yet Old Wen stumbled several times while crossing, for the stream was sweeping down with such force that a rock the height of a man was tottering. Once across, they clambered quickly up to the peak. It was raining now and the farm hand stopped to catch his breath.

"Look upstream," he told Old Wen, "and you'll see how the water rises in these hills."

Old Wen turned in the drenching rain and saw a torrent like a yellow mud wall rushing down the valley, rearing up higher and higher as it gathered momentum. At first they could hear nothing, but as the flood approached the foot of the massif, they felt the whole mountain shaking. The deluge bore with it branches and leaves that had lain for days in the gully. It had uprooted a great tree and sucked in wild animals, large and small, as well as cattle.

"We're well out of that!" Old Wen shuddered.

"This flood here is going to hit your folk down below," remarked the farm hand.

"D'you think they've mended the dikes at home?" Old Wen anxiously asked Mang-chung.

But Mang-chung made no reply. He was gazing intently at the turbulent waters as they rushed headlong towards the east.

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Huang Chou*

Writings of the Last Generation

TSANG KO-CHIA

Poems

Disaster

Give thanks to our enemy,
Who pities your soul fast mouldering away,
Fires his guns to awaken you,
Sounds the charge to arouse you
And thrusts a bayonet through you,
So that bleeding, in anguish, dying,
You may see clear at last.

Give thanks to our enemy,
Who has seen the travesty you have made of life
And with one hard shove
Pushed you over disaster's brink,
Making you find your own way out,
Draw closer in spirit to others, and with that strength
Build a new life.

March 1932

For information on the author see the article on p. 86.

Soon the Day Will Come

Never mind how things stand now, just wait,
For soon the day will come
When the world hides its face and strange changes come
to pass!
The sky will glow with such a dazzling light
That darkness, trembling, finds no hiding place;
Men will grow wings and soar up with their dreams
Like the white doves that flutter in the breeze,
While the whole sphere resounds with perfect peace.
Squalor will be transformed
And loveliness dismayed to lose its shadow.
Ah, you laugh at my folly,
As you would mock a madman
Who swears that the sun rises in the west
Or the Yellow River flows clear and unclouded.

What proof have I to offer?
Why, a sunless land has no shadows;
But mark my words:
Under the pinions of dark night
A radiant dawn lies waiting.

1932

Siesta in the Fields

They've knocked off work,
Downed tools and all
To rest —
Sleeping
With the earth for bed,
The sky for cover,
A tree's lacy shade for pillow,
One with an arm sprawled over the other's chest.
Every pore of their skin
Is faintly pearled with sweat,
Sweat gleaming with well-being;
Sunlight has dappled their bronze limbs
With white flowers,
And lusty snores
Keep time with regular breathing.
Sound sleep spreads iron wings above their hearts
To ward off even the most airy dreams,
Till, at their ease,
Having slept through the drowsy noon,
They rise and stretch themselves
Like giants refreshed.

June 1933

Night in the Village

Once the sun has set
The grown-ups tell blood-curdling tales
Till the little boy pulls the quilt up over his head.
(Now his small heart is dreaming
Of the ghostly shadows of trees outside
And the endless silvery moonlight.)
Then they dim the lamp,
Fight off the sleep weighing heavy on their eyelids
And listen with fearful hearts,
Straining to catch the dog's first warning bark.

March 1934

Answer to a Friend

Fresh back am I from my village,
As you must know without my telling you,
From one glance at my face
Or one whiff of my clothes.
I know that village like the palm of my hand,
Everything about it I know,
As a child knows every hair
On his mother's head.
What is it you ask?
Are the willows misty still above the dike

In the mizzly rain on the spring festival,
And do girls' faces glow like peach blossom
In the light of the setting sun when the spring wind
blows?
Do cool mountain springs seep through rocks in sultry
summer,
And bats flit past old temples in the gloaming?
What else would you hear?
Of the beauty of autumn hills,
Autumn clouds that furl and unfurl in the autumn wind,
Or the desolation of the sun as it sinks behind boundless
plains?
You will ask if cocks crow eight times on winter nights
When an old woman spins at her loom by a dim yellow
lamp.
Ask me these questions, well I know the answers;
But what I would tell you, friend, is something else,
And, in the hearing, do not start or sigh;
For that would show your lack of understanding.
Let me tell you then: The farmers in my village
Are tightening their belts as spring wears on;
They have given themselves no rest,
Delving deep into the foot-hills in wind and rain
And still sowing the broad plain,
But with their seeds they are no longer sowing hope;
Each least word of command to an ox
Shows how they have lost heart!
No longer are they singing as they work,
The pipe to lighten toil brings no content;

They drive themselves from dawn till late at night,
Yet their bellies are still half empty when all's done.
The village story-teller, a grandam of eighty,
Speaks no longer of heroes of old, but of our times.
With her own eyes, she says, she saw the peasant revolt,
But never before has she known a year like this!
Now crops bring in no money,
If there is no fighting, there's flood;
As soon as the sun goes down men's hearts despair,
They lie sleepless on their pillows waiting for dawn.
Pangs of hunger like pelting rain
Beat on their hearts, bow their heads. . . .
The sky is blue as in the days gone by,
But peace has vanished from the countryside.

March 1934

Bloody Spring

The east wind tugs me up the city wall,
Sunlight impregnates my cotton uniform;
On the stagnant pool countless golden eyes are winking
While willow tendrils lead spring back again.
Yes, Spring is an enchantress,
Yet I feel no warmth in her charms
As I gaze out over the far-stretching plain,
Blazing with beacon fires, swept by alarms.

Who can find any pleasure now in flying kites
Or watching wild horses race?
Stifling nostalgic memories,
I wait for the call to war.
In the north of our land,
In the central plain
Trampled by enemy feet
There is no spring!
Mount Tai knits stern brows,
The river's yellow face is contorted,
Flames of vengeance
Stalk the east wind
And blaze on the plain,
Blaze in the hearts of all China's sons and daughters.
In my home
In springs gone by,
Green grass would embroider
The earth with loving care,
While the willows' eyes
Would watch the village for us
As peasants led out their old oxen
To toil in the fields.
Drop by drop their sweat watered the soil
Of the earth, our mother!
(Five thousand years of history bear witness to this.)
She nurtures her sons,
Cradling them on her breast,
And so it has been
For generation after generation.

The cuckoos now
Are calling throughout the land,
But not a soul in our village
Goes to the fields.
Men leave their homes,
Whole families are parted;
Insults and death
Are their companions now.
Japanese planes are the swallows of spring,
And bombardments the spring thunder;
The enemy at one stroke
Has changed the gentle spring into stern winter.
We must use gunfire
To recapture balmy spring;
We must not let our mother earth
Be dismembered!
We are waging bloody battles
In the north,
Under a southern sky,
Beyond the Great Wall,
And before the Changpai Mountains.
Rank blows the wind,
Hoarse rise the yells of rage,
And in those battles
Trembles a bloody spring!
Fight to the last!
When the enemy's feet
Are hacked off our native soil,
Hand in hand we shall return to our old homes

To see spring flowers incarnadined by blood,
To see the green hills at our doors
Shed tears
Of joy and sorrow.
Then how fresh
The spring wind will blow,
Wafting from the central plain
To east of the Pass
And out beyond the grasslands
Unimpeded.

March 1938

The Armoured Train Rolls Towards the Front

Ploughing through dark night,
Gallop from the bright day
To meet the foe a thousand *li* away,
Dust-stained from the long journey,
The armoured train rolls towards the front.

The armoured train rolls towards the front.
Gun muzzles are laughing,
Fighters are singing aloud,
The wind is souging,
The horses' manes are ruffled in the wind.

April 1938

Spring Birds

When, my heart pounding from a dream,
I open wide frenzied eyes,
Your song, as pure as truth itself,
Has brought the dawn to my window.
Sighing, I press
One hand to my heart,
Exchanging a nightmare dream
For the nightmare on earth.
Your song
Like the stars in the darkling sky
Gains every second in glory,
As if the fingers of goddesses
Were in concert striking life's keys.
Exquisite floods of sound
From clouds of green trees,
From the ocean of the blue sky,
Flow into one pool of abundant life and freedom.
Surely this is the season
For full-throated songs of man,
Like a tocsin bell
To arouse the universe
From its long winter sleep,
For the cold has been trampled to death,
The spring wind has left footprints everywhere.
When you sing

For green hills,
They gain in loveliness;
When you sing
For flowing streams,
They romp and play like little imps;
When you sing
For flower and trees,
They put forth their spring blossoms;
When you sing
For the earth,
It turns soft and pliable;
When hibernating insects hear your song,
They throw off their earthy quilt
And crawl into the sun,
When men hear your song,
The sap of youth fills their veins — they are born again.
And I, with a poet's heart as quick to respond,
Have the same dread of cold
And my own songs of life;
Like you, I long to sing;
But the chain round my neck
Is racking my throat with pain.

May 1942

Life's Zero

**A snow-storm the day before yesterday,
And last night eight hundred small corpses.**

More than eight hundred living souls
Are consigned to one small corner
In the column of "local news" in the daily paper.
No mention of names,
Age,
Place of origin;
Not a word of explanation
As to how and where they died of exposure.
Readers run their eyes over
This type of social chit-chat
And then forget it;
At the most it evokes a sigh.
The press prefers other news items:
The rape of young girls, a human-headed spider, mon-
strous twins,
Gang killings or the murder of gangsters.

Your deaths
Were as insignificant as your lives.
Tender shoots of "men,"
Before spring came
Hunger and cold have killed you
In the bud.

Where were you from?
From under the whips of landlords?
From the barren fields in the country?
Did you come with your fathers and mothers?
What forlorn hope of survival
Brought you to this great metropolis of east Asia?

Lost in this maze of skyscrapers,
Your mouths watered at the smell of dainties,
Your wails were drowned in the tumult of sound,
Here where men's conscience is blunted.

Your dirt
Made ladies and gentlemen steer clear;
Your shivering bodies and your trembling cries
Won more curses and contempt than pity.
Shanghai is vast,
Warm,
Bright
And rich;
But you,
Assailed by cold and hunger,
Retreated into dark corners
With empty stomachs, your teeth chattering. . . .

The northwest wind that night
Brought a heavy snow-fall,
And your bodies
Like thermometers

Dropped slowly,
Dropping at last to life's zero!

You died, more than eight hundred waifs,
As if by common consent,
All a prey to the same despair,
You perished together that night.
I know death was no choice of yours,
You had battled against it;
But your pallid fancies
Held out no ray of hope
To serve as a weapon;
One by one your naked bodies,
Your naked hearts,
Were quickly overcome
By human coldness;
In this society where man preys on man
You live
On sufferance
And should die
Unnoticed.
Curse these "philanthropists"
Who go out to collect your corpses!
Your bodies should be left
To lie for ever
On those three feet of ground!
The inventors of central heating
Should see you
As they walk past;

You should stop the cars of the rich
For them to spit on you;
Young ladies of fashion should tread on you
And scream.
Let these corpses bleed and rot,
Adding their stench
To the breath of great Shanghai!

February 1947

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang*

Sending off the Bride (Water colour) by Shao Yu ▶

See the article *Shao Yu's Sketches* on p. 93.



The Album

It was a freezing winter night. The howling north wind was making our windows rattle and, although Shenyang was a prosperous city, the Japanese invaders allowed its citizens no coal for heating. As soon as we finished supper we shovelled the embers from the kitchen stove into a brazier and put it on the *kang* to warm our frozen hands. Mother sat by the brazier to do some sewing, while I snuggled up against her wrapped in a quilt and by the light of our single 15-watt bulb studied the Chinese characters taught me by a distant relative who told fortunes near the Small West Gate Park. All of a sudden urgent knocking sounded outside. Mother hastily jumped up, opened the door, and listened for a while in the courtyard. On nights like this Japanese ronins and Chinese puppets often broke into private houses to make trouble or to demand money. Mother dared not open the gate.

"Who is it?" she asked in alarm.

"Only me, *omoni*," responded a stranger's voice. Afraid that she had not understood, the voice added, "Please, aunt, it's urgent. Won't you let us in?"

"Who are you?" mother asked, although she already knew that he must be a Korean, because *omoni* is the Korean for "aunt."

"Please open the gate, aunt! It's freezing outside!" the voice pleaded.

As mother hesitated, the wind started howling again. Taking pity on the stranger exposed to this blast, she decided to open the gate.

In came a man in his mid-thirties. Tall, in a black overcoat, he had a box of cakes in one hand. Bowing deeply to mother, he apologized, "Please excuse me for troubling you on such a night!"

Mother sized him up warily. He was definitely too polite for a ronin. Pointing at the box of cakes which he had put on the *kang*, she asked, "What's that for?"

He smiled—a smile strangely pathetic on his face so numb with cold. "I'd like to borrow that empty room to the east of your courtyard," he said.

"It isn't ours," replied mother.

"But it opens on to your courtyard and nowhere else."

The stranger seemed well informed. The front door of that room opened on to the street but was bolted inside. There was a small side door, however, which was not locked and which led to our yard. That room was like a tunnel, long, narrow, dark and windowless. It was impossible to rent, being no good either for a shop or for living quarters. So the owner, a landlord in a neighbouring county who had left Shenyang some years ago when the Japanese came and his small business there collapsed, regarded it as a liability and had left it in our care, since we were his tenants.

"That room is too dark and small to live in," mother said.

"That doesn't matter, aunt," he pleaded. "At least it can shelter us from ice and snow. My two children are freezing outside."

Mother turned instinctively to look at me, cosily wrapped in my warm bedding, in sharp contrast to the children outside in the cold wind. Regardless of whether she had the right to dispose of that room or not, she decided to let them in.

"All right, you may move in," she agreed.

He went out again at once. Mother followed him, feeling concern for his children. Out of curiosity, I jumped off the *kang* and, putting on my cotton-padded coat, went as far as the gate. Outside stood a woman with a child on her back. Her white skirt was billowing about in the wind. A young lad stood beside her, hatless and also in white. At their feet was a small wicker basket and two or three bundles. The woman made mother a

low bow but said nothing. She and the lad were shivering convulsively.

"It's perishing here, come on in!" invited mother. Then she muttered as if to herself, "Why move house on a bitter night like this, instead of in the day?"

Leaving her question unanswered, they followed her in silence into our room. In the lamplight I saw that the woman, who appeared to be in her thirties, looked quite haggard and exhausted. The boy, in his early teens, had a broad forehead, dark bushy eyebrows and full lips. He impressed me as somebody with a clear, quick mind. He too seemed to be absolutely tired out, his face blue with cold, his eyelids drooping. They were Koreans, no doubt about it now. Mother was rather at a loss, but she said mildly:

"Anyway, you must warm up a bit first."

She set our brazier before them. As the man warmed his hands, he looked at mother closely with deep gratitude in his eyes, and then asked softly:

"Aunt, you're Hung-sheng's widow, aren't you?"

Mother gave a start. Hung-sheng, my father, had worked in a Japanese iron works. He joined in a strike to protest against bad conditions, but his name was handed in by an informer, the Japanese arrested him with many others and condemned him to ten years' imprisonment. Before he had served one-third of the term, however, he was tortured to death in prison.

"How did you know his name?" mother asked.

"One of my countrymen, Kim Jung Tai, told me," the man explained. "He used to work in that Japanese iron foundry too—now he is a porter at the railway station. He and your husband were good friends. He told me you had a kind heart and would give us a lodging. I see he told the truth."

"Kim Jung Tai?" Mother thought for a while. "Yes, I remember him. He came to see once or twice while Hung-sheng was still with us. Well, it's late now, you must be tired. You had better go and rest."

After bowing deeply again to mother, the man led his wife and children to the small narrow room. That was how they became our neighbours.

But we were very busy. Since father's death my mother had earned a living by setting up a small stall in the street, while I helped her with the housework. We had so little time to spare that we saw nothing of our new neighbours. Indeed, mother was afraid to have anything to do with them.

They for their part did not seem anxious to have anything to do with us either, and never visited us after settling in. They used the front door only and generally kept the side door to our yard bolted. But there were several big cracks in that door through which I sometimes peeped. The father seemed to be very busy: I never saw him. Probably he went out early in the morning and came home late at night. The mother, though, appeared to have little to do, for I often heard her pace slowly to and fro in that tunnel-like room, the baby on her back. The boy was the only one to enter their small courtyard from time to time, turning over the leaves of a book as he strolled up and down, the image of a small scholar.

One day I felt so lonely, I could not help longing to ask him over to play. It was snowing heavily. By midday the ground was two feet deep in snow. Since mother could not set up her stall in such weather, she was doing all the housework herself. I was bored, at a loose end. How I wished that boy would play in the snow with me! I wondered how to tempt him out. Perhaps a snow man would do the trick.

I put on my hat and made for the door. Mother stopped me. "Are you crazy?" she asked. "Going out on such a cold day?" "Just to play in the snow. I'm bored. . . ."

I was interrupted by the tinkle of broken glass from our neighbours' room and a woman's piercing scream. Mother turned pale. We clung to each other, not knowing what to do. Soon footsteps were heard in our courtyard and somebody was knocking softly at our door. Mother opened it and in came the boy I had wanted to ask over. He was white and trembling.

"*Omoni*, please help us!" he said.

"What happened?" mother asked in alarm.

"They hit my mother. She's fainted."

Mother hurried towards their small room, with me at her heels. That was our first visit to our neighbours. The Korean woman was lying on the ground, her face and hands stained with blood.

Glass splinters were scattered everywhere -- it was probably these that had cut her. An icy blast blowing in from the door made me turn and see that its glass pane was smashed. Wind was whirling papers and clothes in all directions. Mother helped our neighbour on to the bed and sent me home for hot water and a clean towel. The boy, once so shy, went with me. He was no longer trembling. A friendly expression had appeared on his face.

"What happened?" I asked.

"I don't quite know," he said in a low voice. "Dad used to come home late in the night. Today he came back earlier than usual. He told mother he was leaving for Mutankiang by the 17.30 train. But the Black Caps* were at his heels. . . ."

He broke into sobs. I handed him a handkerchief and patted his shoulder gently, trying to console him.

"Those Black Caps are gangsters! They break into people's houses for no reason and sniff around like a pack of hunting hounds. . . . Just pay no attention!"

"That's no use!" He was still sobbing. "They rushed in like bandits and shouted at father, 'We've been after you all this time, and at last we've got you! Trying to escape, were you?' They grabbed hold of his collar and dragged him towards the door. When mother clung to him, the Black Caps hit her over the head with the butt-ends of their rifles. Mother was forced to let go, but she glared at them and cursed, 'You bandits, you'll get what you deserve one day!' So they dragged my father away! One Black Cap, hearing mother's curse, turned to shoot at her through the door. Luckily the bullet whizzed past her. But she fainted and was cut by the broken glass. . . ."

That reminded me that the hot water and clean towel were needed in a hurry. "Quick!" I said. When we went back to their room, the Korean woman had come to and was sitting on the edge of the bed while mother was offering her a cup of hot water. Hanging her head, the woman sipped and sighed.

"Those Black Caps are devils," whispered mother sympathetically. "Hung-sheng was dragged off like that too. Worrying

* Japanese policemen who wore black caps.



won't help. You've got to think of the children. Don't let them fall ill of fright."

Evidently mother had discovered that what had happened to the Korean was very similar to what happened to my father. Both were treated by the Japanese as dangerous enemies. I handed the hot water and clean towel to mother, who wiped our neighbour's blood-stained face and bandaged her wounds. The woman picked her baby up from the bed and rocked him in her arms. She fixed her eyes on the infant's face and her tears fell silently on to his forehead, while the baby whimpered softly.

"Child, shall I live to see you grow up?" she sobbed. "It's a cruel world!"

The elder boy was sweeping up the glass. Now he put aside the broom and took his mother's hand to assure her:

"Don't worry, ma! We'll manage somehow. Nothing can scare us!"

My mother was touched and stroked his head. "That's the spirit, lad!" she said. "What's your name?"

"Choi Chang Ho."

"Yes." She turned to me. "You should learn from Choi Chang Ho. We're in the same boat, aren't we?"

Mother must have been thinking of father, for since his capture life had been hard for us too. We all kept silent. This silence, strange to say, seemed to link us closer together and make us understand one another better. We seemed to have so much in common that I began to regard Choi Chang Ho as my good friend.

Several days later, somebody knocked lightly at our door one evening while I was winding wool for mother, who used to do some knitting for customers at night. I immediately went to the door. When Choi Chang Ho came in and saw the wool he wanted to leave at once for fear of interrupting our work. But mother stopped him.

"Amuse yourselves for a bit," she said. "Boys who never play fall ill. Look, you're thinner than a few days ago." She paused thoughtfully before asking, "Any news from your father?"

Choi just shook his head.

"They've not been back to bother you?"

Again Choi shook his head without a word.

"Do you have enough to eat these days?"

This time he did not shake his head, but said nothing.

Mother looked thoughtful again, and then grumbled to herself, "Why, I forgot to wash the dishes." She went into the kitchen, leaving the two of us there. Choi and I exchanged glances, as if to say, "We can play now." But we were in no mood for playing, not I at least. For he looked so thin and pale with hunger I wished I could offer him something to eat. But we never kept any biscuits or cakes in the house. Choi broke into my perplexity to ask:

"What are you thinking about? Why don't you say something?"

"I wasn't thinking about anything." To hide my embarrassment I asked in return, "What about you? Why don't you say anything? Let's find something to play with."

A ghost of a smile lit up his face and his eyes shone. He put his hand inside his jacket.

"Here, I'll show you something!"

With a flourish like a magician, he produced a book, a bulky object to be hidden over his thin chest. He opened it carefully and laid it on the *kang* under the low-hanging light.

"Isn't that beautiful!" he cried.

I took a closer look. It was a landscape. Now I realized that this was the book he used to look at in the yard. It was too shabby and dog-eared to make much appeal to me. In fact, I rather despised him for admiring it so much. What was so wonderful about an album of pictures?

To him, though, it was obviously a treasure. He turned to another page with a different landscape. "Look!" he said admiringly. "That's Kungang Mountain. Isn't it magnificent!" Without waiting for my reply he turned to another page. "This is our ancient capital—Seoul. You should go and see what a fine city it is." He turned the page again and looked at a picture in silence for a while. "Do you know this river?" he asked presently. When I shook my head, he explained, "This is the famous Yalu River linking our two countries. We came along that river—I shall never forget it."

He stared at it raptly in silence.

"So this is an album," I remarked as he went on turning the pages. All the pictures were of Korea: beauty spots and places of historical interest, pictures of people and scenes of historic struggles. Under each picture was a neatly-written caption.

"Did you make this album yourself?" I asked curiously.

"No, my father did it. He wrote the captions too."

"He did that specially for you?"

Choi nodded and explained, "You see, I had no chance to go to school. This is how father taught me to read. He also told me many stories about my country and wrote these splendid descriptions under each picture. If only I could go to school and read all the books in the world! I'd like nothing better!"

This outburst ended in a sigh.

"Well, why don't you go to school?"

"Why don't *you*?" he retorted.

"Because we can't afford it," I replied. "Even if we could, mother wouldn't let me go because nowadays all they teach you in school is how to be a slave. Even the name of Sun Yat-sen has been crossed out of some of the textbooks."

Choi's eyes gleamed, as if finding common ground with me, as if we shared the same fate, the same circumstances. We looked at each other in silence and smiled in spite of ourselves.

"Now do you understand what this album means to me?" he asked at length.

I nodded. He loved it not only because it had taught him to read but because it represented his motherland. That was why he never tired of looking at it.

"I understand perfectly."

"Good." He seemed relieved. "Let me ask you a favour then."

"What is it?"

"Will you keep this album for me for some time? It's awkward for me to keep it on me."

"What? Don't you want to look at it every day?"

"Not just now."

"Why not? Tired of it?"

A shadow crossed his face and his eyes lost their sparkle. He lowered his head and did not look at me.

"It's not that," he replied softly. "Things have been pretty hard for us since my father was taken. Of course, Uncle Kim is helping us. But he's hard up himself and his money should be kept for more important things. Mother won't use it. She'd rather go without. But for two days she's had no milk for my little brother. I'm thinking of doing some odd jobs to help. I've made a wooden case for shining shoes. First thing tomorrow I'm going to the South Station. I've always carried this album with me because I don't feel easy leaving it behind. But to take it out to work would be dangerous. If the Black Caps found it, there'd be trouble, don't you think? They won't let us look at such pictures because they don't want us to think of our motherland."

"It's the same with us," I said. "But do you mean to say you're starting work because you've had nothing to eat for some days?"



“Yes.” He nodded. “But even if we had food, I’d want to learn a trade.”

“Have you had supper today?”

He did not reply but hung his head. After a while he closed the album and handed it to me.

“There you are. Will you promise to keep it for me?”

“Can you trust me?”

“I know you’d never let us down. Uncle Kim has said so more than once.”

“So long as you trust me, I promise to keep it for you. . . .”

Just then mother came in with a plate of hot sorghum cakes. She put it down before us and stood there smiling. Well, this was a surprise!

But Choi would not eat, no matter how much we urged him. He shook his head and smiled, but refused. Even though I stuffed

one cake into his hand, he put it quietly back. Presently he stood up and bowed to my mother, saying:

“It’s not that I don’t want it, aunt. But if I eat it there’ll be less for you. You’re just as badly off as we are. Once I’ve found some job we’ll manage all right. Don’t you worry.”

With another deep bow he left.

We had no more visits from Choi. He became very busy, going out early and coming back late every day.

One afternoon mother sent me to buy something at a store near the South Station. After finishing my errand it occurred to me that Choi worked just by the South Station, and I headed that way. There was such a crowd there that it would be impossible to pick out even a grown man, not to say a boy. I was turning to leave when a commotion in one corner stopped me. I went over and saw a Black Cap hitting and kicking a boy, accusing him of working without a licence and obstructing traffic. The boy lay on his back, crying and protesting, but holding tightly on to his wooden case. I saw it was Choi! Many on-lookers were talking indignantly among themselves about the outrage and this attracted a crowd. In the general confusion the Black Cap got caught in the throng, and at once Choi jumped up with his case and took to his heels. Darting out from the crowd, he vanished.

But I had been following him with my eyes. I saw him hide behind the door of the waiting-room. Then he went down the passage between the cloak room and the luggage room and slipped out of the station. To avoid attracting attention, I left the station by way of the ticket office. I expected to meet him at the end of the passage, but when I got there he was nowhere to be seen. I felt very let-down.

I looked for him in vain for quite some time. At last I made my way to the bus station, intending to go home. My bus was not in and other would-be passengers were sitting in the waiting-room. I was about to join them when, to my surprise, I caught sight of Choi shining boots there. He looked as unconcerned as if nothing had happened. When he caught my eye he showed not the slightest astonishment, but threw me a cheerful smile before bending over his work again. I remained standing outside, waiting patiently for him. Actually, I was acting as a sentinel too.

At last the bus arrived. By the time it was due to start, Choi had finished shining three pairs of shoes. He stretched and picked up his case, smiling at me as if to say, "The day's work is done. Let's go home."

It was not yet too dark. Although the streets were still frozen, the north wind had stopped howling some days ago and this quietness gave us a sense of warmth. The sky was clear. A half moon and countless tiny stars seemed to be twinkling at us from the eastern sky. Suddenly Choi stopped.

"It's so fine, why not take a stroll somewhere?" he suggested.

I readily agreed to his proposal and led the way to the Small West Gate Park not far from our house. We could go home from there either by bus or on foot. At that late hour the park was very quiet. Once inside, we felt as happy and relaxed as if we had come to a free world.

It was only right that we should make the most of our time. We had not been together for so long. Except for a few tall locust trees, there were not many trees in this park, giving it a very open and spacious appearance. Choi hung his case on a tree and stamped on the frozen ground underneath, where the ice was solid enough for us to slide. Just then we looked up and saw the moon hanging over a tree opposite as if she had something to convey to us. We stopped to gaze at her. Choi was so delighted that he sang a song. Although I could not understand the words, the air was a very sweet one.

"What's that song?" I asked. "I couldn't make out a single word."

"A song about Korea."

He sang it again, explaining it line by line. It went something like this:

*My motherland, Korea,
Wonderful are your mountains,
Wonderful your rivers,
And your trusty sons
Are happy and proud, living in your embrace.*

"That's a lovely song. What made you sing it suddenly?"

"Usually I've no chance to sing it—the Japanese police would nab me if they heard it."

"If you don't dare sing it as a rule, how did you learn it?"

"Father taught me secretly. At home, on lovely night like this, father would put down his work and teach me this song. . . ."

He stopped suddenly. No doubt, the song reminded him of the past.

"Thinking about your father, eh? You know, the only time I saw him was that night when you first came. What kind of person is he?"

That set him off on reminiscence about his father whom he dearly loved and respected. He told me a great deal about this man who had been rather a mysterious figure to me.

"Father used to teach in a junior-middle school at Pyongyang. Ever since I can remember, he wasn't too happy. One day he came home most upset about his job. I was eight then and old enough to go to school. But that night he told my mother, 'I can see now that the Japanese aggressors want to bring up our children as slaves. We mustn't let our son receive that kind of education.' Instead of sending me to school, he himself taught me to read. Every evening after supper, no matter how tired he might be, he would teach me several new words and tell me stories about our motherland. That album was a textbook he made for me at that time. Gradually I learned to read and understood a good deal about my country. Then he taught me poetry and songs. The song I sang just now was one he taught me."

He stopped, lost in a dream.

"Ah!" After a while he sighed like a grown man. "Misfortune sometimes comes when you're happiest. One day he forgot to bring his notebook back with him from school. In that notebook was a slip of paper with the words of that song. The Japanese superintendent was informed, and the next day he sent for father. Then the school authorities reported the matter to the Japanese police bureau. It was early in the morning, I remember, when they summoned him to the bureau and already dark when he came home. Sinking into an armchair, he quietly told mother, 'They've stopped my class, saying I'm not qualified to teach. To stay here any longer would be dangerous.'

"Mother was preparing supper, but she stopped to stare at him in a daze. 'We must leave at once,' father went on, 'or it will be too late.' Mother's eyes grew wider and wider. She had no



idea that it would be so serious. Father forced a smile when he saw her distress. 'Never mind,' he told her gently. 'Things are different now. We have somewhere to go. I'm in touch with somebody most reliable. On the other side of the Yalu many patriotic countrymen of ours have organized themselves to fight for the freedom of our land shoulder to shoulder with Chinese revolutionaries. I'm still young. I should join them.'

"No longer staring in a daze, mother's eyes gleamed with doubt. 'You mean we should leave our beautiful native place?' Father nodded, no longer smiling. 'For the sake of our lovely native land and for the next generation, we must leave here now. But we'll come back. We are bound to come back—as masters and

not as slaves!' Mother's eyes were wet. 'Yes, for the sake of our children, let's go!' The tears streamed down her cheeks. I shall never forget that scene. It was like a key which opened my heart and gave me understanding. I knew we had lost our motherland and I also knew that one day we were sure to restore it!"

"So you left your country?" I prompted.

"The next day before dawn we locked the gate and set off. Neighbours may have thought we were visiting relatives. We took the train to Sinuiju and that same night crossed the river. Somebody was expecting us on the other side. Before long father got to know many Koreans over there. Life became easier for us. We changed our lodgings every few days so that the Japanese police could not trace us. After a few months we knew local conditions pretty well and had learned to speak Chinese. That made things easier. Since father had no experience of village work and there was plenty to do in the cities among the Koreans, he worked in the towns. During the last few years we have been in quite a few towns. . . ."

"I wish you'd come to Shenyang earlier," I remarked. "Then we could have made friends long ago."

"We have been here quite a time. Ever since last autumn. Only we lived in another quarter. . . ."

"Which quarter?"

"Near Shihchienfang, not far from Uncle Kim. That place had its advantages. Uncle Kim dropped in quite often and looked after us. He may strike you as hard and rough, but actually he is very quick and clever. Father learned a lot from him. One day Uncle Kim noticed a suspicious character hanging around our place, and suspected this was a spy sent by the Japanese. As soon as the man disappeared, he told father and advised him to leave at once. That was why we came to your place so suddenly that night. And that very night the Black Caps did break into our old home and search. But we had gone. Still they caught up with father in the end. . . ."

He broke off.

"Any news of your father?"

"He's still imprisoned in the Japanese police bureau, Uncle Kim told us." He went on in a remarkably composed voice,

"They can get nothing out of him, so they can't decide what to do with him! . . ."

Abruptly his voice broke. He could not go on. Not wanting me to see his face, he turned away and pretended to look at the moon. I saw that his eyes were full of tears and two big drops rolling down his cheeks glistened in the moonlight. I knew how he missed his father, how his heart ached. But I had no words to console him.

As we approached the gate of the park we saw a dark shadow dart across the street. It was a Black Cap on patrol duty. At once we both laughed and started talking childish nonsense. The Black Cap, listening, found nothing amiss. Once out of his sight, we hurried homeward.

That was my longest talk with Choi, and it made a deep impression on my mind, teaching me much about his family and about life. But that was our last chance to be together.

The days slipped by. Spring came unawares. It was beginning to thaw. Icy water trickled silently from the corners of buildings and from shady places. Although a door separated our house from theirs, the water from both courtyards intermingled. To welcome spring, I chose a sunny afternoon to sweep the courtyard, clear away the drifted snow and fill up the puddles. As I was doing this, I heard sounds of similar activities next door. Then the door opened gently and Choi's head appeared.

"I came home early today," he told me. "When I heard you sweeping, I decided to clean our yard too, otherwise your work would be wasted!"

"That was good of you," I said. "Shall I come and help?"

"No, it won't take long, it's such a small place." He closed the door as if afraid I would go over. But a second later he opened it again to whisper, "I haven't seen the album for some time. I rather miss it. If it's convenient I'd like to take it back and have a look."

"I've put it in a hole in the wall," I replied in a whisper. "But it's no trouble to get it out."

"Fine! After supper I'll come over for it."

He closed the door gently again and I heard him sweeping hard. He must have decided to clean up the yard before dark — he liked everything neat and orderly.

After supper I carefully removed the brick over a square hole in the wall where I used to hide my treasures in case the Black Caps raided our house. The album, which I carefully wrapped in oil paper, was there too. I discovered that the album was no worse than when Choi had entrusted it to me. I was very pleased and would have liked to take it to him myself. But his mother had warned us not to go to their room to avoid arousing suspicion. Since Choi had said he would come over, I had better wait. But when bedtime came and there was no sign of him, I grew impatient. Mother said I could go over, but must not stay there long.

I tapped on the side door. No response. I knocked again. After a few seconds the door opened suddenly. I stepped in and nearly collided with Choi.

"Why didn't you come?" I was rather put out. "I've been waiting."

"Don't talk so loudly. Come in." Choi's voice was barely audible as, grasping my arm, he led me towards their room. The door was ajar but he stood between it and me, not letting me in. "Uncle Kim is here. He came to discuss something urgent. That's why I didn't come when I said I would."

I peeped in and saw a workman of about forty standing with his back to the front door. His bronze face was wrinkled and there was a smile in his brilliant, deep-set eyes. He was telling Choi's mother in a deep, low voice, "They are sending him back to Korea by train tomorrow night. The news came from the police bureau this morning. But we're ready for them. We shall rescue him as soon as he steps out of the prison van. We'll send him to the Changpai Mountains. The guerrillas there are very active and badly in need of more cadres. As for you, I don't think it's safe for you to stay here. Better join him in the mountains. We have arranged for transport. . . . Before daybreak someone will come for you. . . ." Choi saw that I was listening to what was being said. He shut the door and took the album from me. "Thank you," he whispered, evidently dismissing me.

Back with mother, I felt no resentment at being sent away, only distress that he might be leaving us. He had brought new life into my lonely existence, although we were not together every day.



That night I dreamed a good deal and slept fitfully. At dawn I got up and went to the backyard to find out whether they had left or not. I knocked gently at the side door, and discovered that it was as solid as a block of wood. When I pushed it, I realized that it was bolted and nailed up from inside. Very disappointed, I went home with hanging head. I was about to open our door when I saw a paper package on the window sill. Opening it, I found Choi's album. He must have left it before nailing up the door. Rather than disturb our sleep, he had left it there for me. Inside the album was a note which read:

We are going far away and are not likely to come back. It's not safe to take this album. Because you're my good friend, I hope you will keep it for me. Till we meet again!

Choi Chang Ho

So they had left. But I wanted to make dead sure. Since it was so early that the street was still deserted, I went to their front door. There was a big lock on it.

As I hid Choi's album in the hole in the wall again, I felt unspeakably wretched. My mind ran on many things. That night I lay awake for a long time, only falling into an uneasy sleep towards dawn. I was woken by my mother jumping up from the *kang* and calling out in alarm, "Who is it?" Somebody was hammering on the door. I threw on my clothes and got up.

Mother trembled as she opened the door and three puppet policemen rushed in accompanied by a short fat Japanese with a moustache. He was half a head shorter than my mother, yet he swaggered before her, shouting:

"Where have your neighbours gone?"

"What neighbours?" asked mother calmly.

"The Koreans who lived next door."

"I don't know. We never had anything to do with each other."

"You mean you never saw them?"

"Oh, I saw them, but we never spoke to each other."

"Did that man come back yesterday?"

"Man?" Mother looked very surprised. "I never saw any man there."

"H'm." The Japanese thought this over.

"You must have known about them. Don't your courtyards communicate?" the first puppet policeman demanded.

"No, they don't," replied mother firmly.

"That's a lie!" roared the second policeman.

The Japanese took two steps to the side and waddled back again. In silence he signed to the third policeman, who rushed towards mother and struck her in the chest, then gave me a vicious kick. I fell to the ground, a stabbing pain in my stomach. After the worst of the pain passed I opened my eyes and saw mother sitting up. The Japanese and the puppet policemen were gone. She stroked my forehead and whispered:

"Don't be afraid. They've gone to break down the door."

I heard the sound of wood cracking and splintering. Then silence. Probably they were searching the house. Mother leaned towards me and murmured into my ear:

"Don't worry about Choi. From what the Black Cap said, it's clear they got safely away. Otherwise the Black Caps wouldn't have come to ask us where they are."

Mother's reassurance made up for the pain in my heart. As long as Choi and his family were out of danger, what was there to worry about? Let the Black Caps do their worst. We could wait fearlessly for their return. Sure enough, presently they came back. The lips of the Japanese were twitching with rage. "Search!" he shouted. The three policemen ransacked our house, but they never discovered the hole in the wall concealing Choi's precious album. After some time they left in anger.

We sat on the *kang*. Mother unbuttoned my jacket and examined my bruise.

"Now you understand, don't you, why Choi nailed up the side door and locked the front door before they left?" she asked.

"Yes. They were afraid to involve us. That was really thoughtful," I said.

"You must be sure to take good care of his album."

I nodded. The following day mother decided that we should move house. Though she did not tell me the reason, I guessed that it was because she was afraid the Black Caps might come back and make more trouble—especially for me, if they found I had kept Choi's album. We removed after dark. After staying for a couple of days with a distant cousin, we returned to our native Penki.

We settled down in the village. I put Choi's album in a porcelain jar, sealed it carefully with cement, and buried it under a walnut tree in the backyard. Nobody but mother knew that I had a Korean friend and that I was keeping his most treasured possession safely beneath the earth of our beloved land.

Would this album be buried for ever? As time passed and the situation changed, would it be forgotten? No, indeed! I not only thought of it frequently, but remembered its owner as well, Choi's features, the things he did, and the evening of his departure. . . . But it would have been dangerous to take out that album during the period of Japanese occupation. After the invaders' surrender, I left my village to join the Chinese People's Liberation Army. In 1950, when the U.S. imperialists launched an aggressive war against Korea, I applied to join the Chinese

People's Volunteers. But not until 1951 did I have the chance to go to Korea as a political worker in an auxiliary force. Before I left, I went home to see my mother. Naturally I took that opportunity to have a look at the album with its pictures of the beautiful mountains and rivers of Korea.

Since the jar had been tightly sealed, the album was well preserved. As I turned its pages Choi's features and gestures appeared vividly in my mind's eye. He should be twenty-seven or twenty-eight by now. Where was he? His lovely country and his heroic people had stood up. The day longed for by his father and mother had come. Although Korea was still menaced by the U.S. imperialists, I was sure they had returned to their motherland, that is if they had survived the guerrilla warfare during the resistance to Japan. Perhaps Choi was fighting shoulder to shoulder with our Volunteers right now. I should take this chance to return the album to him. Then I would have completed my task and proved how faithfully I had kept my promise to my childhood friend.

So the album crossed the Yalu River with me. Naturally in the heat of battles I had no time to look for him, but I made inquiries about him whenever I could. After the cease-fire agreement was signed at Panmunjom, I was among the first batch of Volunteers to return. Before leaving for China I had a few days free, but my enjoyment was clouded by anxiety. I must find Choi to return his album and keep my promise. And although I failed to locate him, I was lucky enough to find his father.

Choi's father was a leading member on the general staff of the Korean People's Army. Two days before our departure from Korea, the Korean army headquarters gave a farewell party in honour of the Chinese People's Volunteers, and it was at that party that I made his acquaintance. He was an old man with white hair. When I introduced myself, he immediately recalled that icy night so many years ago when he had brought his family to our home in Shenyang. He threw his arms round me and said, "I never expected to meet you in my own country!" Then he told me what had happened to him since his capture in Shenyang, how he was rescued by Kim Jung Tai, how he had joined the guerrillas in the Changpai Mountains under the leadership of General Kim Il Sung, and how at last he had followed Kim Il

Sung back to his own country to help to build up the people's power. . . . Of course he also talked about his family. His wife had died of heart trouble during the guerrilla fighting. His younger son — a baby on his mother's back that night they came to our door — was now a well-known tank driver who had won three merits during the last campaign. But he answered none of my questions about Choi Chang Ho, avoiding the subject and looking so grave each time I made an inquiry that, in order not to spoil the festive atmosphere, I did not insist. When the party was ending, however, I could hold myself in check no longer. I told him straight out that I was eager to know Choi's whereabouts because I wanted to return his album.

"All right, I'll take you there tomorrow," he replied.

The next day — the eve of my return to China — I went to his home where he was waiting for me, and we drove out to the country. After some time we stopped at the foot of a hill. Alighting from the car, I found myself before a newly made grave on which was a granite tablet with the inscription:

Here Lies the Immortal Hero Choi Chang Ho

With a pang of distress, I realized the truth. I stood before the grave in a daze. Choi's father stood beside me in silence. Mechanically I took the album from my pocket and placed it solemnly before the grave, then removed my cap and slowly bowed my head. The Choi of my boyhood days came back to me. Such a resourceful, fearless and warm-hearted lad he had been! And now I should never see him again. . . . I could not hold back my tears.

Choi's father laid a gentle hand on my shoulder and said gruffly, "Young man, you should understand better than anybody else that it is no easy task to win freedom and independence. There is a price to pay, sometimes a very high price. . . ." After a pause he resumed, "Chang Ho fell in battle last October. That was when the U.S. invaders were putting up a last desperate fight in an attempt to occupy the area north of Kumbua and the Sang-kumryung hills. They wanted to drive a wedge between the Chinese and Korean armies. Chang Ho was in charge of a detachment defending a strategic point. He held his position, firm as a rock, and forced the enemy further and further back. But

in his last counter-attack he was mortally wounded. The enemy suffered a tremendous defeat, the whole battle cost them more than 25,000 casualties. More important still, that frightened them into signing the cease-fire agreement so that peace was finally restored. . . ."

I raised my head slowly as I grasped the significance of what he was saying. Death comes to every man, but it may be as insignificant as a feather or as sublime as Mount Tai. Choi Chang Ho had given his life for the cause of peace and the happiness of mankind. What could be greater and nobler? A new image of Choi Chang Ho took shape in my mind. No longer the poor shoeblack of my boyhood, but a great man, a hero, I bent down to pick up the album and reverently turned the pages. Yes, Korea was indeed a wonderful land as described in the song Choi had sung me. Now he lay proud and happy for ever in her embrace.

"Choi Chang Ho had a passionate love for his country. He longed to give his all to his motherland," I said. "Now he has had his wish. He has done what he set out to do. He can rest here with no regret. What a pity, though, that I wasn't able to see him and to return him his beloved album. . . ."

Choi's father took the book from me and turned its pages in silence for a while. When he closed it at last his eyes were bright with tears. But he forced a smile as he said:

"I made this album during the most painful period of my life. It represents my son's ideal and my sentiments too. It has a certain historical significance, which you can understand better than anyone else. Let me, on behalf of my son, present this to you. You are the one who most deserves to keep it. . . ."

"Thank you, uncle," I said, unable to find the words to express what I felt. I took his hand and gripped it tightly, reluctant to let it go.

So the album accompanied me back from Korea to my own beloved motherland. To me, it symbolizes not only the beautiful country which my Volunteer comrades and I have defended, but also the friendship formed between a Korean and myself in time of distress and suffering.

*Translated by Chang Su
Illustrations by Ah Lao*

LU CHIEN

Tsang Ko-chia and His Poetry



Tsang Ko-chia has been writing poetry for over thirty years. More than twenty collections of his poems, from his early *Stigma* and *The Dark Hand of Crime* to his recent collections *Cry of Joy* and *Triumphant Return*, echo the voice of history of recent periods and reveal the difficult and tortuous path the poet himself has travelled.

Tsang Ko-chia was born in a family of officials and literati in Chucheng, Shantung Province, in 1905. He spent his childhood in the country, where the miserable lot of the toil-worn peasants

and the lovely scenery left indelible impressions on his mind. In 1923 he went to study in the First Normal School of Tsinan, the provincial capital. This was shortly after the May the Fourth new cultural movement of 1919, and in his quest for knowledge and truth he looked eagerly for revolutionary and progressive

Lu Chien, a poet, was born in 1919 in Shantung Province. His collections of poems include *Fresh Grass* and *The Stream*.

works of literature. In 1926 the fervent young idealist went to Wuhan, then the revolutionary centre opposed to the feudal warlords. New vistas of revolution unfolded before him, and he became a soldier in the Northern Expeditionary Army. In 1927, when the expedition failed, he made his way along the Yangtse Valley to Shanghai, thence to Shenyang and Yilan in the northeast. The events of this period shaped his character, and his dangerous adventures left him with a store of experience which was to prove invaluable material for his writing.

In 1930 he returned to Shantung and enrolled in Tsingtao University, where he made friends with Professor Wen Yi-to, the author of *Stagnant Water* and other poems. This friendship opened up a new path for him. From Wen Yi-to he learned how best to use his imagination and something of the rules of prosody. In 1932 Tsang Ko-chia's poems began to appear in magazines and immediately aroused the interest of readers and writers.

At that time modern Chinese poetry was, in general, listless and insipid, for symbolism and kindred schools were in vogue. Tsang felt that his poems could serve as a small lamp reflecting something of reality, offering a gleam of light in the darkness, a source of vital strength. He used simple language and forceful descriptions to present the decline and turmoil of the countryside, the sorrows of the people, the indignation of honest intellectuals and his own dream of revolution. He conjured up refugees driven far from home by hunger, hired hands hounded from their masters' houses in old age after a life of unremitting toil, charcoal-burners condemned to unspeakable privations after putting their fingerprints on documents which sold them as slaves, prostitutes who tried to retain some inner decency, an old horse heavily loaded and tormented, symbolizing the inhuman plight of the peasants, as well as rickshaw men, workmen, slave girls, fish-vendors, beggars and women driven out of their minds. With these images and pictures of civil war, flood, drought, ruined temples and nights of terror, the poet painted with delicate lines a picture of the dark reality of China at that period.

Yet Tsang Ko-chia was by no means pessimistic. In *Soon the Day Will Come*, published in this issue, he hinted at the coming revolution.

Under the pinions of dark night
A radiant dawn lies waiting.

In *Answer to a Friend*, he wrote:

Peace has vanished from the countryside. . . .
The village story-teller, a grandam of eighty,
Speaks no longer of heroes of old, but of our times.

Fire from Heaven prophesies the destruction of the reactionary ruling class.

When you force sparks from dead ashes,
The world will pass from your hands.

In *The Grand Canal* he used scenes from the past to symbolize the present, describing the history of the canal, the wanton luxury of ancient emperors and the hard lot of the boatmen throughout the centuries, ending with these words:

At this hour, as dusk falls,
Let me ask you this:
Which way will the wind blow tomorrow?

This indicates his longing for the coming storm of revolution.

The years 1932-37 covered the first phase of his writing, when the peasantry was the chief theme of his poems. "I feel for them from my heart," he said. "Their misery distresses and enrages me. I want to identify myself with their fate." It was from the peasants that he drew his inspiration, and this gave his poetry its special quality.

At the same time, however, another major theme was appearing in his poetry and that was opposition to imperialism, especially to Japanese aggression. The Japanese imperialists were encroaching on China's northern territory, and the poet from his childhood had personal experience of the oppression and humiliation inflicted on the Chinese people by the aggressors. *Disaster*, published in this number, was written in 1932, the year after Japan's occupation of northeast China. And passionate indignation made Tsang say:

Give thanks to our enemy. . . .
Who fires his guns to awaken you. . . .
And with one hard shove
Pushed you over disaster's brink. . . .

And so it came to pass. For after the Japanese invaders bombarded Lukouchiao Bridge near Peking in 1937, the Chinese people rose up to resist the aggressors. This war to determine the destiny of the nation aroused the mighty force and passion inherent in the Chinese people and gave Tsang Ko-chia's poetry a new point of departure. His feelings, hitherto suppressed, now burst forth like a volcano, and the style of his poetry changed. The former tone of dignified restraint gave place to a robust impetuosity, while he discarded some of his earlier ornateness in favour of a more fresh and natural style, a quicker, more impassioned tempo.

As he himself said, "As soon as the clarion call for resistance sounded, all my suppressed passion found vent and poured forth unchecked. I wrote poems in the trenches, on my knee instead of at a desk." During the first five years of the war he travelled from his native Shantung to the south, then to Sian, Hsueh, Huangchuan, the Tapieh Mountains and the front lines in Honan and Hupeh, writing poems wherever he went. His sole aim was to help to arouse his compatriots to resist aggression. He did not care whether his lines were well polished or not. In *Joining the Army*, a poem to farewell a friend off to the front, he said:

Wherever the enemy appears,
There is your battlefield!

With soldierly enthusiasm he penned *The Armoured Train Rolls Towards the Front*, while *The Mighty Symphony* pictures a stirring scene in which thousands of men sing of resistance as if with one mighty voice:

The thunder of this mass singing
Is a chorus heralding the storm. . . .
Who can say that great China will perish?

Bloody Spring is another hymn of the war of resistance, in which the poet calls upon his people to drive the enemy from our native soil in order to bring back the spring. His heart was brimming over with grief and yet with confidence too, so that this whole poem had the rhythm of a marching song, and the language used is clear and incisive. This is typical of his style during those years.

Honest patriotism and national pride made Tsang Ko-chia take part in the war of resistance, believing that he would be able to sing freely. But this was not the case. The Kuomintang government's policy was one of appeasement: it forbade the people to resist the Japanese aggressors. Thus within a few years the poet found that he could no longer sing nor remain at the front. In January 1942 Chiang Kai-shek launched a surprise attack on the anti-Japanese New Fourth Army led by the Communist Party in Southern Anhwei. With this worsening of the situation, many revolutionary and progressive intellectuals were arrested or slaughtered. That May, Tsang wrote *Spring Birds* to express his anguish. He envied the spring birds at dawn whose

Exquisite floods of sound . . .
Flow into one pool of abundant life and freedom.

His own fate was different:

Like you, I long to sing;
But the chain round my neck
Is racking my throat with pain.

By means of this strong contrast the poet made his protest against the forces of reaction. This poem was a true record of that age and marked another turning-point in his career.

Tsang Ko-chia travelled some two thousand *li* from the Honan and Hupch fronts to Chungking, where he stayed until the Japanese surrender in 1945. The next year he went to Shanghai. This was a period of doubt and distress for him, for in China's war-time capital in the interior he could not discern a single ray of hope. Disillusioned and frustrated, he poured out his grief and indignation in recollections of life in the countryside, nostalgic memories of his old home and the peasants whom he had known in his childhood days and depicted in his early poems. Although sometimes he voiced a vague and wistful longing for the liberated areas in Shantung, his poetry seemed to have lost touch with the times when compared with the new life in the liberated areas, the new spirit and outlook of the peasants there, and their organized fighting strength. These waverings, however, show the spiritual agony of an honest, patriotic intellectual living under Kuomintang rule.

The poet went through a time of deep mental conflict, but finally his outlook changed again and he entered upon a new phase. In the stormy days from the end of the war to the eve of the liberation in 1949, he wrote a large number of political satires.

Satire has its source in indignation and hatred of evil, in faith and love for what is new. Tsang came to write satires as the result of his long experience of the Kuomintang reactionaries and of comparing the Kuomintang-controlled area with the liberated area led by the Communist Party.

After Japan's defeat the Kuomintang, backed by U.S. imperialism, launched a civil war and plunged the people into fresh calamities. At that time, Tsang Ko-chia came out openly against the reactionary Chiang Kai-shek regime. He described the so-called democracy of the Kuomintang as a "ramshackle shed" which could not withstand wind or rain. He poured scorn on the Kuomintang for robbing the people of the fruits of victory and dividing up the loot among themselves, on those puppet generals who changed their uniform and became Kuomintang "heroes," on the criminal war against the liberated areas and on the Kuomintang "national assembly." He exposed the rule of terror, the bankruptcy of factories, galloping inflation, press-ganging and the misery of the people. *Life's Zero* is an impassioned protest:

A snow-storm the day before yesterday,
And last night eight hundred small corpses.

He announced the imminent downfall of the reactionaries in *Winter*, when he declared:

This bitter cold is not a question of climate;
Surely this will be the last winter.

These satires were not couched in veiled or allusive language like his early poems, but openly and vehemently scourged the enemy. The poet chose as subjects whatever provided the most forceful condemnation, thus his work of this period shows the horror of the last days of the Kuomintang, the darkness before dawn. In this sense the poet was aiding the advance of the people's forces.

In 1949 China was liberated and Tsang Ko-chia's youthful dream was realized at last as the radiant dawn so long awaited came. Living in the new society, he could not suppress his urge

to sing like an oriole in spring. His former heavy, sombre tones have given place to lyrical, tender notes, as he sings with tears of gratitude of the builders of the new life, drawing sustenance from this life. He sings of the stock tender who has recaptured his youth, of the fearless, competent woman bricklayer who is eager to scale the blue sky. In *Gazing at the Central China Plain* he tells us that a letter from a friend reminded him of this region during the war, the mournful River Han and the people's distress; but now new scenes, a new spring have appeared, and he cannot refrain from exclaiming:

The old poverty and suffering swept away,
Water and paddy fields
Stretch green to the horizon!

With pride and joy he sings of the new Constitution:

A towering tree whose thick shade
Is a shelter for hundreds of millions;
A broad sunny avenue leading to the future,
Which countless generations of men will tread.

His new poems are very different from his old ones, whether in the choice of images, structure, language, rhythm and tempo. And yet we can see that they are the natural sequel to the fervent patriotism of his youth and a further development from it.

LI YANG

Shao Yu's Sketches

A sketch of *Red Flowers by the Adriatic* was one of many brought back by the painter Shao Yu from his visit to Albania. It shows a cluster of red flowers in full bloom with high mountains forming a distant background. A few lines indicate waves stirred by a wind at the foot of the mountain. And the waving branches and leaves show the flowers are blooming in the same sea wind. . . . This sketch of red flowers, seen and drawn with deep and poetic feeling by the Adriatic, was the artist's gift to the brave and steadfast Albanian people. They symbolize the friendship of the Chinese for the Albanian people.

With a keen power of observation and analysis Shao Yu is skilled in singling out the typical characteristics of the times from the teeming ocean of life, then he enriches what he sees with a lively imagination to produce, with a great economy of means, rapid, highly characteristic sketches. In *The Land*, a collection of sketches done in his early period, he has described the land reform in the three northeastern provinces. They are a vivid record of this great change in the life of the peasants. *Sketches in the Capital* shows new scenes on the streets of Peking. *On the Borderland* is a collection of sketches made among the national minorities who live in the borderland areas and their new aspect as they work with gaiety and enthusiasm to build their new socialist motherland. *Red Flowers by the Adriatic* is his most recent

Li Yang is a young writer with considerable interest in the arts.

album of sketches, a warmly envisioned souvenir of the life and work of the Albanian people. His sketches have a morning freshness; they sweep away the gloom of the old days and herald the birth of the new.

An artist depicts life according to his loves and hates and these bear the imprint of his personal life experience. Shao Yu matured as a painter in war-time revolutionary struggles. Born in a peasant family in the border regions of the northeast, this talented peasant boy learned from the art of traditional New Year pictures and folk toys. Then, when in middle school a schoolmate showed him some woodcuts by Kathe Kollwitz. He was deeply moved by the art of this great German woman artist and its passionate hatred and denunciation of those who exploit mankind. When the Japanese imperialists invaded the three northeastern provinces in 1931, Shao Yu sadly left his home and escaped south of the Great Wall with many other students. He came to Peiping (present-day Peking) and studied western-style painting in the Peiping Secondary School of Fine Arts. In 1937 when the War of Resistance Against Japan broke out and Peiping was occupied by Japan, he was forced to flee again. Led by deep wrath against the invaders he found the road of revolution. He joined the revolutionary forces led by the Chinese Communist Party and took part in the work of national liberation, of national salvation and of resistance against Japan. Graphic art was his weapon.

Most of his works during this period depicted the struggle of the awakened people against Japanese aggression. These were posters and pictures pasted on street walls to rouse the people's enthusiasm in the fight against the Japanese invaders. In 1940, he joined the Communist-led New Fourth Army fighting the invaders south of the Yangtse. The new people he met and the new life he experienced in this people's army were the inspiration for many new drawings which sang the praises of these people's heroes and were published in the army publications. Unfortunately, none of these drawings have been preserved.

In 1941 the Kuomintang treacherously attacked the New Fourth Army and arrested many of its officers and men. Shao Yu was one of the six hundred arrested and taken to the Shangyao Concentration Camp. Here, he witnessed scenes of unbelievable



Kuomintang ferocity. He saw his comrades-in-arms shot in cold blood or buried alive by the enemy. Even under the muzzles of their gaolers he and his comrades united by a common belief fought on unswervingly. This mortal struggle left an indelible impression on him and fostered in him a profound love for the people and their heroes and a bitter hatred for their tormentors. He was unable to sketch in the camp but more than ten years after the liberation, he drew from memory a series of vivid scenes of life in the camp; they are a bitter denunciation of the bestial cruelty of the reactionaries and a moving tribute to the revolutionaries who gave their life to defend righteousness and truth.

Shao Yu later succeeded in escaping from the camp, and with one of his comrade-in-arms, overcoming unimaginable difficulties, crossing mountains and rivers, searching through cities and villages

and experiencing many dangers, they at last made their way back to the people's army. Shao Yu recorded his experiences during this period in his collection of drawings entitled *Through Mountains and Rivers*. These reflected the corruption of the Kuomintang reactionaries and the awakening of the broad masses of the people during the Japanese imperialist invasion as the artist saw it in the cities and villages he passed through in the latter stages of the War of Resistance Against Japan.

After the victory of the war in 1945 Shao Yu returned to the northeast and took part in the land-reform movement in the great northern wilderness. He himself had been born in a family of hired hands. Side by side with the peasants he struggled against the landlords and local despots and the system of feudal exploitation that had lasted for millennia; together they welcomed the first happy spring of freedom. He used his art to good effect in this struggle. Within a single month he produced more than a hundred paintings in the traditional style showing landlord oppression and exploitation and the peasants' struggle for land. These were collected and published under the title *The Land* which we have already mentioned. "I wanted to write a novel," he says as he recalls that time. "But the excitement I felt at that time simply drove me to express myself in sketches and poems. I wanted to give as many people as I could a more systematic understanding of the crimes and relentlessness of the landlord class as a feudal exploiter." *The Land* was published in 1947 in the northeast. Brought through the reactionary blockade lines, it helped the people in the Kuomintang-controlled areas to feel the spirit of the new age and mobilized them for the great struggle which was transforming the country.

The Land, one of Shao Yu's earlier works, shows clear evidence of Kathe Kollwitz's influence. It flays injustice. A fat landlord is holding the rod he has used to thrash a small, thin swineherd. The little whip the boy uses to drive the pigs is lying on the ground. He is crying his heart out, hiding his head in his arms. Through the sharp contrast of these two images the artist mobilizes the sentiments of the viewer.

The Prisoners Who Resist Japan is from *The Shangyao Concentration Camp* series. It shows a group of revolutionary fighters



being taken to the camp. Their torn clothes show the fierce fight they put up before being captured. Now they are prisoners, but they show no sign of despair. Anger burns in their eyes, and their erect bearing evidences their heroism. Shao Yu uses the technique of the western-style pencil drawing to create a group of deeply moving figures. The whole composition is designed to stress the tragic yet heroic mood of the picture.

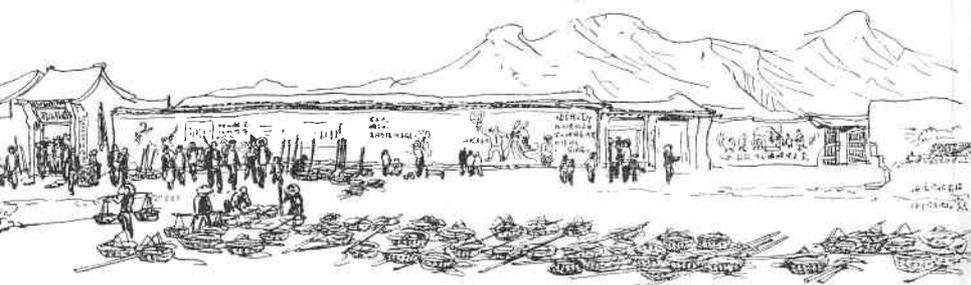
On the Borderland, a collection of drawings and paintings depicting the life of New China, is in quite a different style. *Sending off the Bride* is a genre painting with a tropical flavour. The dark green shades of the broad-leafed tropical plants on the upper half of the picture contrast well with the emerald-coloured crops which, in the lower part, add a gay and lively note to the painting. A group of women of the Tai nationality walk beneath sunshades along a twisting path. They are followed by colourfully dressed younger women who are bearing wedding gifts, their heads turned to each other as they chat merrily. Then come several guests and a girl in a purple skirt accompanying the red-skirted bride who advances slowly as her companion steals a glance at her. The girl in purple is probably whispering a joke to her bashful friend whose head is modestly lowered. The women who follow them may be members of the bride's family. The rear of the procession is brought up by a group of jovially chatting male wedding guests. The whole painting projects the happy animation of the occasion. By skilfully adapting and using the pictorial techniques used in Chinese New-year pictures and folk toys, Shao Yu here has created an original painting in attractively bright and vivid colours and with a delightful rhythm.

Shao Yu is insatiably curious about what is going on about him and eloquently expresses his feelings about what he sees. There is a great love of life in his work. His paintings reflect his world. He lives now in Peking, so naturally the changes in the capital have become a theme of his creative work. He has made sketches of many new construction sites in this ancient city and people enjoying the new life.

During the Big Leap Forward in 1958 Shao Yu went to the mountain villages with many other literary and art workers to make sketches of the new life there. His pen-and-ink sketch *At*

the Headquarters of the Chuolu County Canal Project shows a scene common at that time when the building of water conservancy projects was the order of the day. The long line of baskets and shoulder-poles laid out on the ground show that construction work is under way on a big scale. Peasants stream out from the headquarters on their way to the construction site. On the outside wall of the office is a mural painting of a peasant leading a dragon, symbolizing the peasants' determination and enthusiasm. The situation of the village is indicated by the mountain tops sketched in with a few strokes in the background. With its sparse, expressive lines, this sketch, rich in content, has an ordered composition that grows naturally from its subject and an abounding enthusiasm that comes from the same source.

In the past few years, Shao Yu has put a great deal of effort into learning Chinese traditional painting and particularly its characteristic methods of composition and strength in wielding the brush. His pen-and-ink sketches done during his visit to Albania prove that he can make most skilful use of the creative techniques of Chinese painting. The methods of expression of western-style painting which he learned earlier is blended with what he has learned from traditional Chinese painting. *Hoeing*, in the collec-

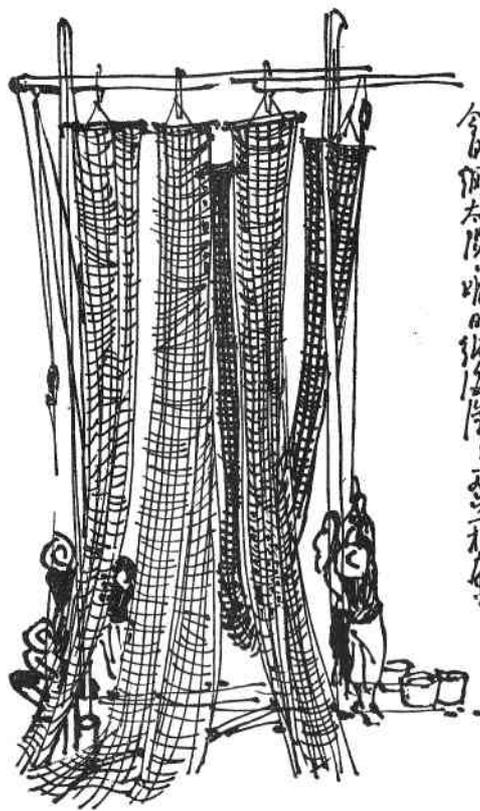


At the Headquarters of the Chuolu County Canal Project



Hoeing

tion Red Flowers by the Adriatic, shows a group of Albanian peasant women hoeing their co-op farm field. The last woman in the row is chatting and laughing as she rests on her hoe while two other women raise their heads to look at her. It is a lively little composition; each of the thirteen women is in a different posture. The two water jars add to the liveliness while balancing the composition. Using blank space in the Chinese style, Shao Yu succeeds in enticing the viewer's imagination to expand the sketch beyond its actual limits. Boundless, fertile soil seems to stretch before the viewer. Shao Yu uses his pen skilfully and with a great variety of strokes. The dots and lines he makes to depict the beautiful skirts of the women produce an atmosphere of joyous activity. He has too a long, smooth and expressive line



Summing the Nets

Today we net the sun;
Tomorrow, the ocean itself.

The words help the viewer the better to sense the aspirations of the fishermen through their hanging nets. It is clear that his verses are influenced by the folk songs of China and match his sketches well.

For many years, no matter whether on a trip in China or abroad or at home in Peking, Shao Yu has never let his sketching hand rest, a militant hand with which he records the life of our age.

今日網太陽
明日網海洋
吾之志也

which he uses to excellent effect. Every stroke adds interest to the sketch and blends harmoniously with its companions making the whole a most attractive artistic whole.

Another characteristic of Shao Yu is his skill in composing and inscribing verses on his sketches. The combination of poetry and calligraphy with painting is an old tradition in Chinese art. Shao Yu's purpose in inscribing verses on his sketches is to induce the viewer to meditate. On his sketch *Summing the Nets*, from the life of the fishermen, he writes:

Introducing a Classical Painting

TSO HAI

Chou Hsun's "Waiting for a Ferry"

Our reproduction is of a painting of a classical hero done towards the end of the seventeenth century. He stands in his white-soled, black satin shoes with uncompromising strength in the middle of the painting. His beard reaches to his chest. A red pompon bobs on his hood. A purple cloak is thrown around his dark-blue satin gown which is tied at the waist with a sash. The pommel of his sword protrudes from under his cloak on his left side. His two hands are thrust into his sleeves. His proud brows show courage. His eyes stare solemnly into the distance. There is no indication as to the identity of this swordsman* of ancient China. Except for the title, *Waiting for a Ferry*, on the upper left-hand corner, there is nothing else in the painting: neither river nor ferry-boat is shown. It is a typical example of the laconism of the traditional Chinese painting. The title, the spiritual aspect of the figure depicted, is enough for the viewer to divine the painter's meaning.

The painter is Chou Hsun, both a swordsman and a painter who lived during the reigns of the Emperors Kang-hsi and Yung-

Tso Hai is a well-known art critic and a connoisseur of classical Chinese painting. In *Chinese Literature* No. 7 of this year we published an article of his on the artist Huang Chou.

* Swordsman or *chien-hsia* in Chinese is one who considered it his sacred mission, often carried out in great secrecy, to champion the weak and victims of despotism and uphold justice and the right.

cheng of the Ching dynasty in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. History identifies him as a descendant of the Ming emperors (1368-1644), whose real surname was Chu. He changed his name to Chou after the Ming dynasty was overthrown. A native of Honan Province, he drifted to Kiangsu Province and lived in Nanking. Dissatisfied with the rule of the Ching dynasty he learned to read and fence even as a child and grew up to stalwart manhood, excelling in both civic knowledge and military skill. He was quick to make friends and, loving travel, travelled widely through the country. He eventually became friends with various other *chien-hsia* such as Kan Feng-chih who lived south of the Yangtse and was among the 185 persons arrested about the year 1729 for activities against the Ching dynasty. The official records give no clear account of the fate of these men. Some stories say that Chou Hsun and Kan Feng-chih were condemned to death; others say that Chou lived till he was eighty. How his life ended we do not know for certain but what we do know gives added significance to this painting. Is it a self-portrait of Chou Hsun "waiting for a ferry"?

As early as the reign of the Emperor Kang-hsi (1662-1722), Chou Hsun was known for his paintings of human figures, dragons, horses and flowers and plants. Legend has it that he once hung an ink painting of a dragon on the Yellow Crane Tower in Wuchang, Hupeh Province. He put a price of a hundred taels of silver on it. This was a considerable sum in those days but an official who had come to the tower on an outing saw it and appreciated it so much that he exclaimed: "It is well worth the price!" On hearing this praise Chou Hsun immediately presented the discerning official with the painting. "I don't really want money for it," he declared. "Since you appreciate it, I regard you from now on as my bosom friend. I would like to present it to you." His fame spread wider following this incident. And indeed his paintings of dragons are done with a lively, forceful brush.

But his best works are undoubtedly his figure paintings. In these he achieved a style of great vigour and originality. He learned much from the brushwork of Wu Tao-tzu and Li Kung-ling, masters of the eighth and eleventh centuries respectively, both of them famous figure painters, and also from the fifteenth-

century painters Chang Lu and Wu Wei, but he added his own gallant steadfast spirit to produce a style of his own.

In this painting of a swordsman, every line, thick or thin, on the clothes and the brows and beard is as strong as steel wire. Most of them are forcefully drawn with the very tip of the brush. This treatment is patterned after the "iron thread method" of Wu Tao-tzu and Li Kung-ling; the many freer lines are patterned after the brushwork used by Chang Lu and Wu Wei. But the strength and the spirit of the figure are entirely the original invention of the painter himself, characteristics which were inseparable from his own experience of life.

Chou Hsun shows many original touches in his use of ink and colour too. Using a light wash of ink he has tinted to a darker tone the whole picture space around the figure of the swordsman. By this means he has achieved two aims: he has given even greater prominence to the figure and also indicated the descending dusk that is slowly obscuring the surroundings. This has heightened the expectant and romantic atmosphere of the painting.

Chinese ink can give a range of tone from a light, hardly perceptible wash to the deepest black. A characteristic of the technique of Chinese traditional painting is skilful use of this property of ink, and Chou Hsun was adept in this. He was also skilled in his use of colours, achieving most effective results by combining the use of ink and colours. For instance, the edge of the hood near the forehead of the swordsman was painted with a light shade of ink with a little indigo blue added to it. The ink was applied more heavily where the hood hangs down over the side of the swordsman's head, with the heaviest part as dark as black lacquer. This gives the viewer a feeling of the velvet texture, substance and lustre of the cloth. The lustre of the blue satin gown was also achieved by using ink mixed with indigo blue.

A study of how the cloak was painted is also rewarding. Colour was applied to the back of the picture surface to produce light shades on the front while several layers of colour were applied on the front to create the deeper shades of purple. Light ink and heavier colour were used inside the folds and finally red-tinted ink was used to stress the lines of the cloak to create the impression of thickness and weight. In general, Chou Hsun

makes striking use of bright colours but controls them so that they are not raucous, but soft and solemn in tone, pleasant to the eye, and suited to the dignity of the swordsman.

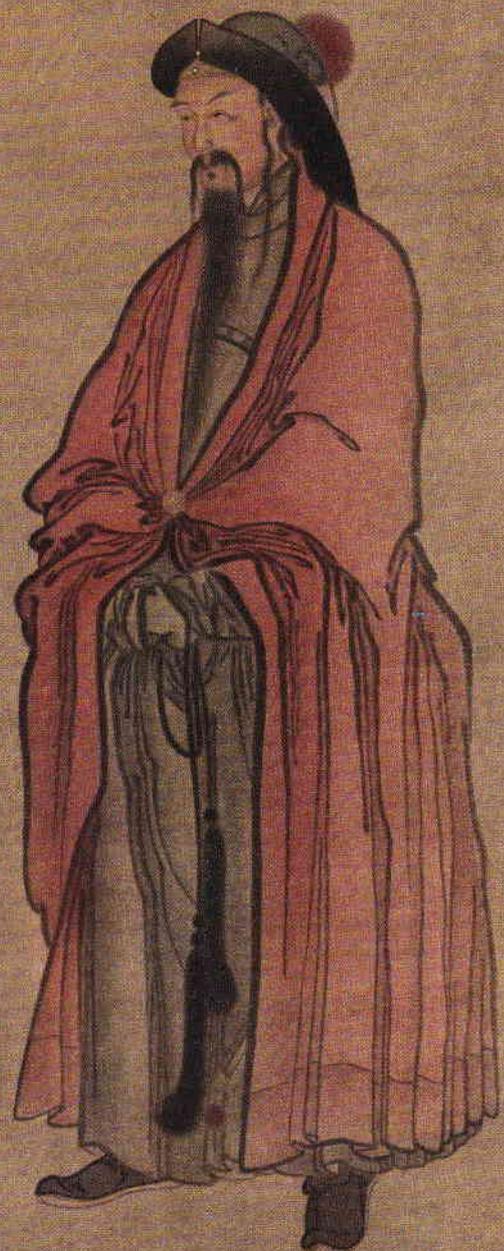
The face of the figure too calls for special attention for it shows the painter's skill in characterization. The swordsman is handsome and refined, a man of culture. His probing eyes, scanning the distance, show that he is an unusual man; the fine-drawn wrinkles at the corners of his eyes show that he has weathered many a storm and that he is a man of wisdom and perspicacity.

Every minute detail of the painting was executed with the utmost care. Every stroke is thoroughly thought out. The red pompon on the hood and the tassels on the sword scabbard are meticulously painted to achieve the texture of real silk. The sash is done with a similar respect for reality. The ivory button on the front of the purple cloak is depicted with great care to show the hardness of the ivory. The two pearls shining one below the other on the front of the hood catch the eye of the viewer. All these details show how conscientious was Chou Hsun in his creative work.

In the more than two hundred and forty years since Chou Hsun's paintings were done there has been no further development of his art; his school of figure painting has not been popularized. He apparently took no apprentices during his life. This may have been because of his wandering existence. Fortunately, his son Chou Liang learned from him and I have seen some figure paintings and paintings of dragons, horses, flowers and plants by him done in his father's style. Chou Li-pen, son of Chou Liang, was the third generation of Chou Hsun's school. But he never reached the standards either of his father or grandfather. Later painters have highly esteemed Chou Hsun's works and would have liked to learn from and carry on the legacy of his creative method but unfortunately few of his paintings have been located.

Waiting for a Ferry by Chou Hsun ►

待渡圖
嵩山周煥寫



Recent Publications

The Collected Works of Chu Chiu-pai

People's Literature Publishing House, Peking

Chu Chiu-pai (1899-1935) was one of the early leaders of the new literary movement in China. As a student he took part in the May the Fourth Movement of 1919 started by patriotic young intellectuals in Peking as a new cultural movement opposed to imperialism and feudalism. In 1921 he went as a reporter of the *Peking Morning News* to Moscow, where he joined the Chinese Communist Party in the spring of 1922, returning to China in December of that year. Thereafter he was active in the world of letters and an outstanding proletarian revolutionary. Together with Lu Hsun, the founder of China's new literature, he helped to carry forward the tradition of the May the Fourth Movement, raising it to greater heights. The China League of Left-wing Writers was established in 1930 under their joint leadership. This made the new Chinese literature, led by revolutionary writers, an important component part of the Chinese people's revolution.

As a revolutionary writer, Chu Chiu-pai's activities were many and varied. He was a good prose writer, a literary theorist, a distinguished editor and a brilliant leader of the literary movement. His theoretical writing made an important contribution to laying the foundations of China's new literature. It was he who started the discussion on the literary revolution and the reform of the Chinese language, who advocated writing for the masses, introduced and reviewed the works of Lu Hsun and other contemporary revolutionary writers, and waged a pitiless struggle against reactionary literary theories. He also introduced many Marxist works on literary theory and translated masterpieces of world revolutionary literature as models for China's new writing. In this way he helped to guide the new literature on to the path of revolution, bringing it closer to the people and making it serve them. This marked the beginning of a new age in Chinese literature.

At the same time Chu Chiu-pai was a fine Communist and brilliant worker for the Party. In July 1927 he was elected secretary of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1934 he be-



came minister of education of the worker-peasant democratic government, and president of the Soviet University in the central revolutionary base of southern Kiangsi and western Fukien. When the Red Army's main force set off from the Kiangsi base on the Long March to Szechuan and Shensi, serious tuberculosis forced Chu Chiu-pai to stay behind. On June 18, 1935 he was murdered by the Kuomintang reactionaries at Lohan Ridge in Changting County, Fukien. He was then thirty-six years old. His comrade-in-arms Lu Hsun, then in Shanghai, was bitterly distressed and outraged by the news of his death. To commemorate his friend, Lu Hsun, although mortally ill himself, edited the writings of Chu Chiu-pai left in his hands. Before his death in September 1936, Lu Hsun succeeded in publishing two large volumes of Chu Chiu-pai's writings entitled *Shanghai Miscellany*.

Edited and designed with loving care by Lu Hsun, this work attained a quality rare among Chinese publications of that time. Printed on fine paper with excellent illustrations, it was solidly bound with brocade and cloth covers. Lu Hsun wrote: "I am publishing his writings as an act of commemoration and as a protest, a demonstration. . . . They (the Kuomintang reactionaries) have killed the man but they cannot kill his writings, these will never die!"

Shanghai Miscellany totals nearly 800,000 characters. The first volume comprises literary theory, important writings on literature by Engels, Lenin, Plekhanov, Lafargue and Gorky, and some of Chu Chiu-pai's own notes and commentaries on these writings. The second volume consists largely of translations from foreign literature,

including more than ten stories and essays by Gorky and Lunacharsky's *Don Quixote Liberated*.

Soon after the liberation in 1949, a committee was set up to carry on with the work of collecting, compiling, studying, editing and publishing Chu Chiu-pai's writing. Sources have been checked and a search made to find out where his work first appeared. The printed versions have also been compared with such original manuscripts as remain. The recently published *Collected Works* includes his most important creative writing, literary criticism and translations. (His political writing will be brought out separately.) The order followed in these three categories is mainly chronological. The *Collected Works*, in 1,780,000 words, is divided into four volumes of two parts each, altogether eight parts.

Part I contains his earliest creative writing dating from the early twenties, *Journey to the Land of Hunger* and *Thoughts in the Red Capital*, as well as two short articles he wrote in 1923 after his return from the Soviet Union. These are China's earliest records of the political and social conditions of the world's first socialist state in its infancy. *Journey to the Land of Hunger* opens with a description of life in semi-feudal and semi-colonial China, "darkness, gloom, a biting wind, the stench of filth, and not a ray of sunlight in men's life." He recalled the family of impoverished literati into which he was born, the revolutionary student movements of his early days, and his experiences on the way from Peking to Moscow. To him the October Revolution was "splendid, magnificent sunlight which he had never seen before." He hailed the "stream of brightness, red as blood, which is spreading to illumine the whole world. The earth is covered with red blossoms dyed with fighters' blood; that red light gleams as brightly as the radiance of dawn or sunset so that, no matter how vast the universe, it will soon all be enveloped in this red glory." He declared, "I want to change our surroundings, develop the potentialities of the individual, find a proper solution for the 'China problem,' and play my humble part in guiding Chinese society along the new path of life."

Thoughts in the Red Capital, in forty-six chapters, describes his travels and all he saw in Moscow, his reading and his views. Written in the form of a diary, he called it "a draft record of my mind."

In 1922 Chu Chiu-pai returned to China to take an active part in the revolutionary movement led by the Chinese Communist Party. Between 1931 and 1933 he stayed in Shanghai because he had tuberculosis, and helped Lu Hsun to lead the left-wing cultural movement. Most of his writing and translation work, the main bulk of the last

seven parts of the *Collected Works*, was done in the short space of these three years, in spite of his poor health.

Part II presents *Miscellaneous Jottings on Literature, A Medley of Tunes* and *Miscellaneous Jottings, Second Series*. These contain poems and prose written after 1923, mostly in the early thirties. The essays here constitute a most important part of his literary writing. Similar in kind to Lu Hsun's essays but with Chu Chiu-pai's individual style, they sharply criticized and attacked the foreign imperialists who plundered and oppressed the Chinese people, the Kuomintang clique which was enforcing fascist rule, and the sycophantic writers who served the reactionaries. They voiced fervent longing for the coming revolution. In order to avoid trouble from the Kuomintang censorship, Lu Hsun had some of the best of these essays like *Poems on the Kingly Way*, *A Gloomy Answer* and *The Trick of Selling Yourself* copied out in another hand and published under pen-names adopted by Lu Hsun himself. On such occasions, Chu Chiu-pai deliberately imitated Lu Hsun's style to make these appear very much like Lu Hsun's essays. Indeed, since the contents were mostly the product of their conversations at night, they contained Lu Hsun's ideas as well as his own; and later Lu Hsun included them in some of his collections of essays to secure them wider circulation. These are noted works of modern Chinese literature.

Part III is wholly devoted to theoretical writing, including *Russian Literature Before the October Revolution* and *Some Russian and Soviet Writing*, the earliest systematic introductions to China of the history of Russian and Soviet literature. Here too are *The Literary Revolution and Some Problems Regarding the Chinese Language* and *A Draft Plan for the New Chinese Language*, as well as *On Literature for the masses*, which consists of six important articles written in 1931 and 1932 on the problem of making literature accessible to the masses. Chu Chiu-pai believed that literature for the proletariat should be written at once and serious steps taken to solve the following problems:

1. What sort of language should be used?
2. What subjects should be chosen?
3. What should the purpose of such writing be?
4. How should a start be made?
5. What measures should be taken?

Chu Chiu-pai gave his views on these problems from the Marxist standpoint. The end of Part III consists of eight articles under the

general heading *Discussions on Literature*. These include the famous *Freedom in Literature and Lack of Freedom Among Writers*, and make a penetrating analysis of certain fundamental problems of Marxist literary theory, such as the class nature of literature, the role of literature in society and the class struggle, and the relationship between politics and art. There is also the brilliant 10,000-word preface to his selection of Lu Hsun's essays. This was the first correct and comprehensive analysis of Lu Hsun's mental growth and the place of his essays in modern Chinese literature. Chu Chiu-pai made this acute summary of Lu Hsun's ideological development: "Lu Hsun has advanced from the theory of evolution to that of class struggle, from the position of a rebel of the upper class to that of a true friend of the proletariat and labouring people, a genuine fighter. He has taken part in struggles for a quarter of a century, from before the 1911 Revolution to the present day, joining the new camp as a result of his own painful experience and penetrating observation, and bringing with him a valuable revolutionary tradition." He enumerated the characteristics of Lu Hsun's essays as follows: first, the most sober realism; secondly, a firm, resilient fighting spirit; thirdly, anti-liberalism; fourthly, opposition to hypocrisy. These, he said, are "the most important qualities in Lu Hsun, the writer and thinker."

Besides translating numerous works of foreign literature and literary theory, Chu Chiu-pai was also the first to introduce the views on literature of Marx, Engels and Lenin in a systematic way. Part IV presents his translations of Engels' letter to Margaret Harkness and his articles on Balzac and Ibsen, as well as important writings on literature by Plekhanov, Lafargue's articles on Zola, and Lenin's articles on Tolstoy. In addition there are certain notes and explanations by Chu Chiu-pai himself. All these played a useful part in the fierce debates carried on among writers of that period on such questions as the relationship between literature and politics, the class nature of literature and the freedom of the writer. They served as valuable guides for revolutionary writers.

Parts V and VI contain translations of creative writing including Gogol's play *The Servant's Room*, Tolstoy's *Three Deaths* and three other stories, and Chekhov's *Excellent People*. Most important of all, however, are Gorky's two early stories *Twenty-six Men and a Girl* and *Malva, Song of the Stormy Petrel*, *Comrades*, *The Mordvinian Girl*, *A Droll Story* and his autobiography, as well as Lunacharsky's analysis of Gorky, *Writer and Politician*. In a postscript

to these translations Chu Chiu-pai said, "Gorky's writings are writings to awaken us, for they can teach us how to live tomorrow."

Part VII contains twenty-four of Gorky's essays translated in 1932. This was the first Chinese translation of Gorky's essays, which Chu Chiu-pai considered "reflect different aspects of the great struggle of the world. He exposes false humanism and liberalism, scourges philistine individualism and incurable self-interest, comes out strongly against all forms of exploitation, slaughter, tyranny and war. . . . He supports the only sacred war in the world, the war to eliminate all exploiting classes. He praises the rational power of the labouring people, the leadership of the working class and its creativeness. He penetratingly exposes the lethargy of the petty-bourgeoisie and detests the philistines who persist in sitting on the fence between the capitalists and the workers. . . ."

Part VIII presents his translation of Pushkin's *The Tziganes* and poems by Gorky and Bedny as well as writings by Serafimovitch, Gladkov, Pavlenko, and Lunacharsky's *Don Quixote Liberated* and Hans Marchwitza's great novel *Sturm Auf Essen* which vividly depicts the heroic struggle of the German workers in 1920. Before Chu Chiu-pai's death, he made great efforts to have this, the first proletarian novel in Germany, published in a separate volume; but the reactionaries would not allow this. Lu Hsun preserved the manuscript which is now being published in Chinese for the first time.

Chu Chiu-pai never ceased to challenge and attack the decadent old culture, the reaction and conservatism that old China represented and all enemies of the people. All his creative writing, literary criticism, research work and translations are imbued with the spirit of the age and clearly intended to play a part in the social struggle. They had indeed the role of a vanguard of the revolutionary cultural front during the dark days of reactionary rule, and they have exercised a great and lasting influence on our writers, becoming a most valuable part of our heritage of modern Chinese literature.

— Hu Yu

The Collected Works of Hung Shen

Drama Publishing House, Peking

Hung Shen (1894-1955), born in Changchow, Kiangsu, was an outstanding dramatist since the May the Fourth Movement, a talented director and the author of numerous scenarios and monographs dealing



with dramatic theory, who made great contributions to China's young modern drama and cinema. His *Collected Works* in four volumes totalling more than a million and a half words includes all his important writings and forms a valuable part of the history of the modern drama in China.

While still a student of Tsinghua University in Peking, Hung Shen took a great interest in modern drama. He first tried his hand at a play in 1915. Volume I of the *Collected Works* contains six plays written between 1916 and 1932. Recalling how he wrote the first play in this volume, *A Tragedy of Poor Folk* (1916), the playwright said, "Soon after going to Tsinghua, I made friends with all the poor people in the vicinity, especially the stall-keepers, rickshaw-men, cart drivers and donkey-men outside the university gate. I often cracked jokes with them and by degrees came to converse with them freely." This play, based on his observations, expresses great sympathy for the hard lot of the poor.

The second play, *Chao the Killer* (1922), was his first stage success. It describes an honest peasant, who joins the army, is driven by poverty to rob the battalion commander of money he has embezzled, and then escapes to the forest. Fear makes him lose his mind and finally he is killed by soldiers sent by the commander. This play exposes the evils of the reactionary rule of the feudal warlords.

Later Hung Shen wrote, "*My Tragedy of Poor Folk* and *Chao the Killer* were taken straight from life, based on my own experience

and observation, and charged with genuine feeling. They were not written to suit the fashion of that time. . . . The theatre should serve mankind, should voice the sorrows of men." Since this was the idea underlying his early writing, from the very start his plays were closely linked with social reality and the labouring people.

In 1923 Hung Shen started teaching in universities in Shanghai and joined the Drama Club. He worked with the late Ouyang Yuchien, another promoter of the modern drama, and directed the performance of *The Young Lady's Fan*, as well as other plays. His activities helped to lay the foundation of modern Chinese stagecraft and marked the beginning of the art of direction in the modern Chinese theatre.

The Young Lady's Fan, the third play in Volume I, is an adaptation of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, but Hung Shen had in mind the Chinese society of his day and his postscript explained, "Although social abuses vary according to the place and time, the same human frailties are often to be found in different countries now as in the past, and those described in Oscar Wilde's play seem much the same as those in our own society." In this way he imparted fresh social significance to this nineteenth-century social satire.

In 1930 Hung Shen joined the left-wing literary movement and became a fearless fighter in the vanguard of progressive literature. Volume I also presents his trilogy on village life written between 1930 and 1932: *Wukuei Bridge*, *Fragrant Rice* and *Green Dragon Pool*. These were the first plays of the May the Fourth period to deal comprehensively with the wretched lot of the peasants and their courageous struggle.

Wukuei Bridge tells how peasants during a drought try to ship a water-pump to their village, but their boat cannot pass under low Wukuei Bridge, the property of Landlord Chou. On the pretext that this bridge brings luck to his family, Chou refuses to let them destroy it and fetches the local justice to intimidate them. Eventually, however, the peasants led by young Li Chuan-sheng pull the bridge down, defying the might of the landlord class.

Fragrant Rice is concerned with the bankruptcy of the rural economy. Although the peasants have a good harvest, owing to the import of foreign rice, the manipulation of prices by unscrupulous merchants and the harsh taxation imposed by the government, the price of rice drops so low that the farmers lose money.

The theme of *Green Dragon Pool* is some peasants' sacrifice to heaven to beg for rain in time of drought. Through the mouth of the young peasant Li Chuan-sheng, the author exposes the craftiness

of the local justice and the reformist outlook of the school teacher, but he fails to show how the peasants could change their fate. The best of these three plays is *Wukuei Bridge* which had a great influence in its day. A truthful reflection of the class conflicts in the countryside during the thirties, it is one of the outstanding plays of the May the Fourth Movement.

Volume II in this collection contains seven plays written between 1936 and the time of the author's death. Only the last, *This Is the American Way of Life*, was written after liberation. The first six date from the War of Resistance Against Japan, when Hung Shen devoted all his energy to patriotic tasks and wrote a series of outstanding one-act plays like *Contraband* and *Salt Fish*. Under the leadership of Chou En-lai and Kuo Mo-jo, he and other noted playwrights such as Tien Han and Yang Han-sheng organized ten dramatic troupes to tour villages and cities in the southwest advocating resistance and national salvation. *Men with Wings* (1937), *Pao the Dauntless* (1939) and *Rising Early at Cockcrow* (1945) all have the war of resistance as their theme and played a positive part in arousing public indignation and supporting the resistance against Japan. The sixth play in this volume, *Women, Women* (1946), touches on marriage, family education, child welfare and other problems of women. All Hung Shen's plays of this period show his deep hatred for imperialist aggression and corruption of the Kuomintang reactionaries, his just indignation and fervent patriotism.

Hung Shen also contributed much to China's young film industry. In 1924 he started to write scenarios and direct films, and by the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1937 he had written and directed more than ten outstanding films. The earliest Chinese films had no scenarios, it was Hung Shen who introduced the film-script form to China, who founded the Chinese Film School and trained talents for this new industry. Volume III of his *Collected Works* contains four scenarios, one radio play and four articles on the direction and staging of drama and films.

The Woman Named Shentu, Hung Shen's first film script, tells the story of a gallant woman in the Sung dynasty who avenges her husband's death, and this historical theme is imbued with the spirit of revolt.

Master Feng (1925) was Hung Shen's first shooting script for a silent film, while *The Singsong Girl Red Peony* (1931) was the first shooting script for a sound film in China. These innovations mark his role as a pioneer in the Chinese film industry.

Downtrodden Peach Blossom (1933) is the story of the family of Chu, a retired official at the beginning of the twentieth century. They live in Tsingtao under the rule of German colonialists and are oppressed by a German and his interpreter. After the First World War Japanese imperialism takes over from the Germans in Tsingtao, but Chu and his family continue to be persecuted by a nephew who is a traitor serving the Japanese. This is a successful film with an anti-imperialist theme.

The Gong, a minor piece in this volume, was one of the earliest radio plays in China.

Volume IV of the *Collected Works* contains two long informative monographs, *Introduction to Modern Drama* (1935) and *Dramatic Movements and Dramatic Education in China in the Ten Years Since the Outbreak of the War* (1947). There are also more than twenty articles, including reviews and essays. This volume ends with a short biography of Hung Shen by Ouyang Yu-chien and a list of his main writings.

These four volumes of his *Collected Works* reveal the important contribution made by Hung Shen to the modern Chinese theatre and to the Chinese film. We can see his life and struggles, how he advanced from sympathy for the poor to take the path of revolution and became a resolute fighter against imperialism. For instance, in the early thirties when the American film *Shanghai Express* was shown in Shanghai, Hung Shen made a strong protest in the cinema, exposing the true nature of this film which was an insult to the Chinese people and an instrument of U.S. cultural aggression. His words won such a response that the audience walked out *en masse*. And although this was a minor incident, it shows his ardent patriotism and inveterate hatred of imperialism.

After the liberation in 1949, Hung Shen was active in promoting cultural exchanges with foreign countries and in work to defend world peace. While suffering from cancer of the lungs, he directed *The Fascist Germ* and *Our Desire for Forty Years*, and planned to write more plays. A tireless dramatist, he worked in his chosen field persistently till his death in August 1955 which was counted a great loss to the Chinese literary world.

— Wu Chih

Chronicle

Shanghai Spring Music Festival

The people of Shanghai hold a festival of music each May known as the Shanghai Spring Music Festival. This year they had forty-three concerts at which were performed 222 items in ten different categories including popular songs, symphonic music, grand choruses, folk music, folk songs and chamber music. There were also *erb-hu* and violin contests between musicians from six eastern provinces and from nine cities including Peking, Shanghai and Tientsin.

The outstanding feature of this year's festival was the emphasis on revolutionary and mass music. The festival opened with the mass singing of the Chinese national anthem and the *Internationale*. Then a workers' chorus sang *One Heart by One Loom*, soldiers sang *We Must Liberate Taiwan*, students sang *Advance Under the Banner of Mao Tse-tung*, and children sang *Fly, Little Dove*. All these were stirring revolutionary songs.

Storms of applause greeted more than thirty songs from Asia, Africa and Latin America sung by Shanghai professional and amateur choirs.

The performance of symphonic music aroused particular interest, for most of the instrumental pieces were composed by Shanghai musicians in recent years to reflect revolutionary struggles and socialist construction. These included the symphonic poem *Monument to the People's Heroes* and the *Gada Mirin Cello Concerto*. Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* was also performed with other foreign classical music.

Folk singers from ten nationalities presented their fine folk songs from the hills and grasslands. Nine of these young minority singers were performing in Shanghai for the first time.

During the festival Shanghai composers, singers and musicians, both professional and amateur, held discussion with musicians from elsewhere on the promotion of the new upsurge in mass singing, the development of national music and of the technique of singing and performing socialist music.

Albums of Paintings and Woodcuts

The Chinese Artists' Union and People's Art Publishing House have jointly edited several albums of works by modern Chinese artists, as part of their systematic introduction of modern Chinese art. Recent publications include paintings by Wu Ching-ting and Huang Chou, and woodcuts by Li Shao-yen, Yang Na-wei and Chao Tsung-chao. Each album contains twenty reproductions.

The album of Wu Ching-ting's paintings introduces landscapes in the traditional style by this artist who is nearing sixty and has made a careful study of traditional techniques. After liberation he made three sketching tours of the Yangtse Valley, the northwest and the upper reaches of the Yangtse, and this induced him to modify his earlier style in order to express new themes with the old techniques. This album includes his early works like *The Red Pavilion* as well as paintings done in the last ten years.

The paintings by Huang Chou consist mainly of work done since 1962. Huang Chou is a figure painter who uses traditional techniques to depict the men and women of our new society in a fresh, vigorous and polished style. *Chinese Literature* No. 8 this year published an article introducing his work.

Li Shao-yen is a woodcut artist brought up in the revolutionary ranks. In the early years of the war of resistance woodcuts were his hobby. He did not become a professional artist until 1941. The album devoted to his work includes woodcuts showing life in the old liberated areas, *Marching at Night*, *Camping in the Open*, *Reconstruction*, *By the Lake* and *The Lonely Stream*, as well as his illustrations for the novel *Red Crag*. His work has a striking directness and simplicity.

The album of Yang Na-wei's woodcuts contains representative work by this veteran artist. *Where Should the Refugees Go? Taking up Arms Again* and *Blood on Red-flower Mount* expose the dark rule of the Kuomintang, the suffering of the people and their revolutionary struggle. Yang has experimented with different styles and borrowed certain techniques from ancient Chinese stone reliefs to bring out the spirit of his figures by means of fine, simple line drawings.

Chao Tsung-chao is a young woodcut artist. *Spring the Whole Year Round*, *Farming and Weaving at Nanniwan* and other reproductions in his album show that he has picked up features from folk art, boldly ignored the usual conventions of time and space, and adopted

traditional methods of composition and decorative treatment. Works like *Bumper Harvest in the Gobi Desert*, with its use of traditional wood-block print technique, are distinctively Chinese in style.

The Hundred Flowers Film Poll

Last year the *Popular Cinema* monthly in Shanghai initiated an annual Hundred Flowers Film Poll and asked film-fans to vote for the best films, directors, actors, actresses and other film workers. Recently the second Hundred Flowers Film Poll was held, and the *Popular Cinema* office received as many as 180,000 voting papers.

Li Shuang-shuang, a comedy about a young peasant couple and the new life in a rural people's commune, was voted the best feature film. The young scenario writer of this film, Li Chun, won the award for the best scenario writer. Chang Jui-fang, who played the title role, was acclaimed the best actress; and Chung Hsing-huo, who played Li Shuang-shuang's husband, won the award for the best supporting actor.

Wang Ping, woman director of the feature film *Locust Tree Village*, was voted the best film director for her handling of this story about class struggle in the countryside.

Chang Liang was chosen best actor for his portrayal of the twin brothers Ta-hu and Erh-hu, who look alike but are actually very different in temperament, in the comedy *Twin Brothers*.

Kuo Chen-ting and Yin Chih won the award for the best cameramen for their photography in *Third Sister Liu*, an opera film based on a folk legend from the Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region. Lei Chen-pang won a prize for the music he composed for this film and Tung Ching-wen and Chang Chi-wang received awards for their sets.

Facts About the Sino-Indian Boundary Question was voted the best full-length documentary, while its cameramen Tse Jen, Tien Feng, Chhimedondrub and Trashiiyangdui won the award for the best documentary photography.

Public Enemy Chiang Kai-shek took the prize for the best documentary short.

The Wise Old Man was judged the best scientific and educational film. And other awards went to the best animated film and the best opera film.

Recital by a Young Pianist

The well-known young Chinese pianist Liu Shih-kun, who is twenty-three this year, not long ago gave a recital in the Nationalities Cultural Palace Theatre in Peking. This was the first piano recital in China at which all the items performed were composed by Chinese musicians. The choice of repertoire showed the young musician's eagerness to bring piano music to the masses and to popularize national music.

He played thirteen pieces familiar and dear to the audience, including Ting Shan-teh's *Song of Children*, Ho Lu-ting's *Soirée*, Fang Kun's *Boatman's Song*, four items adapted by the pianist himself from the Chinese ballet *The Mermaid*, his own *Impromptu Music for the White-haired Girl*, and the powerful *Youth Piano Concerto* which he composed with other musicians to express the burning desire of young people for revolution.

The central theme of the *Boatman's Song* is the life of Chinese boatmen after liberation, their battle against racing waves and dangerous rapids, their optimism and pride in their work. *Songs of Children*, gay and brimful of vitality, was performed eight years ago by Liu Shih-kun when he was still wearing a young pioneer's red scarf. The audience was stirred by his impassioned and mature performance in this recital, which conveyed such a strong feeling of our age.

Reproductions of Ancient Art

The People's Art Publishing House in Peking recently brought out three albums of reproductions of ancient Chinese art: *Rubbings of Han Bricks Discovered in Honan*, *Han Dynasty Terracotta Tomb Figures from Szechuan* and *Stone Relief Portraits of Sages by Li Kung-ling*.

Rubbings of Han Bricks Discovered in Honan has reproductions of the designs on bricks of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), when ornamented hollow bricks were used in tombs. These brick designs, which form an integral part of Han pictorial art, reflect the social life of that period, depicting the same subjects as those on Han dynasty stone reliefs and frescoes. Here are chariots and horses, scenes of hunting and tours of inspection, dances and acrobatics, all concisely executed, simple and vivid. This album provides

eighty-one rubbings from Han bricks and one from a brick of the Warring States period (475-221 B. C.).

The forty-seven reproductions from *Han Dynasty Terracotta Tomb Figures from Szechuan* were chosen from the best figurines excavated in the province of Szechuan. The terracotta figures buried with other pottery funerary objects are a truthful portrayal of the labouring people who served their masters as slaves, and they give us an insight into the luxurious life of the ruling class. These figurines are remarkably vivid and realistic. Their faces are most expressive, the drapery of their clothes hangs in beautiful lines. They are presented in a wide range of action: dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, telling stories, carrying burdens, or waiting on their masters. . . . And in every case their different functions and distinctive personalities are clearly defined.

Stone Relief Portraits of Sages by Li Kung-ling is a collection of rubbings from stone carvings made by a famous figure painter of the late eleventh century. The sages are Confucius and his seventy-two disciples. The artist succeeded brilliantly in conveying the thoughts, feelings and characteristics of these different men.

Asian and African Literature Series

The Writers' Publishing House in Peking has recently published eighteen works of modern Asian and African literature, including novels, stories, plays and poems from fourteen countries.

Works of fiction include *The Mystery of the Snake Island* by Martin Wickramasinghe of Ceylon, a story about two Ceylonese children who open up virgin soil and mature in the course of their labours. The Japanese writer Yoshie Hotta's *Kibuki Island* tells of two young lovers in one of Japan's southern islands who are forbidden to marry, but who fight courageously against reaction and finally break the fetters of tradition. This tale reflects the profound changes in the Japanese countryside since the war. The Korean writer Chun Sui Bong's novel *The Land Under Silvery Clouds* takes as its theme the campaign to increase production in the rear during the Korean people's war against U.S. imperialist aggression. Its hero is a disabled soldier who joins the production front and typifies the Korean people's determination to overcome difficulties, their courage and resourcefulness. *Priests of the Temple* by George Hanna of

Lebanon reflects the awakening of workers in the Arab countries. This volume is a reprint of a former edition. The U.A.R. writer Mahmoud Teymour's *No. 2 Tram and Other Tales* is a collection of eight stories which make a bitterly satirical attack upon the feudal system and depict the life of simple, honest working folk.

Among dramatic works we have the Korean writer Jo Baik Ryung's *Red Propagandist*, an outstanding play which uses the story of a village propagandist to present the noble spirit of the new men under socialism and their new relationships in collective endeavour. This is a second Chinese edition of this play. *Midnight and Other Plays* by the Guinean poet Keita Fodéba includes five song-and-dance dramas rich in national flavour, reflecting the toil and life of the African people and their sufferings under colonialism. *Plays Adapted from Folk Tales* by Junji Kinoshita of Japan is five compact, simple and poetic plays which show us the longing for a better life of the labouring people of Japan.

In the realm of poetry, there is a new reprint of the Algerian poet Abu Al-Kasim Saadallah's *Victory Belongs to Algeria*, which voices the Algerian fighters' confidence in the victory of the national liberation struggle. Another recent reprint is *Poems* by Marcelino Dos Santos of Mozambique, including his famous long poem *Xangana* which breathes a noble patriotism and firm determination to resist imperialism. New publications include *Poems of Angola* by three leaders of the Angola liberation movement, Mario de Andrade, Agostinho Neto and Viriato Da Cruz, as well as others. Collected poems by the Indonesian poets Sitor Situmorang and Harahap Bandaharo reflect the anti-imperialist struggle of the Indonesian people and testify to the deep friendship among Afro-Asian peoples. *Profound Feelings and Other Poems* by the late Dashtsebegin Senge shows this Mongolian poet's love for the new life of his people. *Songs of Struggle* by the Sudanese poet Ahmed Mohamed Kheir lashes out angrily at the new and old colonialists and pays tribute to the anti-imperialist struggle. *Poems* by Aaly Tokombaev of the Kirghiz Republic of the Soviet Union gives us songs in praise of his motherland and labour. Two works by Vietnamese poets, To Huu's *Hurricane* and Che Lan Vien's *Sunshine and the Earth*, reflect the revolutionary Vietnamese people's resolute anti-imperialist struggle, and warmly praise the militant friendship between the Vietnamese and the Chinese people.

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英文月刊 1963年 第9期

本刊代号2—916