

CHINESE LITERATURE

Monthly



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MAO TUN

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

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As the East Wind Brings Warmth a Hundred Flowers Blossom

Four years have passed between this council meeting (enlarged) of the Chinese Writers' Union and the last. Four years are no more than a brief moment in our history of five thousand years, yet these are the four years in which "twenty years are concentrated into one day" when our country has won a series of great victories on the economic, cultural and educational fronts; especially since the announcement of the general line for going all out, aiming high and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism; everyone has been elated and keen and there has appeared the unprecedented big leap forward.

This report, intended for the third council meeting (enlarged) of the Chinese Writers' Union, was delivered to the Third Congress of Chinese Literary and Art Workers on July 24, 1960. The text published here is slightly abridged.

Everywhere throughout our vast land one can hear the resounding, joyous symphony of socialist construction; with the vigour of dragons and tigers our six hundred and fifty million are engaging in great, earth-transforming tasks; profound changes have taken place in our social morality and human relations; new men and women with lofty communist qualities are appearing not in twos and threes but in hosts. The three great red banners of the general line, the big leap forward and the people's communes are leading us from victory to victory.

What achievements have been scored in literature, the barometer of the age, in the task of reflecting this splendid reality? What contributions have been made by writers, the engineers of the soul, in the task of educating the people with communist ideas?

We should pride ourselves on the fact that in these years, in the last two particularly, we have leaped forward too in the wake of the mighty tide of the whole country's big leap forward, thanks to the leadership and infinite care of the Chinese Communist Party, and under the great red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought on literature and art, combined with our own conscious, voluntary efforts.

Our output has increased. Works of literature published in these four years, excluding works not yet printed in book form but appearing in newspapers and periodicals, is nearly double the total output of the six years from 1950 to 1956. The quality of our writing has also improved. What is even more encouraging is that our ranks have been greatly enlarged. Whereas four years ago we had writers' unions in eight provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions (or *chou*), we now have branches or preparatory committees for branch unions in twenty-five provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions (or *chou*); while our membership, including that of the national union and branch unions, has increased from 945 writers four years ago to 3,719 today. However, this figure by no means reflects the whole picture of the tremendous mass literary movement in our country. In government offices, schools, army units, factories, mines, villages, streets, indeed wherever there are masses, you find spare-time literary workers, and their number is past counting. They constitute a powerful reserve literary force. Most of the best works

published in the last two or three years have been written by spare-time writers or young writers.

This is an exceedingly good sign, and a healthy development which proves the absolute correctness of the Chinese Communist Party's mass-line in literature.

Another of the Party's brilliant and correct policies is that professional writers go down to factories and the countryside to take part in productive labour and struggles. This is the most effective method for remoulding a writer's world outlook, as well as the most reliable method to enrich his experience of life and give him inspiration for his writing; at the same time it is an effective method of improving his skill in writing. The marked improvement in our writers' ideological level and the quality of their works in the last few years proves the absolute correctness of this policy put forward by the Chinese Communist Party.

At the same time we should point out emphatically that the achievements of these years were not won without ideological struggles. No, a hundred times no! These achievements of ours were won in the course of a series of consecutive and protracted ideological struggles carried out resolutely on a nation-wide scale under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Mao Tse-tung on literature and art, against bourgeois thought on literature and art, modern revisionism, and the criticism of unhealthy trends in writing. The facts make it abundantly clear that every ideological struggle has enabled us to go one step further in seeing clearly the dividing line between the two paths in literature, has further strengthened and developed our line that literature and art must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, has enabled the broad masses of literary and art workers to have deeper insight and broader outlook, so that they can create, with their great enthusiasm, more and better works.

Another reason for the great achievements we have won is that we have resolutely carried out the policy put forward by Chairman Mao of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend, and developing the new from the old. The policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend aims at serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, and serving socialism; relying on this policy we shall make the hundred flowers of socialism blossom in greater luxuri-

ance and glory, while the various schools of literature and art which serve socialism will be widely developed and improved through emulation. Developing the new from the old aims at taking over past traditions critically and carrying out reforms on the basis of Marxist ideas. We believe in the theory of uninterrupted revolution; we not only want a multitude of flowers to blossom, but want them to become better and better; we not only want debates, but firmly believe that their aim is to raise our Marxist-Leninist ideological level and artistic attainment. The facts too prove the absolute correctness of this policy of the Chinese Communist Party. In the general voicing of opinions everyone's ideological level is raised and fresh impetus is given to the flourishing of literature and art.

Our people have summarized the achievements in literature during the past few years in the two phrases "recalling the revolutionary past, singing the big leap forward." This is quite right. In the four years between our last meeting and this, according to an incomplete estimate, we have published 239 works with revolutionary history as their theme. In addition, we have the magnificent series, *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire* and other revolutionary reminiscences which are both literature and historical records.

According to an incomplete estimate, ninety-nine collections of reminiscences written by veteran revolutionaries have already been published. Some of these, like the works of Yang Shang-kuei, Teng Hung and Chen Nung-fei have both historical and artistic value.

The masses have co-operated with professional authors in the collective writing of numerous histories of factories, mines, units of the armed forces and people's communes, which recall revolutionary struggles or give a record of developments from past revolutionary struggles to the big leap forward today. Examples are *Red Anyuan*, *The Red Star of the North*, *Pages from the History of the Wuban Steel Works*, *Green Trees Spread Their Shade* and *The Sun Rises in the East*. All these new types of chronicles and historical literature are products of the great mass literary movement which has opened up a wide road for spare-time writing by the masses and fostered thousands and tens of thousands of new writers.

I shall confine my remarks here to original writing and start with those works "recalling the revolutionary past." "A hundred flowers blossoming" may be used to describe this flourishing of works on historical revolutionary themes. Now, let us give some of the best known works as example: The first volume of Li Liu-ju's novel *Changes in These Sixty Years*, which describes the times before and after the 1911 Revolution; Li Chieh-jen's *Great Billows*, dealing with the Szechuan people's revolutionary movement with the protection of the railway rights as the centre of struggle, which led to the 1911 Revolution; Liang Pin's *Keep the Red Flag Flying*, the first volume of which describes the class struggle and revolutionary movements in the countryside under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party about the time of the Great Revolution (1924-1927); Ouyang Shan's *Three Families Lane*, which is the first part of the novel *An Age of Heroes*, presents the class struggle and differentiation of classes near Canton, the revolutionary base at the time of the Great Revolution (1924-1927). There are plays too: *Red Storm*, a collective work, written down by Chin Shan, of the China Youth Art Theatre, with the great Peking-Hankow Railway Strike of February 7, 1923 as its theme; *A Thousand Li of Flames* written collectively by a group of workers in their spare time about the Peking-Suiyuan Railway Strike of 1922; *The Storm of August the First* by Liu Yun and others on the Nanchang Uprising of August 1, 1927; *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire* by Chao Chi-yang, Lin Chien, Chen Chung-hsuan and Chen Shao-yun, describing how after the failure of the First Revolutionary Civil War in 1927 the peasants of western Fukien, led by the Chinese Communist Party, carried out an armed revolutionary struggle and set up a Soviet government. There are the modern operas *Red Aurora*, *Red Guards of Hungbu* and the screen play *Daughter of the Party*, all of which take as their theme the First Revolutionary Civil War and the Agrarian Revolution; Yang Mo's novel *The Song of Youth* reflects the students' patriotic movement before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression; while the screen play *Nieh Erb* presents the story of a revolutionary musician. Roughly speaking, all the important historical events of the historical period from the 1911 Revolution to the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression are reflected in literature — if we go further back,

there is the screen play *Commissioner Lin* which describes the Opium War. Works written against the background of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation and reflecting the revolutionary struggle through different forms of class struggle in different periods are even more numerous. To cite a few examples, there are novels like Sun Li's *The Blacksmith and the Carpenter*, Feng Teh-ying's *Sow-thistle*, and Li Ying-ju's *Wild Fires and Spring Wind*; the screen play *The Hui Contingent*, short stories by Sun Tsun-ching, Ju Chih-chuan and others, and long narrative poems by Li Chi, Tien Chien and Kuo Hsiao-chuan.

There was a very rich crop of writing during this period with the revolutionary wars as its theme. First mention should go to that monumental work *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire*, Volumes 1 and 3 of which total more than a million words. This is a collection of reminiscences long and short arranged according to the period of the event, a true and glorious record of the fighting of the liberation army, a record of the military thinking of Chairman Mao in practice, and a collection of stirring memoirs. The short stories of Liu Pai-yu, Sun Tsun-ching and Ju Chih-chuan all have their distinctive qualities. Noteworthy novels are Wu Chiang's *Red Sun*, Chu Po's *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, Yang Shuo's *Let Men and Horses Rest* and Liu Chiang's *Upheavals on the Taihang Mountains*. Poems on the subject include Li Chi's *The Story of Yang Kao* and Wen Chieh's *Tumultuous Years*; while there are such plays as *Prelude to the Eastern March* by Ku Pao-chang and others. The characterization and the descriptions of battles and the excellent, close relationship between the army and the civilian population are more meticulously and penetratingly handled than in earlier works on similar themes. The portrayal of commanding officers and political commissars, in particular, shows a marked improvement on the past. Besides these, fairly successful works about the life and struggles at our frontiers and coastal defences include *Blue Sea and Staunch Hearts* by Hsi Hung, *Green Pines by the Sea* by Ting Shan and others, and *Li Ti-san* by Tso Chi.

Numerically speaking, there are still more works reflecting the vast changes in agriculture from co-operation to people's communes than there are about industry. This is quite natural. Well-

known works on this aspect include Chao Shu-li's *Sanliwan Village*, Liu Ching's *The Builders* Part 1, and Chou Li-po's *Great Changes in the Mountain Village*. Hu Ko's five-act play *Locust Tree Village* depicts the tremendous changes in the countryside during the entire period from the land reform to the people's communes, and despite certain defects this is an excellent drama. Short stories by Ma Feng, Wang Wen-shih, Li Chun, Liu Shu-teh, Liu Yung and Shen Yao-chung, the last two of whom are peasants, the screen play *By the March the Eighth River* by Lu Yen-chou and the works of such peasant poets as Wang Lao-chiu, all take the socialist transformation of agriculture as their background to depict from various angles the raising of the class consciousness of the broad masses of peasants and the spiritual outlook of advanced characters with communist ideas and qualities in the countryside. Though the people's communes have a history of only two years, innumerable short stories have already been written about them, the best including Ma Feng's *The Sun Has Risen*, Chao Shu-li's *Old Timer*, Sha Ting's *Uncle Ou-yao*, Wang Wen-shih's *A Crucial Moment*, Li Chun's *The Story of Li Shuang-shuang* and Liu Shu-teh's *Stubborn Ox Niu*. Li Mao-yung's *Men Want Happiness as Trees Want the Spring* is noteworthy as the first novel written by a peasant.

Greater achievements have been attained during this period in works reflecting industrial construction. This is evident not only in quantity but also in quality; and what is especially encouraging is the large number of writers that have appeared among workers in the last two years. These are all spare-time writers whose writings accord closely with the tempo of life and whose characters in their thoughts, feelings, speech, laughter and looks represent the unmistakable temperament of the working class. The number of these writers among workers is increasing all the time. The number of workers playing an active part in every branch of literature, whether fiction, reportage, poetry, plays, ballads or storytelling, has become too large to count. Here I can list a few names only of workers who have written steadily, who are fairly mature writers and welcomed by readers far and wide. In the field of short stories there are Hu Wan-chun, Tang Keh-hsin, Fei Li-wen and Wan Kuo-ju; in poetry Wen Cheng-hsun, Huang Sheng-hsiao and Li Hsueh-ao. Their themes cover a wide range but

are mostly in praise of the new men and new phenomena of the big leap forward. It has also been most encouraging to see Ai Wu's *Steeled and Tempered*, Tsao Ming's *Riding on the Wind* and Lo Tan's *Dawn in Wind and Rain*, all of which draw their themes from the Anshan Steel Works. These three novelists have given brilliant portraits of advanced workers and depicted various contradictions within the ranks of the people. *Dawn in Wind and Rain* shows distinctive style in construction, characterization and language, and is marred only by a certain redundancy which could have been avoided by further polishing. The novel has such breadth and lofty stature, however, that this defect cannot spoil its beauty. Tu Peng-cheng's short novel *In Time of Peace* dealing with industrial construction has been much acclaimed, and so are other short stories by him.

When we come to works reflecting the big leap forward, the great movement for technical innovations and technical revolution or the communist style of men who dare to think and act, we should give pride of place to *Red Flag Folk Songs*. Short stories, reportage and poems, too many to enumerate, form the main bulk of this category. There are also many films and plays on kindred topics, the most well known being the screen plays *New Story of a Veteran Soldier* and *Everywhere Is Spring*, and plays like Wang Ming-fu's *Men Daring to Think and Act*, Liu Chuan's *Red Hearts and Blazing Fire*, *Taming the Dragon and the Tiger* by Tuan Cheng-pin and Tu Shih-tsun, *The Red Phoenix Pays Homage to the Sun* by Li Shu and others, *Withered Trees Revive in Spring* by Wang Lien, *Paeon of Communism* by Chen Kung-ming and Wang Lien and *Bridge of Happiness*, a collective work by the dramatic group of the general political department of the People's Liberation Army. In short, the works in this period which reflect the big leap forward and the technical revolution from every angle all have their distinctive merits and special features; but their common characteristic which is also the most important, is that they created images of the heroic characters of the working class today.

During the last few years great achievements have been made both in quantity and quality in works reflecting the revolutionary struggles of the minority nationalities under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, their happy life after liberation, their

tremendous enthusiasm for building socialism, and the friendship and solidarity among various nationalities. Most of these works are written by writers of minority nationalities in their own language or the Han language, while a few are by Han writers. Some examples are the modern opera *In the Struggle* and the short story *The Joy of Abong Turdi* by the Uighur writer Saifudin; the play *Happy Event* and short story *Turning a New Leaf* by the Uighur writer Zunun Kadyrov; the short story *Point of Departure* by the Kazakh writer Kasilkan; the short story *Experience of Living* by the Kazakh writer Chakurin, and other works by young writers of minority nationalities in Sinkiang. From Mongolian writers we have such novels as Ulanbagan's *Beacon on the Steppes*, Malchinhu's *Joyous Song of Spring* and Punsek's *The Golden Kbingan Mountains*; Tsogtnarin's play *Golden Eagle*, N. Sayntsogt's long poem *Song of Ecstasy* and Bren Bik's long lyrical poem *Sparks of Life*. Li Chiao, an Yi writer, has written the novel *The Laughing Golden Sand River*; Lu Ti, a Chuang writer, the novel *Beautiful South*; Hanan-chou, a Tai singer, the *Songs of the Tai People*; Hanan-ying, also a Tai singer, the long poem *Song of the River of Flowing Sand*; Latsu Ngawang-Losan, a Tibetan poet, the poem *Golden Bridge and Marble Arch*. The screen play *Paeon of the Oasis* is a collective work by Wang Yu-hu, Lin Sung-chun, Chuan Kuan-fu, Fan Yi-ping and Yusof Hejeyev, a Uighur; while writers of the Korean nationality in Yenpien include the poet Kim Chel, the story-writer Li Kyn Tsun and the dramatist Hwang Bong Liong. Such a wealth of variety has never been seen in our country before. The best works on the minority nationalities by Han writers are *Red Sun Over Kosban*, a new opera by Chen Chi-tung; *On the Tibetan Highlands*, a novel by Hsu Huai-chung; *The Rainbow Road*, a short novel by Hu Chi; *With the Anmeina Tribe*, a novel by Kuo Kuo-fu; *Beacon Fire at the Frontier*, a novel by Lin Yu; *Moyatai*, a screen play by Kung Pu and Chi Kang; *Tumultuous Years*, a narrative poem by Wen Chieh; *Song of the Li River* and *The Men of Kawa*, narrative poems by Tien Chien; and *Khamba People*, a narrative poem by Chang Yung-mei. There are also some literary periodicals which regularly publish poems, reportage and short stories about the life of the minority nationalities, but these are too many to enumerate.

Apart from the five main aspects I have just mentioned, there are the historical plays *Tsai Wen-chi* by Kuo Mo-jo, and *Kuan Han-ching* and *Princess Wen-cheng* by Tien Han; comedies with modern themes like Lao Sheh's *Happy Reunion* and political satires like Chen Pai-chen's play *The Paper Tiger's True Form*. Chou Erh-fu's *Morning in Shanghai*, the first part of which has been published, is a novel reflecting the *wu-fan** movement and about the remoulding of the bourgeoisie; *Girl Basket-Ball Player No. 5* is a screen play about the quick development and great achievements in sports in China; the screen play *Tide of the South China Sea* reflects the life and struggles of fisherfolk before and after liberation, while *Nameless Island* deals with the struggle against the enemy on China's southeast coast. In poetry there is Emi Siao's *Song of Friendship* and Yuan Shui-po's *Praise and Condemnation*. A great variety of poems and essays praising the socialist revolution and socialist construction in these ten years since the founding of our People's Republic have appeared one after another, and a splendid harvest has been reaped. In short, all these works are the result of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend. They are all products of the big leap forward.

I come now to three rather special categories of literature: first, essays and prose sketches; secondly, *chuyi* literature and thirdly, juvenile and children's literature.

Essays and prose sketches reflect every facet of life: they cover the mines and factories, reservoirs and work-sites, fertile rice producing districts, and fields where industrial crops are grown and, of course, all schools, government offices, streets and lanes as well. They can reflect reality as quickly as newspaper reportage, their form is very flexible and varied, while the subject can be chosen at will from every angle, further increasing their ability to reflect reality swiftly. In the last few years our essays and prose sketches have shown their effectiveness more and more and have become a powerful "shock brigade" in literature, thereby presen-

* Literally movement against five evils practised by wicked businessmen: the bribery of government workers, tax evasion, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts and stealing economic information from government sources.

ting a picture of a hundred flowers blossoming together themselves. Some examples are travel notes like Liu Pai-yu's *From Fulark to Tsitsihar* or Wei Kang-yen's *Rare Place, Rare People, Rare Events*; there are reminiscences of specific happenings like Chen Chang-feng's *With Chairman Mao on the Long March*, Chu Chia-sheng's *Flickering Camp Fires* and Wu Chiang's *The First Boat Across the Yangtse*; there are narratives with a lyrical touch like Wei Wei's *Friendship Shown at Departure* and Han Hsi-liang's *Don't Follow Our Train, Korean Aunty*; there are lyrical prose sketches with excellent descriptions of scenery like Liu Pai-yu's *Sunrise* and Pi Yeh's *Night at the Salt Lake*; but the form most often used is reportage, as in the case of Pa Chin's *A Battle to Save a Life*, Chin Yi's *Following Lao Ma* and *Old Meng Tai Visits Shanghai*, Wei Chin-chih's *Gunners at the Front*, Sha Ting's *Liu Yung-hui*, Ha Hua's *Shanghai's Satellite Town - Minhang* and Lu Chun-chao's *Tanker S.S. Labour*. Reportage of this kind often presents us with vivid characters and gives us descriptions of true people and true events. Yang Shuo, Hua Shan, Kuo Feng, Ho Wei and others have also written a variety of prose sketches and essays. Reportage and sketches, the most mobile "shock troops," have appeared in our border regions, presenting the heroism of the soldiers of our frontier garrisons and the colourful, joyous life of the fraternal nationalities there; on our high mountains, where surveyors work, recording their elation at discovering underground treasures; on work-sites for reservoirs and other building projects, recording the transformation of our land and rivers; in workshops, canteens and the nurseries of people's communes, describing the newest developments in a language full of poetry; in factories and mines with workers who dare to think and to act, praising their victories in technical and cultural revolutions; while at the meetings of outstanding workers in various fields and professions, reportage and sketches draw portraits of the heroes for us. If there were no such genre as prose sketches and essays, our literary forum would lose much of its splendour and a whole genus of flowers would be absent from our garden.

Chuyi are a linguistic as well as a dramatic art. They have the honoured title of "advance guard" or "light arms" of literature and art, being best fitted to reflect reality swiftly, sometimes even more swiftly than reportage and sketches. Probably all

of us have seen cases of a technical revolution accomplished in the workshop in the afternoon and sung throughout the factory in the form of a ballad that same evening. *Chuyi* are in themselves a garden of a hundred flowers. According to a recent estimate, this art falls into ten main divisions with more than two hundred different types. In the workshops, fields and army units, people come into contact with this art every day and are also creating it every day. The masses enjoy all kinds of *chuyi*, which teach them with the communist ideas while at the same time giving them the pleasure of an artistic performance. Moreover, the range of subjects is virtually unlimited. For instance, *Gone Astray*, a *yuku* ballad from Hupeh by Kuo Shou, and *The People Have Stood Up*, a story-teller's tale from northern Shensi by Han Chi-hsiang, reflect the struggle between the socialist way and the capitalist way. *The Dragon King Resigns*, a *hsibo* drum-ballad by Wang Shu-hsiang, Sun Chi-sheng, Wang Lin-chuan and Wang Hui-nan, and *The Satellite Wreaks Havoc in Heaven*, a lantern-play by Tseng Yu-shih, are both full of romanticist spirit; *Fish-Scale River*, a clapper ballad by Fei Hsueh, and *Changing the New-Year Posters*, a clapper ballad by Wang Shu, Chang Ming and Chao Hsin-pao, with different styles expose the well-off middle peasants who want to take the capitalist road, and praise the socialist road; *The Flying Pot*, a humorous dialogue by Wang Kuo-hsiang, criticizes workers who fail to observe factory regulations; *Yesterday*, a humorous dialogue by Chao Chung, Chang Pao-hua and Chung Yi-ping, cleverly and wittily brings out the contrast between the old and the new society, while *Crossing a Thousand Mou of Fields at Night*, a *hsibo* drum-ballad by Sun Lai-kuei, pays tribute to the big leap forward. So *chuyi* are a wide and boundless ocean containing a wealth of pearls, agates and coral for us to discover.

These few years have also seen developments in juvenile and children's literature. We not only have literature for children in the form of fairy tales, but books of poetry and drama for children (i.e. the children below school age or in the lower forms of primary school). We also have stories, including science fiction and poems, *chuyi* and drama for young people.

Readers of children's or juvenile literature are mainly children in kindergartens, primary schools and the lower forms of secondary

schools. These young readers, listeners and spectators are at different stages of mental development, and there is a vast difference in interests and understanding between the youngest and the oldest. It is wrong not to recognize such differences, but it would also be wrong to over-stress them and consider the development of the children's imagination and the satisfaction of their curiosity to be the sole aim of children's literature (literature for the children in kindergartens and the lower forms of primary schools), leaving the task of educating the young with patriotic and socialist ideas to the literature written for the older children. The socialist ideological education which teaches us to love our country, to love labour and to love the collective should be embodied in children's literature throughout. Provided we do not write in a formulistic and schematic way like pedantic sermons, but give the younger children patriotic, socialist ideas through clear, lively, artistic images, the young readers can become interested and can accept them. Herein lies the weak link in our children's literature: there are not enough books which meet the needs of children just able to understand; and while the quantity is far from sufficient, the quality also needs to be further raised. But though this is the case, our youngsters ought to thank their writers; for after all they are much better off than the last generation. There are already a number of good children's tales, poems, riddles and nursery rhymes to serve as their spiritual fare, not to mention picture books and cartoon films. Riddles suited to young children are a new product which has recently been developed; some of the best of these are apt, vivid and easy to remember on account of their rhymes. These help to develop the children's imagination and understanding and to foster their appreciation of beauty.

Our youngsters will not forget Chang Tien-yi and Yuan Chang-chin, one pursuing the *Big Grey Wolf*, the other holding a *Golden Conch*; nor will they forget *Next-time Port* by Yen Wen-ching. Their elder brothers and sisters will stare in wonder at *The Magic Gourd* by Chang Tien-yi and take as their model *The Youth of Sanpien* by Li Chi. While *When the Camp Fire Is Burning* they will think of their *Happy Moment* (both poems by Yuan Ying), and their young hearts will understand the significance of being a *Son of the Working Class* (by Wu Yun-to).

As they advance from childhood to boyhood and girlhood and to youth, our thousands and tens of thousands of young readers will carry with them happy memories of the writers I have mentioned as well as of Chin Ching, Ko Yen, Jen Teh-yao, Jen Ta-ling and Jen Ta-hsin, not to mention Kao Shih-chi and others who specialize in writing scientific books for them.

Let me remind all of you who write for the young that you have the support of tens of thousands of our country's young buds, of those who will succeed to our great cause. You are fortunate and have just cause for pride. But on no account forget that more and more small hands are being stretched out to you, asking you to give them more and fresher works.

As I have said, our achievements are tremendous and outstanding. If we look at all the different branches of literature, we may call it a leap forward on all fronts, and it is no exaggeration to describe it as "a profusion of splendid flowers." We should also admit, however, that our work still lags behind the great reality of the leap forward in which "twenty years are concentrated into one day." There are still gaps in our work, there are still weak links, and we have no cause for complacency. We must continue to go all out, aim high, and under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party intensify our study of Mao Tse-tung's thought on literature and art and intensify the criticism of modern revisionism and various other kinds of bourgeois views on literature and art, so that in future our garden of literature and art may produce more and more splendid and fragrant flowers to satisfy the needs of the broad masses of people.

2

National Forms and Individual Styles

Because we have resolutely carried out the correct policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend, and developing the new from the old under the line that literature and art must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, our literature and art are flourishing as never before. The su-

periority of the socialist system has opened up broad vistas for the all-round development of our writers' individuality, and our guiding principle is to have uniformity in tendency but variety in style. A combination of three things—going deep into life, critically inheriting past traditions and critically learning from the good examples of foreign literature—has already enabled our writers, on the basis of creating a national character and mass character, to score increasingly outstanding successes in the attainment of individual styles.

Since ancient times our literature and art have had a distinctively national form. After the Western Han dynasty, the thriving trade between our country and our neighbouring states in Central Asia, and even with countries as far off as southeast Europe, helped to bring about cultural exchange between our country and those regions. Our ancestors absorbed good features of their literature and art and merged these in their own works in a creative manner, thus leading to continuous renovations and developments in the national form of our literature and art. This is a historical fact. To underestimate the influence of such foreign models would be unhistorical. On the other hand, to exaggerate this influence, i.e. to treat our own national cultural heritage in a nihilistic way, is an unscientific interpretation of the development of the national form of our literature and art. The Chinese nation has always been richly creative; at the same time we are irresistibly drawn to what is good and have the courage to adopt the virtues of others, making them our own flesh and blood to enrich the content of our civilization. This has been our fine tradition for more than two thousand years: it does not regard the development of a national form on the one hand and learning from abroad and absorbing foreign influences on the other as mutually exclusive; on the contrary it integrates the two.

After the May the Fourth Movement, however, some bourgeois intellectuals forgot their debt to their forbears and foolishly advocated "complete Westernization," or, under the delusion that foreign literary and art forms could not take root on Chinese soil, made no attempt to explore the ways by which to make them Chinese. Quite a few who studied foreign literary and art forms despised our own traditional, national and folk literature and art, not studying or learning from these at all.

The Chinese Communist Party has consistently waged struggles against such fallacious views and erroneous tendencies. As early as 1938 Chairman Mao Tse-tung pointed out clearly that "The foreign 'eight-legged essay' must be banned, empty and abstract talk must be stopped, and doctrinairism must be laid to rest to make room for the fresh and lively things of Chinese style and Chinese flavour which the common folk of China love to see and hear." Though Chairman Mao was not speaking specifically of literary and art creation, this is also the most important directive for creative activities of writers and artists. This was the first time a resounding blow was dealt at the wrong trends in the literary field rampant for a time after the May the Fourth Movement, and a broad path was pointed out for the literary and art workers who were hesitating at the crossroads.

Today when we advocate national character and mass character in the realm of literature and art, we are striving to produce what Chairman Mao described more than twenty years ago as "the fresh and lively things of Chinese style and flavour which the common folk of China love to see and hear."

The problem of giving literature and art a national character is how to take over past traditions critically and create new traditions. The problem of giving literature and art a mass character is the problem of the mass-line, that is how better to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. These two problems are inter-related and indivisible. They involve the question of form as well as of content. If we consider them simply a problem of form, we shall lower them to the level of technique, ignoring ideological content; but at the same time it would be equally wrong to consider them as unrelated to form, for content has to be expressed through form.

National character and mass character in literature are not set in opposition to the individual style. Individual style must be based on a national character and mass character. But not all works of national features and mass character possess an individual style. If one leaves the broad highway of national character and mass character to seek what we regard as an individual style, to try to achieve something bizarre and unusual, intoxicated with one's own cleverness, one is bound to reach the dead end of formalism.

Initial successes were already scored in the efforts to make the new literature and art national and popular in character in the liberated areas and guerrilla areas during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Since the founding of New China, this movement has further been developed on a nation-wide scale. In the last few years, especially since the big leap forward, even more notable achievements have been won. Let us look at developments in the two important fields of poetry and fiction.

Our new poetry has a history of forty years if we reckon from the time of the May the Fourth Movement. We call it "new" not only to describe the ideological content but also the language. All our old poetry with the exception of folk songs was written in the classical language; but during the May the Fourth period we began to write poetry in the modern vernacular—a great revolution in the language of poetry. Then the poets were confronted with the problem of how to create the artistic form in the new poetry: Were there still some good things in classical Chinese poetry which could be absorbed and made a part of the artistic form of the new poetry? Or should they completely discard the old heritage and seek elsewhere for models? (During that time some poets imitated certain poetic forms from Europe.) The new poets of those years wrote each in his own way, in the attempt to find a new poetic form; but it was not clear to them that the new poetry should acquire a national character (by critically inheriting and further developing the fine traditions of our classical poetry and folk songs) and a mass character (by distilling the best from the language of the people and creating forms which the people love to see and hear). Most poets at that time gave no thought at all to these two questions of principle; only a few like Emi Siao, Pu Feng and Ko Chung-ping tried consciously to give their poetry a national and mass character, and achieve some preliminary results.

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, poets in the liberated areas and anti-Japanese bases following the direction pointed out by Chairman Mao in his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature*, i.e. ideological remoulding, learning from the labouring people, serving the workers, peasants

and soldiers, wrote poems which were fresh and lively both in form and content.

After 1945, a succession of long narrative poems began to appear. In December 1945 there was *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang* by Li Chi, in 1946 the first part of *The Carter* by Tien Chien, in March 1947 *The Trap* by Yuan Chang-chin. These poems had certain common characteristics: they consciously learned from the form of folk poetry, which has rhymes and rhythm and can be sung; the language is that of the labouring people but further polished, simple and vigorous, strongly expressive and rich in imagery. And the brand-new flavour of the language of these poems was consistent with their content which served the workers, peasants and soldiers. This was the first crop of our new poetry on the glorious yet arduous path of acquiring national and mass character.

It was no accident that this succession of long narrative poems appeared between 1945 and 1947. If we look at their contents, we can see that the great social changes caused by the land reform, which was carried out by the peasants under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, were like a fierce hurricane bringing torrential rain, lightning and thunder; these changes were so rich in content that the poets had to use the form of long narrative poems so as to adequately convey these stupendous events. Because the form was new to them, however, they could not immediately master its method of artistic expression; thus with the exception of Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang, the characters in these poems are not outstanding.

The old tradition of Chinese narrative poems from *The Peacock Flies Southeast*, *The Song of Mulan*, the poems of Yuan Chen and Pai Chu-yi, Chao Ling-ssu's drum-ballad *The Story of Ying-ying*, and *The Western Chamber*, a ballad set to different musical scales by the scholar Tung, down to numerous later fiddle-ballads, drum-ballads and *tzu-ti-shu* ballads, had much from which our new poets could learn in their artistic conception and technique, but since the subject of our narrative poems was completely new, the language was new too; hence the old traditions could not help our new poets very much. Similarly, foreign narrative poems could serve merely for comparative study. The artistic rules of the national form of narrative poems have mainly to be created by

ourselves through a process of critically inheriting from the past and learning from others.

Original art, even as regards its form, cannot be successfully created in isolation and solitude. Its source is in the life of the people, the heat of the struggle. In the last few years poets have gone deep into the life of the masses, taken part in various forms of class struggle and participated in the tremendous world-changing struggles in production. New people, new things and a new spirit abound, and a first-hand experience of these things has given the poets great inspiration so that new short lyrics no longer suffice to express all that is in their hearts, and they have produced lyrical poems several hundred or even more than a thousand lines in length, as well as long epic-like narrative poems. There have been at least a hundred of the latter in these two years of the big leap forward. In the midst of such a passionate upsurge for writing poetry, responding to the call to integrate revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism, inspired by the fresh, vigorous new folk songs which have great breadth and spirit, and exhilarated by the mass poetry movement, our poets are learning from each other and producing new works; thus the national form of the new poetry—the creation of a new trend in poetry—cannot but leap forward to a new stage. In the last few years the wide discussions on “The problem of the development of the new poetry” show that the range and profundity of the theoretical problems which have arisen from the tremendous variety of writing done far surpass those of all previous periods.

It is still too early to come to hasty conclusions regarding certain specific problems raised in the discussions on the development of the new poetry, such as those relating to poetry with a regular form and free verse. However, the main direction is clear. That is, on the basis of learning from the traditional folk songs and new folk songs and critically inheriting the fine traditions of our classical poetry and ballads, resolutely to uphold the spirit of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend, to create a new trend of socialist and communist poetry.

Our poets have taken a great step forward in the creation of a national form for the new poetry compared with ten years ago. This is the first thing we must affirm. At the same time we should recognize that in the process of creating a national form, poets are

developing their individual styles and attaining maturity. This is true in the case of narrative poetry, lyrical poetry, political poetry and satirical poetry.

The Water of the River Chang, written by Yuan Chang-chin in 1949, is a poem meriting attention. This is shorter than some of the narrative poems written in the last two years which run to more than a thousand lines; but its structure is more flexible and it has more variety than those poems written between 1945 and 1947. It has adopted the metres of a large number of folk songs from both banks of the River Chang, and it can not merely be recited, but also sung. The splendid language and rhythm of this poem testify to its author's skill in distilling the language of the people. In some eight hundred lines he depicts four people, each with strongly individual traits, very concisely describing three typical sets of circumstances in which women found themselves in the old society. The structure, syntax, vocabulary all show the poet's distinctive style, one which has been further developed in his later works *New-style Ballad of the Northern Borderland* and *Ulantsabo*. Those lyrical poems with their unbridled imagination and splendid imagery show a gallant spirit. If *The Water of the River Chang* consists almost entirely of folk language further polished, the later poems show that the poet is forging a new language, using the syntax and vocabulary of classical poetry in an attempt to create a new style of poetry with a more formal and musical beauty, with a national form and the ability to express the rich and varied life of our age. We should affirm that he has already gained considerable initial success in this respect.

In the creation of a new poetry with a national form, Li Chi and Tien Chien (I have in mind their long narrative poems) are working along much the same lines as Yuan Chang-chin.

Li Chi's *The Story of Yang Kao*, which comprises three long narrative poems, *The Dragon-Boat Festival*, *My Lover Has Come Back from the Red Army* and *Young People of Yumen*, covers the period from the Agrarian Revolution to the War of Liberation and socialist industrial construction in the oil fields. Its grand scale, complex story and variety of characters show a big advance from *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang*; while there are new developments also in the artistic form. The language is simple and vigorous, making little use of poetic exaggeration but deeply evoca-

tive with its vivid images. The poet does not attain cadence through the use of difficult phrases, but achieves a natural musical quality. These traits make up the distinctive style of Li Chi.

Four parts of Tien Chien's *The Carter* have now been published (the whole poem will have seven parts). The writer in this poem tries to reflect the stupendous changes in our countryside and the growth of new men before and after liberation, down to the establishment, consolidation and development of the people's communes. In order to express such a great, splendid content, he uses a poetic form comprising different metres and stanzas of different lengths; he has no definite rule for rhyme endings either, but sometimes the rhyme comes every other line, sometimes after several lines. We can see that the first four parts of the poem make use mainly of the modes of expression found in folk songs — similes, metaphors and repetition — which help to make up Tien Chien's individual style. This style is even more clearly evident in some of his lyrics. He is skilled in expressing the varying intensity of his thoughts and emotions by the repetition of certain key phrases and verses.

Wen Chieh's *Tumultuous Years*, the first part of *Flames of Vengeance*, a poem describing the liberation of the Sinkiang people, is representative of another category of long narrative poem. Wen Chieh has drawn all manner of working men and women, giving us an insight into their minds and showing how their class consciousness and political level are raised. The activities of these characters in typical circumstances, set against a background rich in local colour, form a harmonious whole. As the story unfolds we seem to hear now the clashing of cymbals and roll of battle drums, now the music of flutes and fiddles; and the atmosphere of the whole is inspired and vivid.

Almost a hundred long narrative poems have been published in these two years of the big leap forward, not including those of the minority nationalities which have been handed down from generation to generation and are now re-edited and published; they are like a hundred flowers vying in beauty, dazzling beholders with the variety of their forms. But the four types I have mentioned may be considered the basic forms. They are like primary colours which, when mixed, produced more colours. Whether the final effect is pleasing or not depends on the poet's skill. The main

direction and aim are the same, that is, on the basis of learning from the old and new folk songs and absorbing the best traditions of classical poetry and folk ballad literature to create a new poetic style with a national form. Since the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature in 1942, our poets have made great efforts to learn from folk songs and distill the language of the people, and they have now accumulated rich experience. The assimilation of the fine traditions of classical poetry and folk ballad literature is a fairly new task, and a more complex one. (Chairman Mao in his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature* gave instructions on the principles of taking over the heritage of the past, but our poets in practice started tackling this problem later than learning from folk songs.) In the last two years, our poets have made a special effort in this direction and acquired a certain amount of experience. Learning is not imitation, and assimilation is not swallowing something whole; the main emphasis should be on digestion and integration. However, this is not done well enough in some narrative poems, so we sometimes find a mixture of styles in them and this is true not only of long narrative poems, but also of short lyrics. We are confident that further practice will result in a satisfactory solution of this problem.

We come now to short lyrical poems, political poems and satirical poems, where the output and level of achievement of the last few years are also unprecedented. The new folk songs have given fresh impetus to the development of lyrical poetry, which inevitably entails new traits in the individual styles of different poets. At the same time we must not overlook the fact that in lyrical poetry and political poetry there is still great room for development in the forms with which our poets are already familiar and over which they have a fair mastery. The folk song style has its merits (I am speaking of the new poems written in this style; in other words, of poetic form, not of the works themselves), and in the garden of poetry where a hundred flowers blossom it deserves to occupy a fairly important position; but this does not mean we can exclude other styles because of it. Though most of Li Chi's lyrical poems do not have short lines with seven or ten words to each, they are still quite suitable for recitation; while Yuan Chang-chin's lyrical poems have even longer lines, but precisely because of this he can convey a heroic spirit

and vivid colours. Wen Chieh uses even more varied forms in his lyrical poems, sometimes employing the so-called "ladder" form too, but his short lyrics written in the style of folk songs appear rather slender and lack the breadth of his longer poems like *Motherland! Glorious October*, which is written in the "ladder" style. The same applies to the lyrics of Kuo Hsiao-chuan. The poets should be bold, therefore, in experimenting with different forms and creating new forms.

Another new development in the garden of poetry in these two years is in the field of long lyrical poems. In the history of Chinese literature, long lyrical poems which were both narrative and discursive appeared earlier and in greater numbers than the purely narrative poems. *Li Sao* can be considered as the ancestor of long lyrical poems. After it came *The Song in Eighteen Stanzas for Hunnish Flute Music, To Prince Piao of Paima* by Tsao Chih, *Personal Poems* by Yuan Chieh, *Poems on Historical Subjects* by Tso Ssu and many other long lyrical poems in early Chinese literature, and those by Yuan Chieh and Tso Ssu became the most common models for later poems of this type. Our poets today have clearly developed this tradition to a great degree: the content of our long lyrical poems today is infinitely broader in scope and more profound than in those of our predecessors, while the form has also gone far beyond the old rules. Reality, awe-inspiring as lightning and thunder, splendid as bright clouds and rosy mist, is inspiring our poets to pour out their passion in a torrent of poetry; thus their passion and the ideas they want to express both demand a form that provides breadth and freedom. This explains the adoption of the "ladder" form in poems like Ho Ching-chih's *Hymn of the Ten Years*, Han Hsiao's *I Sing of the Motherland*, Wen Chieh's *Motherland! Glorious October*, Kuo Hsiao-chuan's *Make Our Land a Paradise* and *Long Live the People*. Ho Ching-chih's *Hymn of the Ten Years* creatively developed the new "ladder" form, achieving a preliminary success in giving this new form a national character and at the same time revealing the poet's individual style.

We should also mention *Song of Ecstasy* by the Mongolian poet N. Sayntsogt and *Sparks of Life* by Bren Bik, which are not only good poems but have features in their poetic form from which we could learn. When different fraternal nationalities in the big

family of our country exchange their literature and learn from each other, it will certainly hasten the blossoming of the hundred flowers.

In our garden of poetry, older poets like Emi Siao, Tsang Keh-chia, Feng Chih, Yuan Shui-po and Yen Chen, all of whom have a style of their own, have also developed further. Then there are younger but most active poets and poets from the ranks of the workers, peasants and soldiers, who have appeared in large numbers in recent years, whose achievements vary and whose styles are attaining maturity or are still being formed. Common characteristics of poets among the workers, peasants and soldiers, like the peasant Wang Lao-chiu, the workers Wen Cheng-hsun and Huang Sheng-hsiao and the soldier Rabgyae Pamzang are simplicity and vigour; but since the way to express their art differs, so do their styles. Then there are young poets like Chang Yung-mei and Wei Yang, who can write with strength and distinction, but whose individual styles still change from time to time as they experiment with poetic forms (their short lyrics and long narrative poems are often different in style). Precisely because of these changes, their future offers unlimited possibilities.

The output of poetry in the last ten years, especially since the big leap forward, has been richer than ever before, and there have been more developments in poetic style than I can enumerate in this report. One thing is certain, however: the expansion of our ranks, the growth of new forces, have speeded up the process to give new poetry national features and a mass character, and promoted the great variety of styles. Moreover, the practice of the last two years shows us that under the inspiration of the three red banners of the general line, the big leap forward and the people's communes, new high tides of poetry will appear continuously.

There have been new developments and notable achievements in recent years in the national form of fiction; and these achievements and progress are inseparably bound up with the demand for mass character. Just as with the connection between national character and mass character in poetry, here we have the problem of critically inheriting past traditions and creating a new tradition. The experience of our writers of fiction, especially in

the case of the large body of fine novels, short stories, reportage and sketches published in the last few years, proves beyond doubt that it is superficial to consider the old method of writing with each chapter breaking off at a crucial point and everything narrated in full from beginning to end as characteristic of the Chinese form; again, if we consider the method of writing stories, reportage or sketches by starting in the middle and giving no beginning or end as unacceptable to the broad masses, we are not viewing this from the angle of development. The national and mass character of writing are shown mainly in the language and characterization; for even if we use the old Chinese form of fiction but fill it with foreign expressions and a foreign tone, it cannot rank as national and popular.

If we look at a writer's artistic conception and language, not all the authors of works popular and national in character have evolved an individual style. This is more clearly evident in fiction than in poetry.

Many works which lack a distinctive style may have a national and mass character and deserve praise both for their ideology and art. Many young writers have on occasion shown individual style in their writing, though we cannot yet say that this is something stable. The styles of some older writers are still developing. There is a difference in each case.

Chao Shu-li's style is familiar to all of us. If we put a passage of his writing into another man's work, a careful reader can recognize it. What distinguishes Chao Shu-li's style? His use of language. What is unique about his language? It has unique freshness, evocativeness and flashes of humour. It would not be correct to consider his style as a purely humorous one. Humour is simply one of the things that go to give it flavour, not the framework of his art. The main features of his style as a whole are freshness and evocativeness. Again, to attribute his humour simply to those witty remarks scattered through his writings would not be correct either. His humour is also shown in his habit of giving his characters vivid nicknames to sum up their temperament.

Lao Sheh's style has also long been familiar to us all. He is good at polishing the language of the people and expressing the vivid local flavour of the Peking area; his literary language is graphic and musical. Humour is one of his distinctive features

too. There are many kinds of humour, and Lao Sheh's is more sharp than evocative; sometimes it is rather biting. Sha Ting shows local colour in his characterization and depiction of scenery, and sometimes he is witty too. Since he weighs his words and writes carefully, with an underlying meaning, the suggestive quality of his writing has a special charm; but sometimes he leaves so much unsaid that a careless reader may miss his point. This is good in one sense, but a drawback in another.

Liang Pin in his novel *Keep the Red Flag Flying* has a compact, vigorous style with marked local colour achieved not by relying on local dialect. In general he writes concisely and fluently, but where he wants to build up atmosphere he has a fine descriptive vein. Through his scenes of the cruel and complex class struggle runs a proud, clear note of revolutionary optimism which gives the whole book its powerful, vigorous style.

Chou Li-po's writing from *The Hurricane* to *Great Changes in the Mountain Village* has developed along two interlacing lines. One line is the national form, the other his individual style. More accurately, while he was seeking a national form he was step by step evolving his own style. He is skilled in absorbing good features of traditional literature without being restricted by them. This can be seen at a glance. The sequel to *Great Changes in the Mountain Village* is an example of his success in achieving a national form and individual style; his writing is becoming more and more concise and polished; often he reveals a delightful wit when in the midst of a tense situation he sketches minor incidents in a light, cheerful vein. This novel is well constructed, its sequence clear; the writing is neat, and the characterization simple and vigorous. These are Chou Li-po's special characteristics. He likes to use the local dialect to strengthen local colour, but judging by the first and second parts of *Great Changes in the Mountain Village*, the descriptions of local customs and natural scenery create sufficient local colour, and too many local expressions make for difficult reading.

Chang Tien-yi from the time he started to write was acclaimed for his distinct style. In recent years he has been concentrating on writing for the young, and his *Big Grey Wolf*, *Story of Lo Wen-ying* and *The Magic Gourd* despite their difference in theme, show his distinctive style. His plots seem simple but are care-

fully constructed; his language has simplicity and charming ingenuousness; his denouements are often unexpected, yet always naturally presented with no deliberate attempt to amaze.

Ouyang Shan's novel *Three Families Lane* marks another step forward in his attainment of a national form and individual style. Taking as background the historical events near Canton at the time of the Great Revolution (1924-1927), through three different families he describes the fierce and complex class struggles. The characters and surroundings have a local flavour, and his narrative possesses charm and distinction, its only defect is that the language is somewhat mixed, not being completely consistent throughout the book.

Ma Feng and Li Chun have similar features in their styles: conciseness and vividness, the ease and fluency of floating clouds or flowing water, with no artificial emphasis on details. However, each has his own characteristics too, and this comes out in the types of characters they draw. Ma Feng's skill lies in a high degree of the power of artistic generalization. Through a series of pictures of ordinary life, set against a background of the class struggle and the struggle between the two lines in the villages, he shows the gradual raising of his characters' class consciousness and ideological level. Li Chun, on the other hand, is good at selecting a cross-section of life which has typical significance, and in presenting characters through the development of the conflict.

Sun Li has a consistent style of his own. From works like *Clouds in the Wind* we can see his development. His prose has a lyrical quality; his stories, which seem to pay no attention to plot and structure, are not loosely constructed either. He depicts momentous changes in casual, easy prose, and his virtue is that his writing, though full of wit, is never flippant.

The development of Tu Peng-cheng's style is worth watching. If we compare *In Time of Peace* with *Defend Yenán!* to say nothing of his short stories, we can see a marked difference. The characters in his works are rough and powerful as if hewn out with an axe; he places them at the focal point of a conflict, producing an atmosphere of tense excitement, and his writing is vigorous. There are distinctive merits in the description of circumstances and characterization in his works about peaceful construction, like *In Time of Peace*; but he has not brought out fully

the poetry and joy of creative, peaceful labour, and this is a defect among his good qualities. His short stories like *Yenan People* or *Lingkuan Gorge* have more spirit and clarity. In recent years he has been settling down among the masses, taking part in labour and struggles; and this will change his style further, making it more mature.

In addition to these writers, there are Wang Wen-shih, Ju Chih-chuan, Lin Chin-lan, Hu Wan-chun and Wan Kuo-ju, all of whom have their special characteristics. These characteristics, like Wang Wen-shih's conciseness and vigour or Ju Chih-chuan's elegance and grace, may develop into fixed styles, or with increased experience in life and art may evolve into something new. This is hard to predict. However we can say for certain that the formation of a young writer's style is not achieved in a day. Since life is speeding ahead, writers who are in close touch with the pulse of the age will never rest content with the style they have already attained. The task ahead of them is to make the best use of their good points and at the same time go on to open up new vistas.

The examples I have cited are only a few out of many, and one or two epithets cannot give a very accurate summary of the style of a writer. I have simply put forward my personal views, which may be wide off the mark; I am certainly not setting myself up to pass judgement.

Usually two things help to form a writer's style: first, the social trends of that period (especially the writer's own way of living) and the current in literature; secondly, whether there is conflict between the writer's world outlook and these social trends and current in literature. A vigorous, hopeful social trend produces a correspondingly vigorous and optimistic literary current. Some writers living under such conditions advance, singing with the tide of the age, following the main stream; whereas others fall behind or even turn against it, stubbornly preserving the obscure, decadent style which only they and those like them can enjoy. When the opposite kind of social trend and literary current prevail, some writers follow the tide and advocate decadent art, while others (perhaps a minority) resist the wrong tide and create a healthy, fresh style. To be original and different may

be progressive or reactionary; it all depends upon the circumstances, upon the nature of the "original" things you advocate, upon the "different" trends which you establish. Here in China, if we try to set up something "original" and "different" which is counter to the spirit of the age, it will be rejected by the people.

So although our writers who advance with the age may each have a style of his own, each individual style must bear the mark of the age. What is the spirit of our age? It is the joyous, creative urge for peaceful labour, to achieve more, better, faster and more economical results in building socialism with a noble fighting resolve and heroic ambition; it is the far-sighted, romanticist spirit of revolutionary optimism and revolutionary heroism eager to advance with great strides towards a communist tomorrow; it is the noble communist qualities of daring to think, speak out and act, the subordination of individual interests to those of the collective, the uncompromising struggle against all that is wrong — the spirit of hundreds of thousands of advanced workers which permeates every aspect of our life. When such a spirit of the age is reflected in our works of literature and art, it forms the style of the age; and every individual style must be radiant with this shining style of the age.

There are two aspects to our life: one is like the rising wind and rolling thunder, the other like bright clouds and rosy mist; there is on the one hand earth-transforming heroism and on the other, delicate and radiant beauty. This means that one style is not enough for our writers, and makes us realize that if we want to reflect our splendid reality with full accuracy, vividness and clarity, we must have a variety of styles. We cannot be satisfied with flute-playing alone, we must know how to beat the drum too; and in flute-playing we cannot be satisfied with soft, melodious airs only, we must have lofty, heroic tunes with a quick tempo. We must have a variety of styles; we must master technique to such a high degree that we can describe the magnificence of changing clouds and rising winds with cymbals and drums, as well as convey the charm of flowers and the moon with citherns and guitars. When we expose the enemy, each blow we strike should draw blood; when we praise a hero, each word should be a gem. Our writing should have the spirit of a horseman charging into battle, lance in hand, through a formation of a thousand

men; it should also convey the delight of rustic festival scenes; it should show the sternness of gruelling fight as well as the joy of smiling victory. We should excel in creating characters as well as in evoking an atmosphere; we should be able to express the beauty of our hills and streams as well as the might of our factories and mines.

Our brilliant forbears made use of several styles. What they could do we can naturally do also, and shall do even better. For today the objective and subjective conditions are both different; the superiority of our social system, the wise and correct leadership and deep concern of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao for literary work, the system for us to get tempered in physical labour, the method of the mass-line, all these are a decisive guarantee for the all-round development of a writer's talent.

The best conditions are not everything, however. There must still be effort on our part, before we can fulfill our mission. So we must do our best to study the thought of Mao Tse-tung on literature and art, continue to persist in tempering ourselves through physical labour, critically take over the heritage of the past, critically absorb all the best features of progressive literature from different countries of the world, and in the practice of our writing develop the tremendous potentialities of integrating revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism.

(to be continued)

Spring in Yangchialing, Yenan by Yang Ching→

The artist Yang Ching was born in Hungtung County, Shansi Province, in 1924. He only had primary school education before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. In 1938 he joined the revolution, then did art work in the army; in 1947 he went to study in an art school, and has been doing art work ever since.





Prose Sketches

LIU PAI-YU

Sunrise

Watching the sunrise from a mountain top has had a fascination for me since childhood.

Sunset has a magic all its own, as our old poets have testified in not a few beautiful lines:

From wastes of sand one smoke plume rises sheer,
Past the long river the round sun sinks low.

Or:

The setting sun lights up the mighty standard
Amid the neighing of horses and soughing of wind.

But the best of these convey a sense of desolation. Better to climb some crag or peak, stand on some promontory overlooking the ocean, facing the endless sky, to watch that great scene of rebirth

as together fire, heat, life and light come in the twinkling of an eye to the world of men. For a long, long time, however, I had no chance to see the sunrise and could only enjoy it vicariously from books.

In *Rambles Through the Harz Mountains*, Heine describes how he watched the sunrise from the Brocken peak:

We gazed in silence as that small red ball rose from the horizon, a wan, wintry light began to spread and the mountain ranges seemed to be floating in a sea of white waves, from which their crests alone emerged distinctly, giving the observer the impression that he was standing on a little hill. Here and there only, on the inundated plain below, were patches of dry land visible.

That skilled observer of natural beauty, Turgenev, has left a fine description of the sunrise in the Russian countryside:

. . . As the morning sun first appears, before it has gathered a train of fiery clouds, all around it is a rosy expanse of aurora. The sun is neither fierce and flaming as in those suffocating seasons of drought, nor a livid purple as just before a storm. Invested with a soft, incandescent light, it drifts quietly up from behind a long narrow cloud bank to let us catch a glimpse of its face before hiding once more in the violet mist around. From both sides of the crest of the far-flung bank of clouds flash what seem to be small iridescent snakes, bright as burnished, glittering silver. But, look! that leaping pillar of light has moved forward, bearing with it an aura of solemn joy, and now up surges the round morning sun. . . .

But the rising of the sun, like anything else that is new in life, is not easily seen in the first instant of its inception. To see it a man must climb high and gaze far into the distance, and a keen vision is needed. Several times, in my own case, the opportunity to see the sunrise has come very close to realization.

One occasion was in India. We had travelled from Delhi, Bombay, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Cochin all the way to Trivandrum, whence a three hours' drive along a palm-fringed road brought us to the shore of Cape Comorin at the southernmost

tip of India. This region is celebrated for its views of the sunrise. For between here and the South Pole there lies no land, nothing but an infinite expanse of green waves. Hence this cape is the first envoy to greet the sun. One can readily imagine the grandeur of the scene with that superb sweep of sky, that azure immensity of ocean, when from the utter darkness that precedes the dawn rise the first rays of day to enkindle the first torch of fire. We came here expressly to see the sunrise. But after listening all night to the ocean billows, we rose before dawn to find the east shrouded in grey mist. A fresh wind from the sea ruffled our clothes and a spray showered the ground at our feet with a soft hiss, as if condoling with us.

Another occasion was when I climbed Huangshan. This mountain is another celebrated vantage point from which to watch the sunrise. For Lion Forest on Huangshan towers to a great height. If not for the regrettable limitation of human vision, one could look down from here over Kiangsu and Chekiang all the way to the ocean, viewing every place on the way. This mountain's favourable position is clear if you see how its springs, like some uncurbed white dragon, plunge into the Hsinan and the Fuchun Rivers to flow down the Chientang River to the sea. I reached Huangshan and started its ascent on a fine, clear day amid the singing of birds and the fragrance of flowers, I felt sure this time I would see the sunrise on Huangshan. But I had the same experience as Hsu Hsia-ko:* "A dense mist gathered when I reached Lion Forest. The wind gained force, the mist thickened . . . there was a cloudburst. . . ." All night I heard nothing but the wind and the rain, and naturally caught no glimpse of the sunrise.

I have, however, seen a superbly majestic and beautiful sunrise. Not from any mountain peak or ocean shore, but from a TU-104 thousands of feet up in the air. The thought of it fills me with wonder even today. I was totally unprepared, taken quite by surprise, when the universe without warning unfolded its whole incomparable splendour and brightness before me. I was utterly entranced, my heart took fire. It was August 24, 1958, when I flew from Moscow to Tashkent. We reached the airfield at dead of night, when the sky was studded with stars. The plane took off

* A late Ming dynasty traveller, who climbed nearly all China's famous mountains.

at 3:40, and seen from above, beneath the black velvet canopy of night, Moscow's countless lights twinkled like a myriad tiny diamonds, like grains of gold dust lapped by the waves of a stream, or a coral reef glinting through the deep blue sea. It was incredibly lovely. But though all below remained wrapped in night, above there already floated a thread of light, a narrow dark red ribbon revealing a patch of the chilly, pale blue dawn, while above that aura of dawn hung the bright morning star. The plane gained altitude steadily, flying higher and higher through one cloud bank after another to leave the black earth far behind. And as if afraid to disturb the passengers' slumbers, the engines were exceptionally quiet, the two wings extraordinarily steady. Meanwhile the red ribbon was slowly unfurling like a red cloud and then a crimson sea. Its red refulgence spread out towards the vault of heaven, lifting the night sky higher and yet higher, and incarnadining it in turn. Below, though, was still a dark continent of limitless black. This was the moment when dawn takes the place of night, the moment when the world of the future takes the place of the world soon to be gone. At first glance the black night still appeared illimitably powerful, but a glance round showed that the liquid light of dawn had changed into a powder-blue radiance. The crimson sea had thrown up mass upon mass of inky clouds. A miracle was taking place. All at once from the inky clouds one slender ray of transparent crimson flashed a golden light. It boiled up like molten liquid to shoot up like a rocket, and in that instant I realized that this was the moment when bright daylight emerged from the night sky. After that, through the rifts in the inky clouds sparkled redder and yet more luminous particles. I marvelled at first and wondered what these could be. I looked again. Some particles which had burst through the clouds were drifting together once more to fuse and leap aloft — the sun had risen!

Crimson and fierce as fire, its splendour at once cast light over all the shadows. In a flash, before my eyes, the wings of the plane turned red, the window-panes turned red, the face of each sleeping passenger turned red. In that moment utter peace and stillness reigned. The whole universe had the same calm tenderness compact of ecstasy and beatitude as the mother of a new-born child. Next time I looked down, the clouds were rolling away like a grey torrent to let light reach the earth and make the entire world

gloriously bright. Leaning back in my comfortable seat, I fell asleep. When I woke, our plane was flying steadily and easily eastward. Gone were the reds, greys, blacks and blues of dawn. The sky above and below was one azure expanse dotted here and there with silver sparkling clouds like the laughing faces of children. I forgot the joy and exultation evoked by the sight of the sunrise, and fell to serious thinking. I was savouring the full beauty and profundity of that line of poetry:

We are the six o'clock morning sun.

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustration by Huang Chung-chun*



CHEN TSAN-YUN

A Visit to a People's Commune in Kwangtung

It was early June in Kwangtung. On the south bank of the lower reaches of the East River the summer harvesting had begun. Li, the young Party secretary of Chungtang People's Commune, made time after supper to take me to see Aunt Hua and her new daughter-in-law Peach. It was five *li* or so from the Party office to their village, and we were able to have a look at the crops on the way.

The setting sun cast a golden light and there was a welcome breeze. We set out in a carefree mood down the new highway leading to Canton.

It was an enchanting road. In that region interlaced by streams and waterways, they had dreamed for generations of building a road. And the realization of this dream symbolized the new spirit in these parts after the establishment of people's communes. Both sides of the broad, level highway were planted with fresh green mango trees, two brimming brooks flanking the road had been stocked with fish fry, while banyans covered the new dykes on the

Chen Tsan-yun, well-known story writer, was born in 1914 in a village in Kwangtung. In his boyhood he earned his living by pasturing cows. He started to write in 1933 and in 1937 published his first collection of poems *A Minstrel Under the Iron Hooves*. In recent years he has written the short novels *Morning in a Mountain Village* and *Good Tidings*.

further side. The full use being made of the land had resulted not only in increased production but in a scene to rejoice your eyes.

High voltage electric cable had also appeared above the road. The electric pumping station was nearly finished. A few months more and the hydro-electric station would be providing power. Electrification was no longer a distant dream. These normal yet richly significant new developments captured my imagination and quickened my pulse.

Cheerful commune members were reaping in the far-stretching fields on either side of the road. The paddy, a great sea of gold ruffled into waves, gave off a heady scent. No doubt about it, this would prove a rich harvest. This was borne out, too, by the vivid green bananas, the sugar-cane, hemp and peanuts growing between the paddy and challenging its splendour.

Another cheering sight was the maize, millet, taros, gourds and vegetables of every kind. All available land was planted, not an inch was left untilled. And the flourishing condition of the different crops made up a picture of abundance. As Li pointed out, this was something new for them: with grain as the key link, there had been a leap forward on all other fronts too.

I was getting drunk with the beauty all around me when Li remarked: "A year ago, this was all under water."

The previous year, I well remembered the biggest flood of a century had brought unforeseen disaster. Eighty per cent of the grain and industrial crops had been lost, thirty per cent of the houses had collapsed, more than thirty thousand people had been



affected. For a few days Chungtang People's Commune was gripped by despair, like other hard-hit people's communes beside the East River.

In the hour of need, however, the Central Committee of the Party and Chairman Mao gave the people hope and encouragement, gave them unstinted moral support and material aid. A keen response was made to the provincial Party committee's slogan: "We'll wrest from Nature what it took from us!" A dogged fight started against difficulties. With the resolute lead given by the Party committees at different levels, the situation was speedily changed: men and women went back to work and, after rebuilding their homes, recouped their losses by reaping an abundant harvest in the late crop. Then, singing with confidence and joy, they continued to leap forward.

Now they had won another bumper harvest. With the previous year in mind, I said to Li: "Your people's commune has grit: you can weather any storm!"

"Yes, during the past year Old Man Heaven has been doing his best to make trouble for our new people's commune!" Short, energetic Li pointed to a golden field and announced with pride: "We had to fight Heaven for this too!"

This was no exaggeration either. After fighting the flood, rebuilding villages and getting in a fine harvest of late rice, they had mobilized an army of men to repair the big dyke along the East River. In less than a month, by crash methods, they completed nearly two million cubic metres of earthwork. This dyke of theirs stands like a Great Wall to hold back the highest flood water of the unruly East River, which may race at twelve thousand cubic metres a second. This tremendous campaign assured safety against flood, but the next catastrophe to strike them was a serious drought. For six months there was not a single good fall of rain, till the river's flow dwindled to about thirty cubic metres per second; then the sea water flowed in, and the crops and lives of the villagers were endangered. At once they joined in a new, stupendous battle to halt the sea by damming the river. Once more they triumphed — once more they sang of a rich harvest.

"It's certainly been no ordinary year." The tireless fighters of the people's commune had all my respect. They had demonstrated that gone for ever were the wretched days of dependence

upon Heaven. By relying on the Party, the collective strength of the people's commune and their own stupendous energy and drive, they had gradually come to control their fate. The smiling harvest made me think with admiration of gallant men and women who had taken their destiny into their own hands.

With a full heart, I walked at Li's side down the highway till we saw the luxuriant red blooms of a clump of phoenix trees. We quickened our pace — that was Aunt Hua's village ahead.

The hundred or so households here had formerly lived in tumbling, sprawling mud hovels. Now the place had been transformed. It had new brick houses, neat, clean and bright. An embankment circled the big fish pond in front of the village, and this was green with trees. In the red glow cast by the flowers of the phoenix trees, the village lay tranquil and lovely. I saw what it meant to "change grief into joy" — on the ruins of their old huts they had built new houses. This was no dream, but reality splendid as a painting.

In that village, scattered with red petals, not a trace of disaster remained. All I could see was that Old Man Heaven had dealt them heavy blows, but the Party had brought them new youth and happiness. They had scrapped the old name "Poverty Village" with all the tears and suffering it implied. I rejoiced at the village's new birth.

Skirting the scarlet shadows of the phoenix trees as dusk fell, we turned a corner and ran into Aunt Hua. She is a vigorous woman in her fifties, and she looks much healthier and happier than the year before. She was sitting at the entrance to the pig farm, busily chopping up vegetables for the swine. Her face lit up at the sight of us, and she hurried over as if to welcome one of her own family. "So it's Comrade Chen! Are you down from the county?"

Li answered for me: "He's come specially to see you and your new house, aunt."

"You should have come long ago. How our family's changed! Our fathers never lived in such a fine house." She burst into a torrent of speech. "Peach has married into our family, and she keeps the place spick and span. That's a clever girl for you. A whole year I was waiting for the marriage; now at last she's come."

"Is she completely better?"

"Oh, yes." She laughed. "But if not for Secretary Li here, I'd be asking the Dragon King for a daughter-in-law!"

This was a reference to what had happened several months previously, at the height of the battle against drought. They were damming the river when Peach's boat capsized. Li had jumped in to rescue her, but a huge wave swept both of them under the boat and the girl had been quite badly hurt. Still, her life had been saved.

"The Dragon King must be cursing Secretary Li," I said, grinning.

Aunt Hua smiled with contentment, then invited us home to drink some "bride's tea" poured by Peach.

"Show us your pigs first," I suggested.

She admitted us cheerfully into the pig farm.

There had been a great change here too. This was a brand-new pig farm, surrounded by a low, whitewashed wall. Inside were rows of sties, orderly, clean and with scarcely any odour.

There was a shed for fodder on one side and a small garden in the middle planted with trees and shrubs, which Aunt Hua described as "the piglets' playground." Plump porkers were trotting here and there among the chicks and ducks, as if enjoying a game. How different from the bad old days when pigs and peasants lived under one roof!

As I watched the fat, contented piglets, I said to Aunt Hua: "I can see you're a good pig-breeder—you know how to fatten them up."

"I'd never kept a pig in my life. I'd never heard of green fodder or ensilage." Aunt Hua had a quick tongue, a ringing, cheerful voice. "I just did as Chairman Mao told us—worked and studied hard. That's how I learned the knack of it."

"We'll make a model swine-herd of you yet, aunt," said Li.

"Never mind about making me a model," she retorted. "But our team has got to reach the top."

"That's the idea." I turned to Li and said: "Folk in these parts used to eat pork without raising pigs. Now all that's changed, and they've learned new skills into the bargain. I call that a revolution."

"We've made a start, anyway," Li nodded. "This year we'll at least reach the provincial committee's target of one pig per head."

"All I'm afraid is. . . ." Aunt Hua was afraid of two things: a fodder shortage and another flood. After voicing her doubts in no uncertain manner, she asked: "What's to be done?"

"Don't you worry. There's plenty of foodstuff being grown," Li assured her. "As for a flood, we aren't afraid even if the water rises three feet higher than last year. Last year's flood was the biggest you'd ever seen, aunt. I doubt if even your grandchildren, not yet born, will live to see water three feet higher than that."

"Well, you've set my mind at rest," said Aunt Hua, relieved. "Trust the Party to look well ahead!"

Beaming, she led us out of the pig farm and, with a step as light and fast as a young woman's, conducted us to her house.

We stepped over the threshold of a good, fair-sized room. Hung in state opposite the door, in a handsome frame, was a portrait of Chairman Mao. The walls on both sides were gay with New-Year pictures, of which the most striking were *Long Live the People's Communes!* and *Plump Babies*—two of the subjects dearest to Aunt Hua's heart. The room was simply but attractively furnished, with everything in its place, creating a total effect of simplicity, cleanliness and quiet comfort. I detected the hand of Peach, the clever new daughter-in-law, in this careful arrangement.

With a proud smile, Aunt Hua showed us the two other rooms and small kitchen. "How's that for a house?" she asked.

"Very comfortable indeed!" I pulled out a stool. "A cut above your old place, eh?"

"I should think so!" She offered me some tea. "The whole village says the people's commune is a tower of strength, it can change calamity into good fortune. I'm doubly lucky, because I've not only got a fine new house, but a clever daughter-in-law."

Li chuckled. "It's a pity you haven't electricity yet."

"My son says once they've finished the pumping station we shall have electric light." Her merry eyes flashed as she poured him some tea and asked: "Is it true, Secretary Li?"

"It certainly is," replied Li. "The wires are already installed."

Aunt Hua crowed with laughter and exclaimed: "Did you ever! So we old wives are to live in luxury too."

"We're counting on you to raise more pigs," I reminded her.

"I will," rejoined Aunt Hua earnestly. "I can't let the Party down."

At this point in burst Peach, a lively, pretty girl who fully lived up to her name. She was wearing reed mitts and her trousers were rolled up above sturdy, muddy ankles. She had obviously come straight from the threshing-floor.

As she skipped in like a breath of fresh air, Aunt Hua turned to her with a laugh. "Peach, here's Comrade Chen to drink a cup of bride's tea."

"Of course!" Peach turned big, dancing eyes on us. "I'll serve you tea." She pulled the pale green scarf off her head and made for the thermos flask.

"We've had tea already," I said.

"That was old wives' tea, not bride's tea," protested Aunt Hua.

Peach refilled our cups so generously that the tea slopped over on the table.

"Careless baggage!" Aunt Hua crowed.

Peach burst out laughing.

Li chuckled too as he asked: "Tell me, Peach, is that high-yield rice field cultivated by your Hsiang Hsiu-li* Team going to pass the thousand catty target?"

"The paddy's grown so lush that it's toppling over." Peach mopped the table as she spoke. "At the most we'll get eight hundred catties."

"That'll be a victory all the same," I said. "Does your hand still hurt after your accident?"

"Oh, that was nothing." Peach brushed the matter aside as if it were something she had completely forgotten.

"If there were anything wrong with her, Aunt Hua would be in a proper state," said Li.

"I should think so! I had enough worry last year!" Aunt Hua went on volubly: "Young folk don't know how we old people worry. I went through hard times to bring up that boy of mine,

* Hsiang Hsiu-li was a young worker who gave her life to protect public property. Many production teams in farms and factories took her name to show that they meant to learn from her fine spirit.

just waiting for the day when he would marry; but Peach kept putting it off, putting it off. She had me quite frantic. . . ."

"You should have learned patience by your age," said Peach mischievously.

"What a tease the girl is!" scolded Aunt Hua with a smile. She turned to me. "Comrade Chen, you're getting on in years, don't you think I had cause to be worried?"

I nodded. I understand the old people's feelings. When the people's commune was set up, Aunt Hua wanted to celebrate the occasion by bringing home a wife for her son, and Peach said she was willing. But then the great battle for steel production started, and Peach raced off to the front, postponing her wedding. In the summer of 1959, when the crops promised well, she and young Hua agreed to marry after the harvest; but then the sky darkened, the flood came, houses were swept away and there was great loss of life and property—it was no time to think of marriage. That winter they reaped an unusually big harvest and built a new home. Everything seemed right for a wedding. But then came the drive to repair the East River dyke in record time. Forgetting her own affairs, Peach led the Hsiang Hsiu-li Team that same night to the dyke. At the meeting to celebrate the dyke's completion, Aunt Hua caught hold of her and said frantically: "Don't put it off any longer, Peach!"

And the girl promised: "I won't."

But no sooner were Aunt Hua's preparations complete than came the campaign against drought. Peach joined bravely in this struggle, fierce as a battle, and in the course of damming the river met with an accident.

With these events in mind, I said to Aunt Hua: "It certainly was an unusual year. In the old society, it's not Peach's wedding that would have been delayed—thousands of lives would have been lost."

"Don't I know it!" said Aunt Hua. "In the old society I wouldn't have dreamed of getting a clever daughter-in-law like this. No, not even a stupid one."

"Listen to that!" Peach pouted. "When you're pleased, your tongue just runs away with you. How can you boast to two of our leading comrades about an awkward, stupid bungler like me?"



"It's not you I'm boasting about, it's the Communist Party I'm praising." Aunt Hua threw a fond glance at the girl as she cut her short. "What did you amount to as a child? It wasn't till the Party came that you learned clever ways."

"That's true of everyone!" Peach stood her ground. "When you saw the landlord in the old days, you couldn't get a word out."

"You've both learned clever ways," I said. "And clever people make a good job of things. I think this is a fine home you've fixed up for yourselves."

"Then you must come more often." Aunt Hua was in soaring spirits. "Today you've drunk the bride's tea. Next time you shall eat . . ." she cast a glance at Peach — "sweet ginger with vinegar. . . ."*

Peach turned her head away in confusion.

"All right." With a smile I stood up and said to Peach: "We must be going. We want to have a look at your high-yield taros."

She turned round. "What about our high-yield sugar-cane and peanuts?"

* In Kwangtung, after a child was born, it was the custom to serve ginger to guests.

"Of course, we'll look at them all," I agreed cheerfully. "Your Hsiang Hsiu-li Team is keeping its red flag flying well — high yields in everything."

"We promised Secretary Li to leap forward in everything — we're as good as our word."

Li stood up too and said to Aunt Hua: "Your pigs must take a still bigger leap forward too."

"We'll win a red flag, just watch!" replied Aunt Hua confidently.

"Yes, you ought to win a whole lot of red flags." There was a catch in my voice. "You've overcome natural disasters, reaped a splendid harvest and are providing electricity for yourselves. You'll win so many red flags that people will start calling you Red Flag People's Commune."

To the sound of excited laughter, we left Aunt Hua's comfortable and happy home.

The sun had set by the time we left the small village which had been so heavily struck, yet rebuilt into a new and lovely place. At dusk in this part of the world a south wind nearly always springs up. It was blowing merrily now, setting the wires above the road humming and singing, making the crops in the vast fields on either side ripple like waves in a sea of gold. The sight of this fresh and beautiful abundance brought boundless joy to our hearts.

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Hsia Tung-kuang*



HSIAO MU

Red Night

It was a day exactly like any other in the autumn of 1958.

The sun hid itself behind Phoenix Hill leaving only streamers of sunset clouds trailing from the top of the iron and steel works' blast furnaces. The railway depot was crammed with piles of coal and sand newly unloaded from the train. There were so many keen people on the job that coal and sand literally flowed in two endless streams, one black and one yellow, into the depot. Many came: builders, iron and steel workers and government employees just off work found their hands itching to pitch in and do their bit for the country's steel production when they passed this bustling depot. The volunteers to help with the unloading kept increasing till soon the full train was emptied and pulled out. Only then did the general high spirits find vent in laughter, singing and hearty jokes. The women's laughter was merriest and loudest because their team had again come first in the unloading. Naturally the young fellows, unwilling to admit defeat, insisted that the train come back quickly with a fresh batch of material so that they could

have another race with the women. It took plenty of persuasion from the Party secretary to induce them to go home and rest.

Silence reigned in the depot when everyone had gone except Old Chen, the eldest signalman of the station, who was going round putting the place to rights. It was his habit, whatever the job or whoever had done it, to satisfy himself that everything was in good order before he would leave the depot with a smile on his face. If his impatient juniors urged him to hurry, he would answer calmly, "Don't you know the value of a second look? There's no harm in having a second look." As time went by, the station staff gave him the by no means disrespectful nickname, "Second Look."

He started by putting back some coals that had rolled off the pile, then stamped out some lighted cigarette stubs. When he was about to leave he noticed a queer bulge in a sand pile. A kick revealed a carrying-pole. Heaving with all his might, Old Chen managed to pull it out. "What a one that Ah-ken is," he told himself half laughing and half cursing as he wiped the pole clean with a handful of grass. "Got so worked up just now when he couldn't find his carrying-pole. Wanted to carry a whole basket on his back. Even the Party secretary couldn't stop him. And this is where he dropped his pole. These young people are like a ball of fire — full of energy but they do drop things around." Still muttering to himself, he put the carrying-pole back in the temporary tools shed made of old planks.

By the door of the shed someone had left a pair of cloth shoes. Old Chen bent and picked them up. Two sturdy peonies were embroidered on the toes, and he recognized the handiwork of his daughter, Chiao-ying. "Harum-scarum!" he scolded, his heart filling with tenderness. Five years before liberation, an epidemic in these parts had carried off his wife, since he had no money to get a doctor for her. His motherless daughter was then only a toddler. She grew up on wild vegetables from the nearby mountains and turned out a high-spirited and dauntless girl. She often came to do volunteer labour at the depot. Her father had heard many young men were interested in her. As he picked up an old newspaper to wrap up the cloth shoes and then tucked the parcel under his arm he thought, "If a young fellow had found this pair of shoes, it would surely lead to something." Chuckling unconsciously he hurried along the line towards the station.

The sky was studded with stars. On moonless autumn nights, the sky appears higher and deeper the more you gaze into it, as if deliberately affording scope for the exercise of man's imagination. Old Chen drew a deep breath of the fresh mountain air laden with the scent of cassia blossoms, then walked briskly along keeping his eyes open for any obstruction on the tracks. Overhead, a light click sounded. Old Chen knew from experience that this meant the "line clear" signal had been switched on and a train was due in fifteen minutes. He raised his head. The green signal lights in front were like eager eyes looking out for a guest from afar. He silently commended the man on duty for keeping the glass of the signals so spotlessly clean. "All set!" rang out a familiar voice, after which a clear bell announced that all preparations had been made at the station for the incoming train. Old Chen paused. So Young Li was on duty. That was a capable lad. Still, he had better go for a look nevertheless.

Li Hai-ken was the tenth signalman Old Chen had trained after liberation. He had only just finished his apprenticeship and as this was his third shift on his own, he was thoroughly enjoying his work. Imitating Old Chen's gestures, he tried out the coloured signals, setting them aside when he found them in good shape. Then he buttoned his jacket at the collar and straightened his suit and cap. As the train was not yet due and his stomach was rumbling, he returned to the signal cabin, drew a stale bun out of the drawer and bit into it. Then he turned and found himself facing his former master. With a grin, Young Li quickly swallowed the food in his mouth and slipped the bun back into the drawer.

"Haven't you had your evening meal yet?" asked Old Chen.

"Oh yes, long ago," said Young Li with a straight face. "This is just a snack my mother gave me."

Old Chen gave his former apprentice a stern glance: his clothes were grimy with coal dust and the strand of hair escaping from his cap was spattered with mud. Old Chen grasped the situation. Flicking the dust from the young man's jacket, he said severely but with affection in his voice, "Don't ever lie to me again. Hasn't the Party secretary told us repeatedly that people on night shifts should get a proper rest in the afternoon? They are forbidden to volunteer for the unloading. Why did you disobey orders?"

Young Li, biting his lips, bowed his head.

"Will you carry out orders in future?"

"Yes." The young man nodded.

"Drink some water." Old Chen poured out half a glass of boiled water for him. "Your bun's hard and cold, you don't want to upset your stomach."

Young Li took the glass and sipped the water. Just then the telephone rang. He picked up the receiver with alacrity. "Signalman Li Hai-ken here," he answered in a loud voice. "Freight train 2430 can go straight through. The points are switched, everything's in order."

He turned and left the signal cabin. Lantern in hand he walked to the junction for another look before returning to his post. Old Chen followed him, watching silently.

An engine pulling a long train of goods-wagons swept past with a rush of wind and a rumble like thunder. This was always a proud and solemn moment for Old Chen. More than once he had told his apprentices, "The state and the people have entrusted the lives and goods on this train to us. We must switch the points to give them a safe passage. Just think what an important task it is." Now, standing by his apprentice, his eyes welcomed this unruly customer who would not stand the least slight.

The train pulled in safely at the station. Many thoughts crossed Old Chen's mind at happy times like this. When the train carried huge machines he thought: They've brought machines, so the iron and steel works' second converter must be nearing completion. When it was building material, his mind turned to the first big department store being constructed at Phoenix Hill. They are building the third floor, he'd think, with this new material, they'll probably finish it within the month. Even when an empty train pulled in, he thought: the iron and steel works must be sending up sputniks in production again, the train's come for the extra iron. Today, however, he was occupied with something else. "You didn't have a proper rest this afternoon," he told Young Li. "You won't be able to stick out the whole night. Let me take over for a little."

"That won't do! No, no, Master Chen, you have your own shift to work tomorrow. It's time you went home to rest. Hurry up now and go back." In his eagerness to see Chen off, Young Li spoke faster and faster.

"Do you want an accident then?" Old Chen pretended to be angry. Actually he had full confidence in his apprentice, he just didn't want the young man to lose too much sleep and impair his health.

Young Li pursed his mouth but didn't know what to say. Putting one hand on his shoulder, the older man made him sit down. "Listen to me," he said gently. "Rest your head on the table for a while. I'll come back and call you." Young Li was forced to obey, though he was racking his brains for the right words to persuade Old Chen to go home for some sleep himself. As he argued with his master mentally, he conjured up a cheerful scene: unloading teams of hundreds and thousands, himself among them, were enthusiastically racing each other while gongs and cymbals crashed merrily; then he and his mates were at the newly completed machine-building works, looking around the workshops which still smelt of new paint, where giant machines stood row upon row revolving at flying speed . . . he was already in dreamland.

When Old Chen returned from an inspection of the junction, he gazed with a satisfied smile at Young Li's sleeping face. Putting the signal lantern on the table, he shaded it with half an old newspaper to keep the glare out of the young man's eyes. Then he turned the light up, took a diary from his pocket and unscrewed a thick fountain pen.

He mused, eyes on the flickering light. He had meant to check over his personal plan for leaping forward, but his mind turned at once to the work of the station as a whole. What was still wanting there and what could be done to improve things? The depot, the storehouse and the junction . . . he could visualize the whole station clearly, he knew it as well as each piece of furniture in his own house. Suddenly, the boom of a gong floated over from the north-eastern corner of the town.

At night the tone was deeper and more impressive than usual. "More iron smelted." Old Chen smiled at the thought. Looking out from the signal cabin window, he could see the red glow over the iron and steel works and hear the faint chug-chug of the locomotive plying to and fro in the light and heat under the row of blast furnaces. A tense battle for iron was going on.

The sight reminded him of another exciting event and posed a new problem. Two days ago, he had heard workers from the iron and steel works say that two new blast furnaces would be producing next month. That was splendid news! But more blast furnaces would mean a greater demand for raw material. A big strain had already been put on the railway how could they manage to bring in more supplies?

In a neat round hand, he wrote, "New blast furnaces start production." What else should he add? He didn't know at the moment. A high sense of responsibility and many years' experience reminded him at this juncture that another train was due in soon. He closed his notebook, picked up the lantern softly and went out. He returned the next second and carefully closed the door to prevent the incoming train from disturbing Young Li. The door had no latch and would not stay shut. The old man put down his lantern, and used the old newspaper which had shaded the lantern to wedge the door close tight.

After the freight train rumbled past there was an interval of more than an hour before a passenger train was due. When on night duty, Chen always made use of this time to check the line near the junction as well as the section round the signal.

A little hammer in one hand and a lantern in the other, he carefully examined every connection on the signal line and every spike in the rails, his back bent low over the task. Not the smallest crack could escape his vigilant eyes. After a while, he straightened



up to see if there was anything on the line in the distance. Again the red glow over the iron and steel works caught his eye. The tall chimney stacks spurting red-gold flame were shining like fiery dragons ready to take flight. Not far away, above the newly erected blast furnaces, blue sparks were flashing. The electric welders' skilful hands were embroidering a pattern on the dark purple sky.

Old Chen had been born and bred here in Phoenix Hill. He knew every blade of grass and every tree as well as the palm of his hands. When he was young there had been only a few thatched huts hereabouts. You might go round the hills with a big brass gong without collecting more than a dozen people. Later, bureaucratic capitalists had arrived in sedan-chairs carried by eight bearers. They supervised the building of this Chiangnan Railway and brutally exploited the workers in the process. In those days only two lines ran through Phoenix Hill station and there were very few passengers all year round. After the liberation, when an iron and steel works was built the railway developed by leaps and bounds. When he recalled these changes, Old Chen could have laughed aloud for joy.

"How fast our country has developed," he said to himself. "Like a girl in her late teens, who changes with every passing day and gets prettier and prettier." The more he recalled the past, the prouder he was of the railway today and the more keenly aware of his own responsibility.

He thought of the materials stacked like small hills of different sizes at the other end of the depot. "The iron and steel works is expanding, so freight will increase too. But there's no room in the depot for more materials. What's to be done?" The problem had occurred to him all of a sudden. Yes, what was to be done? A way ought to be found. In a few hurried strides, he approached a pile of cement. He fingered some of the fine, smooth cement that had leaked out from the bags, then covered them more securely with a canvas and muttered, "Excellent cement! We're building to last for more than a hundred years, it's got to be good."

Suddenly a drop of cold water dripped down his back, making him shiver. Could it be raining when it had been so fine a few minutes ago? He looked up into a star-lit sky. Dewdrops from the tree overhead had dripped into his collar. It was this tree

at the foot of Phoenix Hill that gave Old Chen an idea. Why didn't they cut open Phoenix Hill? Yes, that was the way. Make a cutting in the hill and fill in the pond, then there would be plenty of space for the supplies the trains brought in.

Old Chen was overjoyed. Stepping up a little mound of earth, he majestically surveyed the scene around, his lantern in one hand. "We'll level the foothill and with the earth from that fill up the pond over there. That'll give us space enough for at least a thousand tons of material. We'll lay a line starting from that signal cabin. That'll make it easy for me to keep an eye on the materials. We can do the job ourselves. Yes, we can start right away." His hands itched to get started. "But what if there are a lot of rocks? Didn't the villagers run into rocks which broke the iron teeth of their rakes when they tried to dig shelters in the hills against Japanese bombers?" But he was not daunted for long. "What have we to fear now? We can copy the tunnel workers and use explosives. . . . But when we start blasting we must block that path leading to the school. Mustn't let the kiddies come near to watch the fun. . . . Why, I must go back now and get ready for the incoming train."

With a buoyant heart, Chen walked towards the signal cabin. He would think the matter over again carefully later that night and the next morning he would consult the station master and the Party secretary about this idea.

"Dad, Daddy!" came a shrill cry from the distance. "Where are you?"

It was Old Chen's daughter. "Coming, I'm coming," he called back in his booming voice. At sight of him, his daughter began to scold him for staying out so long and going without his supper till after ten o'clock. At this point, Young Li, rubbing sleepy eyes, groped his way out of the signal cabin, wakened by this exchange between father and daughter or perhaps by something else. "Master Chen," he urged, "hurry on home now! You haven't had your supper yet."

*Translated by Tang Sheng
Illustrations by Shu Lan*

LI YEH-KUANG

Good Morning, Africa, New Africa!

Good morning, Africa, New Africa!
You appear across the dawn ocean
Sweeping aside dense mist, treading the waves;
You come like a mighty flagship
To herald daybreak on the "dark continent."

Ah, how many flags I see
Flutter in the morning wind above your mast;
Are those the proud eagles of free North Africa
Soaring aloft from the sheer mountain crags,
Circling and calling as they scale the clouds?

Ah, how many bright clouds I see
Wreath your broad, mighty chest;
Was it the angry people of South Africa
Who made bonfires of their "passes"
To brighten the night of their dark countryside?

Good morning, Africa, New Africa!
Gone are those chilly nights
When your camel caravans plodded on in silence,
For now the tempest of battle has spread its wings
To swallow for ever the camel bells' lonely tinkling.

Now in Nyasaland's jungles I hear
The cry go round: "Dawn is breaking!"
On Kenya's plateau under the moon I hear
Countless heroes seated together
Discuss the coming fight and whet their swords.

I hear the rumbling of impending storm
Like ten thousand horses galloping over the plain;
It is you beating your earth-shaking battle drums
To urge on your two hundred million daughters and sons;
Two hundred million hearts are beating as one.

Ah, great, brave and tender mother,
Spread your mighty arms, the Nile and Congo,
Unfold the far-flung net of your Sahara,
Let the Atlantic kneel before your feet,
Let the Pentagon tremble at your voice!

Good morning, Africa, New Africa!
You come riding on the wind, ploughing the waves,
Proud and resplendent with your flying banners,
To greet the rising morning sun in the east
And the joyful acclamations of the Chinese people. . . .

We Support You, Algeria!

We support you, Algeria!
Your battle call re-echoes in Peking,
Our hearts are flying towards you,
Warm hearts like ten thousand swallows
Carrying spring to forests, valleys and mountains.

We support you, Algeria!
Your heroic stand is admired in Asia and Africa,
Mountains and rivers lie bathed in the light of your victory,
Your gallant spirit like the surging sea
Is shattering the gaol that imprisons your children.

We support you, Algeria!
Who is it walking into the valley of death?
Who is it galloping over the wide plain?
Now the scales of history are tipping to one side:
Right is might, not the butcher's knife!

We support you, Algeria!
We have brought the happiness of heaven to earth,
The torch of truth will soon be shining on you,
The proud eagle of free North Africa will soar high;
Brothers, take the whole sun in your embrace!*

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi

*Soldiers in the Algerian National Liberation Army used to say: "In the daytime we control half of Algeria, but after the moon rises, the whole country belongs to us."

LIU CHING

The Builders (cont'd)

THE STORY SO FAR:

Although Liang the Third, a poor peasant of Frog Flat by the Tang Stream in Shensi Province, worked industriously all his life on rented land, he never had a bit of land of his own and was growing poorer day by day. After the liberation in 1949, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the poor peasants carry out a tempestuous land reform. Like the other poor peasants in Frog Flat, Liang the Third also receives about a dozen *mou* of land. In the old society he had always dreamed in vain of "building up his family fortunes." Now he puts all of his efforts into his newly acquired private land. This old capitalist concept conflicts with the new ideas of his step-son, Sheng-pao, who stands for the socialist approach of co-operation in agriculture.

Young Sheng-pao is a Communist. He whole-heartedly responds to the Party's call: Develop mutual aid in agriculture so that by collective effort production can be increased and the general livelihood improved. He is supported in this by poor peasants, Tseng-fu, Jen the Fourth and Yu-wan. They know that only in this way can they rid themselves of poverty and quickly raise their standard of living. They resolutely take the road of co-operation. But they are faced with a practical problem. It is the spring of scarcity and they are short of food grain. The well-to-do middle peasant Shih-fu and the rich peasant Yao, both have considerable surplus grain. Yao, instead of lending it to the needy peasants, is secretly shipping it into town where he loans it to the peasants at usurious rates.

To prove the superiority of co-operation and mutual aid and to defeat the attack of the rich peasant, Sheng-pao goes to a neighbouring county to buy a strain of quick-growing rice seeds

which would also allow time for planting an additional crop. He believes that with this they will be able to overfulfill the production plan which the district Party secretary has helped them to draw. Sheng-pao has fallen in love with Kai-hsia, a young girl of his village, and hopes to persuade her to become his wife when he returns to Frog Flat.

VI

As Kai-hsia sat listening to her teacher in the third-year classroom of Hsiapao's primary school, in Kuan Creek Hamlet elder men and women kept dropping in on her thatched-hut home in its persimmon-tree compound.

Each visitor solicitously sounded her mother out as to how Kai-hsia might feel about a new match now that she had broken off her engagement.

Several earnest intelligent young fellows of comfortable amiable families were recommended for the consideration of the "beauty" whose fame had spread all along the Tang—upstream, a primary school teacher who had a bit of land which he rented out; downstream, the only son of a rich peasant; on the northern plateau, a township government scribe—he also rented out his small plot of land; in town, a middle-school student whose father was a cloth merchant; and, in Kai-hsia's own village, Shih-fu's son Yung-mao, who was attending middle school in the county seat. . . . All educated young men.

Yung-mao was from Fifth Village; no need to say much about him. The others, although from different localities, had also seen Kai-hsia before sending their matchmakers. Her loveliness, her charm had smitten them so, their appetites and sleep were affected. The matchmakers said if only Kai-hsia would consider their "proposal," they would be glad to discuss any reasonable conditions she might impose!

Ah, Kai-hsia, Kai-hsia! Perhaps you're the prettiest girl along the Tang, perhaps not! But if you hadn't taken part in social activities, if you hadn't gone to that conference in the county seat as a youth delegate, if you hadn't made a speech before an audience of ten thousand in Huangpao Town on May First

in 1951, do you think a country girl like you, raised in a thatched hut, could ever have become so well known and attracted so much attention, no matter how pretty she was!

Kai-hsia's mother, her brass spectacles resting on the bridge of her nose, wound thread binding the earpieces to the frame, listened to the various matchmakers as she stitched a cloth sole for her daughter. The widow was quite pleased with Kai-hsia. She offered no hope to any of her callers, to avoid any possible future embarrassment. Still, the fact that so many big families of the rural middle class were seeking after the daughter of a poor widow gave her a lot of satisfaction. It gradually dissipated an apologetic feeling, which had been oppressing her for some time, towards the family in Chou Village.

She reported these proposals to the neighbour who lived diagonally opposite, her family "advisor"—the chairman of the village deputies.

Waving his hands in a negative gesture, the bristly-cheeked Chen-shan threw back his head and laughed.

"Impossible! Impossible! Not one of those suitors will do! Nothing but rich peasants, small lessors, crooked merchants and prosperous middle peasants. . . . Backward blockheads, every one! All educated, and all working away from home. What girl Youth Leaguer would marry into the family of a man like that? Keeping her in-laws company all day, and watched so closely that at night she couldn't even go out to a meeting. Do you think Kai-hsia would be such a fool? A bird that's escaped the cage isn't going to fly back in again. Ha, ha, ha! . . ."

When he'd finished his laugh, Chen-shan earnestly advised the widow: "Don't talk to Kai-hsia about any of them! Tuck them away in the back of your head and forget 'em. Don't interfere with her studies. Studying is different from tilling the ground—you can't do it well if anything's troubling you."

"Right, right!" She agreed. Then she smiled and said: "But. . . ."

"But, what?"

"But Yung-mao is a good—"

"You mean that match appeals to you?" Chen-shan cried, amazed.

The woman laughed. She was obviously interested. "It's a good family. Shih-fu has a good household. He's got land and people to work it; he has a horse and a cart. His home is well lit; when he travels it's to the tinkle of horse bells. And we live right on the same street. I could see Kai-hsia every day. . . ."

Chen-shan listened impatiently.

"You like Shih-fu's prosperity, but does Kai-hsia care for Yung-mao?"

"Yung-mao's a student in the county middle school."

"How's his outlook?"

"His outlook, his outlook. . . ." The widow didn't know what to say, so she laughed. She had given this little thought.

Although he knew the answer, Chen-shan asked, "Has Yung-mao joined the Youth League?"

"What? Can't a Youth Leaguer marry anyone except another Youth Leaguer? . . ."

"Of course not! You think Kai-hsia's still the same girl she was ten years ago, or even five? Not a political idea in her head? Yung-mao is a non-Youth Leaguer! When our primary and middle school students come home for their summer and winter vacations, our Fifth Village Youth League group organizes them to do propaganda. They write wall newspapers and go around making announcements through megaphones. But that Yung-mao is very listless. Each time, the Youth Leaguers have to call at his door and invite him. Even then, he brings a story book, and reads as he ambles along. Kai-hsia says he hasn't a bit of initiative — always dawdling; unless you push him he doesn't move! He irritates her to death. Do you expect her to marry him? Not a chance!"

The widow smiled awkwardly. "I don't understand all these new-fashioned ideas. . . ."

"Then don't interfere. Just let her go on peacefully with her studies. Even if things come up at home, as long as you can get along without her, don't hold up her schooling. A widow and daughter as well off as you two are today — you ought to be grateful to Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao says we should raise our cultural level. So you let her stick to school. Why did you treat her as a son and stay a widow all these years if not for her sake? . . ."

Profoundly moved by the eloquent chairman, Kai-hsia's mother thought of woman's hardest lot — the life of a widow. . . .

. . . The day of the third anniversary of her husband's death, all the relatives called. After a while they left. Only her eldest brother remained. Big Brother sat on the edge of the brick bed, puffing hard on his pipe. He looked at his widowed sister with a troubled expression.

At last, he addressed her haltingly.

"Sister, you. . . ."

"If you've anything to say, Big Brother, speak out!"

"What I mean is you . . . you . . . you. . . ."

"What about me?"

"You have no son to support you when you're old —"

"Kai-hsia will be my son!" Tears welled from the widow's eyes as she sobbed, "She'll be a son to me. . . . I'll remain a widow. . . . I'd rather suffer . . . than have Kai-hsia . . . go with me . . . to someone else's home . . . and be abused. . . ."

"Forget it! Don't cry!" Wiping his own tears with his fingers, Big Brother said, "There's only one thing. You'll have to be careful of your reputation —"

"Don't worry, Big Brother! I won't do anything to make our family lose face!"

And so it was that she passed a score or more years of strict widowhood, living only to be a mother to Kai-hsia. All the peasants in Frog Flat praised her virtue; there was never a word of rumour against her.

As the years passed, gradually, by both tangible and intangible means, she moulded her daughter in her own image. The result was that at seventeen Kai-hsia was a shy retiring girl. If anyone looked at her more than once she dropped her head and avoided his admiring gaze.

Kai-hsia's mother would never have dreamt that only a few months after liberation the years of training she had spent upon her daughter would prove to be entirely in vain. After Kai-hsia attended several mass meetings, the persimmon-tree compound could no longer hold her. Stirred by the policy which the Communists had brought, the poor sharecroppers of Frog Flat made strong demands for economic emancipation. Kai-hsia, stimulated in turn by their demands, longed for freedom as a

woman. Chairman Chen-shan hinted to her that by participating in social activities she could hasten the solution of her own problem. The clever eighteen-year-old girl, at first solely because she didn't want to marry the man in Chou Village, plunged boldly into the turbulent stream of the mass movement. In the face of this thunderous torrent, how could her timid mother object? Besides, the widow was quite happy to see the rich landlords being overthrown. Let the girl join in, for the time being!

When the mother heard rumours that Kai-hsia and Sheng-pao were becoming exceptionally friendly, she realized that she had made a mistake. But it was too late for regrets.

She called at the thatched hut of the neighbour who lived diagonally opposite.

"Chairman Chen-shan."

"Yes?"

"Come over to my place a while."

"What for?"

"I . . . I want to talk to you about something."

"Go ahead!"

Kai-hsia's mother wiped her tears with the hem of her tunic.

"It isn't convenient here. Come over for a minute, can't you?"

Touched by her weeping, Chen-shan said: "All right. You go back. I'll be over just as soon as I move out this load of manure."

A pipe in his mouth, the bristly-cheeked chairman of the peasants' association soon entered the persimmon-tree compound. Kai-hsia's mother, tears streaking her face, led him into the house.

"Have a seat."

"Thanks. Let's hear what you've got to say!"

The widow again raised the hem of her tunic to her streaming eyes.

"What is all this?" Chen-shan asked, puzzled.

"You've got to make my Kai-hsia quit the Youth League!" the widow sobbed.

"But why?"

"She can't work outside!"

"What's wrong?"

"I'm not going to let her go running around!"

"Speak up, will you!" the chairman demanded impatiently. "I don't like guessing games!"

"That Sheng-pao is a devil," the widow stammered. "Flirting and fooling around. . . ."

"Aiyah!" At last Chen-shan understood what she was driving at. He laughed heartily. "You're all wrong! There's no such thing! You shouldn't listen to idle chatter. Don't wrong a good man!"

The widow's damp eyes widened in surprise.

"Who told you that yarn?" the chairman demanded hotly. "Tell me his name! Spreading rumours and making trouble — he won't get off lightly!"

Chen-shan was so obviously in earnest that the widow's tears turned to smiles.

"Then you mean . . . they haven't —"

"No!" the chairman said firmly. "You shouldn't listen to a lot of silly lies! Communists and Youth Leaguers only do things that are of benefit to the people. Rascals are always trying to smear our work. And since they can't convince anybody on that score, they make up sex stories. They only have to see a man and woman walking together, and that's it! Everything is blown up ten times its actual size. Listen to me, sister. Even if there's someone you suspect, don't you trust your own daughter? Is Kai-hsia that kind of a baggage? Don't let your imagination run wild. Crying and snivelling like this — people will laugh at you!"

Although she believed Chen-shan, the widow still wasn't entirely convinced. When she thought of the difference between Sheng-pao's sickly child bride and her own blooming Kai-hsia, she couldn't help feeling uneasy.

She pondered a while, then made a very simple request.

"If Sheng-pao could be expelled from the Youth League, I'd feel much better. . . ."

Chen-shan opened the thick-lipped mouth of his bristly face so wide and gave such a great wheeze of a laugh that for several seconds no sound emerged. The widow was too embarrassed to say more.

"My dear neighbour!" Chen-shan gasped, when he had recovered a bit. "You've lost your wits! Sheng-pao did a fine

job as the captain of our village militia, and you want us to kick him out of the Youth League? You really kill me! . . ."

"Well, then you must look after Kai-hsia. Teach her. . . ."

"Don't worry about a thing! Not one of our village Youth Leaguers is going to leave the straight and narrow!"

And for the next year or two after the start of the land reform, the widow did indeed relax. But after Sheng-pao's child bride died and Kai-hsia broke off her engagement, she again requested the chairman to keep an eye on the relations between the two young people.

Ordinarily, on Saturday afternoon there were no activities in the Hsiapao primary school. Kai-hsia returned home at noon. On the edge of the brick bed she saw the basket they used when visiting relatives. Inside, covered with a spotless white towel cloth used only on special occasions were freshly steamed muffins of white flour, each with a decorative red dot on top. Next to the basket, Kai-hsia's visiting clothes were laid out—a blue cloth tunic and trousers set that was a great favourite among students in 1953.

"Tomorrow is the birthday of Second Sister's baby," said her mother. "I can't walk that distance, but you can go. Don't try to come back today; it's too tiring. Stay over at sister's place tonight and come home tomorrow afternoon."

Kai-hsia had been thinking of consulting her Second Sister on the complications of her heart. After several days of pondering, she had decided that working in a factory would be more interesting than life in the countryside. But she couldn't help feeling that this would be unfair to Sheng-pao. Although nothing definite had ever been said between them about marriage, they knew they were in love. If she didn't have a talk with him first, but simply left for a factory without a word, wouldn't that be too inhuman? She wasn't so crude that she could drop the man she loved the moment a chance to better herself came along. Kai-hsia wanted to talk it over with Second Sister and get her opinion. Who in the village could she confide in? Chen-shan? Hsiu-lan? Mama? She couldn't tell any of them. . . .

After the noon hour, Kai-hsia left Frog Flat and crossed the Tang Stream. From Big Crossroads in Hsiapao Village she

started down the highway that led to the county seat. As she walked she drew approving glances from the women, adoring stares from the boys, and envious looks from the girls she met along the road.

Mounting a big rise, she entered upon the northern plateau. The Wei River, the eight hundred *li* Chinling Valley, villages, groves, the railway, all unrolled before her. On both sides of the highway, thorny locust trees, still without buds, marched off towards the north. In the fields, the winter wheat had turned a pale green. Larks and golden orioles flitted among the branches of the locust trees by the roadside, flying in the same direction as Kai-hsia as if accompanying her, warbling a bird language no man could understand. Were they expressing astonishment that in this world there could be such a lovely girl?

Students returning home for the weekend from the county schools came walking towards Kai-hsia along the highway in twos and threes. Singing, chatting, laughing, hotly arguing, they fell silent as they drew near her, "saluting" her with their eyes. Some, after walking past, turned their heads for another look.

But Kai-hsia never gave them a glance. Carrying her basket, head high, she kept her big eyes calmly on the Wei plateau stretching ahead. There was a cool reserve about her that discouraged any frivolity or disrespect. Her beauty to Kai-hsia was something external. It had nothing to do with her intellect, her political consciousness or ability. She didn't consider it one of her merits. Attracting attention didn't make her self-satisfied in the least. On the contrary, the hungry stares annoyed her.

Yung-mao and several of his schoolmates came her way, slim and fair, a cowlick deliberately left protruding beneath his black cap from hair fashionably parted on the side, Yung-mao was a giddy lad.

"Where are you going, Kai-hsia?" he halted and inquired solicitously.

"To Kuan Village," she said evenly.

"What for?"

"To visit a relative."

Kai-hsia's answers were reluctant, and she didn't stop as she replied. She had nothing but scorn for Yung-mao's ostentation. Kai-hsia pressed her lips together contemptuously. He had the

same conceit as his prosperous father Shih-fu. His lack of interest in the propaganda work the students did at home during their vacations, his coldness to all the village campaigns, piled up more than enough unpleasant reactions in Kai-hsia's mind. She had plenty of reason to despise him.

"What's so wonderful about you?" she mentally demanded of Yung-mao. "Your family has a lot of land only because your father licked the boots of a big landlord. What right have you to put on airs? Don't you give me the eye! All tricked out like a performing bear!"

A cart pulled by a team of horses hove into view. Seated on one of the shafts, a long whip in his hand, was Kuo Shih-hua, Shih-fu's youngest brother. The cart was filled with men and women passengers.

"Well! Kai-hsia, where are you going?" Shih-hua hailed her when they were still a good distance apart.

After she replied, the cart owner, all smiles, said, "On your way back tomorrow, I'll give you a lift, free of charge!"

"I can walk!" the girl retorted. To herself she said, "Pig! Talking so disgustingly before a cart full of people! You think the whole world is like you — always trying to get something for nothing?"

"Hey!" The cart had already passed, and Shih-hua turned to shout at her back. "Kai-hsia! Wait at the turn-off to Kuan Village tomorrow. I'll come by in the early afternoon!"

"No!" Kai-hsia called over her shoulder. "Shameless wretch!" she thought. "Who wants to ride on your cart? You don't even take your own nephew when he goes home from school for the weekend, just to leave room for another paying passenger. Him you won't pick up — only me!" Kai-hsia knew that Shih-fu wanted her for a daughter-in-law. Well, he could keep on dreaming!

After descending the northern end of the plateau, Kai-hsia walked through a little hamlet by the Lu River bridge, consisting of a restaurant, a tea-house, a small inn and a bicycle repair shop. Suddenly her heart leaped and all the blood rushed to her head. Kai-hsia bit her lip and prepared herself for a tense moment.

Sheng-pao was striding towards her from the bridge, his perspiring face gleaming in the sunlight! Because he was hot, he carried

his towel-cloth headgear in his hand. When he saw Kai-hsia, Sheng-pao blushed a bright red.

"You're back!" she hailed him mechanically, striving to look calm.

"Yes!" he cried, happy and excited, a big moist hand pulling the open edges of his tunic together. He didn't want Kai-hsia to see him looking so sloppy.

His eyes were upon her, but she dropped her head, not daring to meet his gaze. Scuffing a pebble with her toes, she wondered: Whatever shall I say to him?

"I bought two hundred and fifty catties of rice seed," Sheng-pao announced triumphantly, to break the awkward silence.

"Where is it?"

"On Shih-hua's cart. Didn't you meet him just now?"

"Why didn't you ride on the cart with the seed?"

"Huh! That Shih-hua has a black heart! He counted the sack of seed as one passenger. If I went with it, I'd have to pay an extra fare. I told him: You just take the seed; I'll walk behind."

Moved, Kai-hsia raised her head and looked at Sheng-pao's flushed face. Remembering how cold Chen-shan was to what Sheng-pao was trying to do, she felt very badly. "You're so enthusiastic," she thought, "but can you succeed?" Suddenly she noticed that a number of people by the roadside were observing appreciatively the rather intimate manner in which she and Sheng-pao were conversing. Embarrassed, she had to leave him and walk on. If they had been alone in the fields, she would have said much more.

When she turned her head at the top of the arched stone bridge, Sheng-pao was just looking back at her. Torn between two desires, Kai-hsia was more confused than ever. Now she again tended to want to stay with Sheng-pao. She decided that she must have a talk with him after she had seen her sister. . . .

One sunny morning in early spring, peasants — smoking pipes, carrying manure baskets, walking with hands behind their backs — were seen on the many small paths atop the banks of the paddy fields, all moving in the direction of the compound containing the thatched huts of Liang the Third.

"What kind of seed has Sheng-pao bought?"

"It's called Hundred Day Ripener. They say it takes only a hundred days from the time you transplant the seedlings to the time you harvest."

"Very strange! We've always gone by the rule: 'A month for the shoots to turn green, a month for them to grow, a month to put out grain heads, a month to ripen yellow.' That Hundred Day Ripener is quicker by twenty days!"

"But who knows how good it is!"

"Sheng-pao claims it has a short stalk with many grains."

"No! Won't it ever develop long stalks and small heads if you give it extra fertilizer?"

"They say plenty of fertilizer is good for it, as long as you irrigate at regular intervals."

"Aha! Can there really be such a strain of rice? How much seed did Sheng-pao bring back?"

"More than a *tan*. They say after he gives a share to each member of his mutual-aid team, he'll still have some left over."

"You think he might let us have a little? I'd like to try it..."

The shortness of the growing time of the Hundred Day Ripener attracted wide interest in Frog Flat. Peasants jammed Liang's compound. The noise was deafening. It sounded like the Huangpao Town grain market. Many peasants had come from Hsiapao Village, across the stream. Some hoped to buy the seed, but a number were simply curious. To satisfy his curiosity, a peasant will sometimes travel dozens of *li*!

They shoved their thick hands into the open sack, drew out pinches of seed, placed them on their palms and examined them carefully. They pressed the seed with their thumbs, blew lightly on the split husks and peered again. They put the exposed ker-

nels in their mouths, chewed reflectively and spat them out. Then they exchanged views.

The general consensus was — not bad!

Sheng-pao, his head bound with a towel cloth, was measuring out the seed and pouring it into containers which members of his team had brought. Yu-wan, wearing a black cap and a peasant's padded jacket bound at the waist by an army belt, stood scale in hand, weighing the containers before and after they were filled to check the net weight of the seed. This young captain of the militia gave the peasants of Frog Flat the impression he was rather proud that so many people had come to witness the division of the seed among the members of his mutual-aid team.

"Hey, Sheng-pao, that's no way to figure!" shouted old Jen the Fourth.

"What's no way?" demanded his nephew Huan-hsi, the primary school graduate who parted his hair on the side like a city boy.

"Say, Sheng-pao," the old man insisted on speaking to the team leader directly, "you didn't add your living expenses into the cost of the seed. That's not right! You ran around for us for days. That was very good of you. But you shouldn't have to lose anything by it! . . ."

"What a nuisance you are!" Yu-wan, who was weighing the old man's container, cut him short. "How many times do we have to tell you? Sheng-pao didn't stop at any inns on his trip, and he ate only the griddle cakes he brought from home. What living expenses did he have?"

"Only the griddle cakes he brought from home! Don't they cost anything? What were they made of — mud?" Jen the Fourth stuck to his opinion.

His mud griddle cakes made everyone laugh, but Jen himself was quite serious. He knew that the price of the seed included only the original cost plus the shipping charges and Sheng-pao's round trip ticket, but not his living expenses. That wasn't fair. In the few days that Sheng-pao was away in Kuo County, Jen the Fourth had earned ten yuan making a thousand mud bricks. But a strapping young fellow like Sheng-pao not only didn't earn a penny in that time, he had to lay out living expenses to boot!

Even if Sheng-pao insisted on working gratis for the community, what about his old father? Jen had seen how bitterly Liang the

Third and his wife had quarrelled over this, and it made him unhappy. Their mutual-aid team would be stronger if old Liang could be made to feel a bit more satisfied. . . . But Jen wouldn't say this before so many people. He mentally berated Yu-wan for his crudeness, for his failure to consider other people's feelings. Seeing that Yu-wan was ignoring him, he remarked significantly:

"You only think of yourself. You don't care about anybody else!"

"Enough! Forget it! Who wants to argue with you? Our team leader isn't a petty skinflint, he's a Communist. . . ."

"Oh? I suppose Communists don't have to eat? I suppose they don't need clothes?"

Sheng-pao, one hand grasping the sack of seed, the other holding the measure, gazed at the rope of rice straw that had to serve as a sash for Jen the Fourth. With a friendly smile he said, "You needn't worry about me. Just look after your own family."

Huan-hsi was annoyed with his uncle's garrulousness. "Empty talk!" he chided him. "You haven't even paid for your share of the rice seed. Sheng-pao had to advance it for you. Now you're saying we ought to give more money. How are you going to do it?"

"If I can't pay up this minute, I can owe it to him, can't I?"

At this, a contemptuous smirk appeared on the face of the prosperous Shih-fu, who was standing in the crowd a short distance off, wearing a felt skullcap. Beneath his neatly trimmed moustache, his lips twisted scornfully as if to say: "You haven't repaid me yet for those low-interest grain loans I gave you these last two years, but you still say, 'owe, owe.' That's all you know — 'owe!'"

The sharp-eyed Huan-hsi spotted his expression. Furious, the boy whirled on his uncle Jen and snapped: "Take your container and go. You've got a lot of work to do!"

Very satisfied with the seed that was given him, Jen the Fourth, after many grateful words, finally turned to leave. It was only then that he saw the prosperous Shih-fu. Jen's face paled, then turned a brick red. He had become so angry that morning when Huan-hsi told him how Shih-fu had asked to be repaid that perhaps now you're thinking: *Aiya!* Maybe Jen is going to throw

down his bamboo container and fling himself at Shih-fu in a battle to the death!

Well, you can relax. The old saw is right: "Beggars are meek, debtors can't argue." Jen the Fourth was still weighted down by poverty. Averting Shih-fu's cold stare, he silently left the compound and went home.

Sheng-pao and Yu-wan continued measuring out the grain for the members of their mutual-aid team. After these had gone, a share was set aside for Yu-wan.

Now, the former beancurd pedlar, Liang the Eldest, stepped up to Yu-wan and held out a sack. Leaning on a fine cane made of wood from Mount Chungnan, the tall bald-headed old man stood waiting. With a righteous air he demanded:

"Weigh this sack for me."

"What for?" Yu-wan didn't understand.

The bald old man wouldn't talk to him. With the combined authority of the eldest of the clan and a well-to-do citizen, he ordered Sheng-pao:

"Give me five measures!"

Sheng-pao looked at him in surprise. "But cousin Sheng-lu has already taken your family's share home!"

"This is for my married daughter. She's visiting us for a few days and she's heard that your seed is good. She wants to try it."

All eyes were on Sheng-pao. Leaders of several other mutual-aid teams, after examining the seed, had asked for some, and Sheng-pao had agreed to share it among them if there was any left over.

Yu-wan was enraged. He had no patience with unreasonable people. When Sheng-pao, preparing to set out on his journey, had asked Sheng-lu for a loan of a few yuan, this bald-headed old bird, on behalf of his son, had unceremoniously refused. Now he had the gall to demand seed for his visiting daughter! Clutching the scale, his lips a straight line, Yu-wan stood stock still. He wouldn't weigh the old bald head's sack!

A disdainful smile on his flabby ashen face, Liang the Eldest gazed at the mutual-aid team leader as if to say:

"The Eldest has spoken! We'll see whether you give me my due respect, young fellow!"

Sheng-pao hesitated awkwardly, the measure in his hand. He thought to himself: "Of course he's trying to beat me down with his seniority in our clan. What shall I do? His horse is the best in our mutual-aid team, and his family has the only cart. We can't do without him. But he's pushing me too hard! I won't give him the seed. Let's see what he's going to do about it!"

Huan-hsi, who had already taken his seed home and returned, thought of a clever means of helping Sheng-pao out of his difficulty. He heaved a regretful sigh and said to his team leader:

"It's a pity you didn't take more money with you when you went. You could have bought more seed. . . ."

"What?" shouted Liang the Eldest, cocking his bald head to one side and narrowing his eyes in a baleful stare at this mischievous young man. "Didn't my family give money? He's got seed left over. If others can share, why can't his own relatives have some? We'll pay for what we get. We won't owe anyone a penny! Besides, when a Liang is talking to a Liang, what business has a Jen got butting in?"

He was so fierce that Huan-hsi didn't dare reply. The crowd in the compound fell silent, like an audience watching a tense scene in a play.

"Ah, let him have the seed!" thought Sheng-pao, changing his mind. "It wouldn't be worth it to have him quit our team for a couple of measures of seed. I'll give in to him this time. . . ."

"Uncle," he said, forcing himself to smile, "it's like this. I have some extra seed, but the leaders of other teams in our village have already spoken up for it. Still, if you really want some for elder sister's family, I'll let you have a little."

"How much?"

"Two measures, uncle, how about that?"

"Bah, not enough to plant half a *mou*!"

"Three!" said Sheng-pao with an effort.

"Four!" cried Liang the Eldest, coming down one from his original demand.

"Leave me a little face, uncle," said Sheng-pao, pointing at the other people in the courtyard. "We want everyone to think it fair. . . ."

The old bald head looked around at the darkening visages, and saw the angrily glowering eyes. He relented.

"All right. Three, then."

But Yu-wan, the weigher, had disappeared. Irritated beyond words, he had put down the scale, taken his own seed and stalked out. Sheng-pao had to do the weighing himself. At last he got rid of this man with the greying beard whose age inspired no one's respect.

The crowd closed in on Sheng-pao. Everyone was clamouring for seed.

"I want two measures!"

"How about two for me?"

"All I want is one — just enough to raise seed grain for next year."

"Let me have, Sheng-pao, let me have. . . ." Some were too embarrassed to ask for a specific amount.

"Aiyā, don't push, everyone, please!" Sheng-pao was so crushed he could hardly breathe. "We don't have much and everybody wants some. Let's talk over how we ought to divide it."

"Right! That's a good idea!" shouted those who had been unable to elbow their way forward from the rear of the crowd.

Before Sheng-pao had left for Kuo County he had approached every village deputy and every mutual-aid team leader and said he would buy new seed for anyone who wanted to try it, but he had to have the money in advance. A number of peasants really couldn't raise the cash, but many were unwilling to risk laying out one yuan on seed they weren't sure of. Others were doubtful about Sheng-pao's ability to manage; they were afraid he would just waste their money.

Now these people were all attracted by the early ripening quality of the new seed. This was a great encouragement to Sheng-pao. It proved that the peasants generally, whether progressive or backward, intelligent or stupid, sincere or crafty, all wanted to produce more grain and increase their income. That meant there was hope for co-operative farming. Why, it was probably on this basis that the Party was promoting mutual-aid teams and farming co-ops! . . . As this realization dawned on the young Communist, he grew quite excited; his spirits soared.

The strong hand of a man who worked hard grasped Sheng-pao's shoulder from behind. Sheng-pao turned his head. It was the prosperous middle peasant Shih-fu. Sheng-pao had seen him

enter the compound, dressed in a clean black padded jacket, scoop up a handful of Hundred Day Ripener, crack open the husk and carefully examine the big kernels. From time to time he had gazed up thoughtfully at the sky.

Now he placed his mouth, adorned by a neatly trimmed moustache, close to Sheng-pao's ear.

"How much seed have you got left?" he asked in an intimate whisper.

"Two or three *ton*," Sheng-pao replied loudly.

"How much per *ton* are you charging?"

"Two yuan sixty cents."

"Let me have a *ton*. I'll give you five. All right?"

Huan-hsi, standing beside Sheng-pao, heard Shih-fu's offer. He wrinkled up his nose as if he smelled something foul.

"This isn't the grain market, Your Honour!" he warned. He hadn't forgotten how Shih-fu had pressed for Jen the Fourth's debt that night they were discussing low-interest grain loans.

"And I'm no grain pedlar!" said Sheng-pao with a sarcastic smile.

The crowd began to stir ominously.

"Master Shih-fu! If you've anything to say, speak a little louder!"

"Nothing, nothing at all!" the well-to-do farmer asserted hastily. Sensing a bad turn in the wind, he left the compound quickly, with his eyes downcast. He could handle those poor peasants, dealing with them one by one. But they were too tough for him when they all stood together.

Sheng-pao proposed to the waiting peasants that the Frog Flat mutual-aid teams take not more than two measures of seed each. He would give Iron Man five measures, because Iron Man's team was the most important one in the upstream section, and further because Iron Man had loaned him three yuan when he was starting out on his trip. Everyone agreed to this.

"I really ought to give you more," Sheng-pao said to Iron Man affectionately, "but so many people want to try the seed. . . ."

"That's all right," said Iron Man sturdily. He was a different kind of well-to-do middle peasant than Shih-fu.

And so with Huan-hsi keeping accounts, Sheng-pao began distributing the remaining seed grain. The people crowding around him made such a racket that Sheng-pao became dizzy. . . .

At last he was alone in the courtyard. He looked at the handful of seed that was left and clucked his tongue regretfully and swore.

"What's wrong?" his mother called from inside the house.

"I didn't leave enough for us."

His mother was stitching cloth shoes on the brick bed in the thatched hut. Speaking to Sheng-pao through the open window, she reproved him gently.

"You're always so rash. I told you to take out our share right away, but you insisted on serving the others first. Now see what's happened! We don't have enough ourselves!"

"Forget it. We'll just mix in some of our old seed," Sheng-pao said cheerfully. He was happy that he had been of use to the community.

Liang the Third, grinding corn meal in the mill shed, heard what had occurred. He had made up his mind to ignore "the great man," to hear nothing and ask nothing. But his brain seethed when Sheng-pao revealed that he had given away too much seed. Liang stamped out of the mill shed and stood in the courtyard, his hair, eyebrows and beard white with corn flour. Meal adhering to his sleeve and bony hand, he pointed at Sheng-pao and said gloomily:

"You're too capable for your own good. Why did you have to praise the new seed to everyone so? The result is that we're short of seed. Very clever! Very clever!"

Sheng-pao burst into laughter. So those were his step-father's standards — selfishness meant you were clever, falseness proved you were capable, but if you worked for the public good you were stupid! : : :

When the family gathered for their meal that evening, old Liang filled his bowl with rice and sat down on a small stool beside a short-legged square little table.

"Well, you're back now, Little Treasure," he began tentatively.

"Yes, pa, what's on your mind?"

"I was wondering when we ought to dig up our water chest-nuts."

"Right away. We need money to repay what we borrowed for the seed. And our team's going into the mountains very soon."

"I don't care whether you go into the mountains or not! But you'll have to give me part of that water chestnut money."

"How much do you want?"

"Ten yuan."

Sheng-pao laughed. His mother could see that trouble was brewing. The old man's face had darkened and his voice was low and angry.

"What do you want so much money for?" she asked, taking Sheng-pao's side.

"Never mind! I need it!"

"What are you going to do with it?"

"My shirt's so torn it looks like a horse's halter. . . ."

"The hens have started laying. I'm planning to use the egg money to make shirts for both of you," the old woman said soothingly.

"No!" Liang was stubborn. "Don't sell the eggs."

"Why not?"

"I'm going to eat them!"

"Can you eat all the eggs five hens lay every day?" The old woman couldn't help laughing.

"I'll eat 'em coddled in the morning, scrambled at noon, and boiled at night. . . ."

His daughter Hsiu-lan giggled, her head down. Not wanting to be so disrespectful as to choke over her food in the old man's presence, she took her bowl and hurried out into the courtyard.

The old man was saying these extravagant words with a straight face. They were really quite hilarious when you thought of how frugally he spent every minute of his day. While collecting manure on the road, he invariably also picked up bits of kindling wood and torn cloth, and turned them over to Little Treasure's ma. All the tid-bit vendors in Hsiapao Village knew how tight-fisted he was. They used to twit him:

"If every customer was like you, we'd soon starve to death!"

"Have you the heart to waste so much money on food, pa?" chuckled Sheng-pao. He wasn't taking the old man seriously.

Liang gazed at him sternly. "Why not? Why should you be the only one in the family to waste money?"

"Even if you don't mind throwing money around, you don't need ten yuan for just one shirt!" The old woman was annoyed by her husband's provocative attitude.

"Don't make me mad now!" Liang countered. "Would I give ten yuan for a shirt? I'm not that stupid. No, I'm going to a restaurant in Huangpao for a good feed. . . ."

At that, his son and daughter exploded with laughter. His wife laughed too.

"What's so funny?" he demanded irritably. "Why shouldn't I eat? Are we going to build up the family fortunes? Not a chance! I might just as well help you ruin everything!"

"So you're still thinking of the family fortunes!" his wife chided him.

The old man turned on her angrily. "Who wants to be like Jen the Fourth — never knowing where your next meal is coming from?"

Sheng-pao could see that if they kept on like this, there was going to be a quarrel. He knew that his parents had clashed bitterly when he went on his seed-buying trip. He had to help the old man to understand. With a serious mien, he told Liang what he had learned in his studies during the Party rectification campaign. He spoke of China's future development, stressing particularly the difference between the two alternatives — prosperity for all, or the spontaneous development of each for himself.

"Do you know what the spontaneous development is, pa?" Sheng-pao asked. "Let me give you an example and you'll see. Under the land reform we got ten *mou*, right? Let's say I didn't bother with the mutual-aid team. Let's say you and I worked as hard on these ten *mou* of ours as we did on the eighteen we rented from the landlord in the old days. Every year we'd use our surplus grain to buy more land. Isn't that what you'd want? But the Jen family doesn't have many people who can work, and they've got a lot of kids. They can't produce much without the help of the mutual-aid team. Every year they'd have to sell us a piece of their fields. That would be natural, wouldn't it? All right, in eight or ten years they'd be back to where they were before land reform. All their land would be in our name. We'd be rich. They'd have to work for us. Right?"



The old man couldn't conceal his joy at this prospect. His whiskered mouth split in a broad grin.

"Just look at him!" his wife exclaimed. "What are you so happy about? The tune pleases you, does it? You like what Little Treasure's been telling you?"

As proof of his good heart and to show that he was opposed to exploitation, Liang explained: "We wouldn't take on hired hands or lend out grain at high interest. We'd only try to become prosperous so that our sons and grandsons would have some decent property to inherit and not

be as wretched as we were. . . ."

"You wouldn't be able to control it," said Sheng-pao flatly. "It's very strange. The more land and money a peasant gets, the less he feels like working. The carrying-pole and hauling rope hurt his shoulder, they're uncomfortable. When you get to that stage, you begin wanting to let others do the labour for you. Pa, what kind of mind can a man have who doesn't like to work? He's got nothing to do all day but think up schemes that are bad for other people and profitable to himself!"

The whiskered mouth pursed thoughtfully as the old man pondered over this startling philosophy.

Sheng-pao's mother and sister, fascinated by his arguments, gazed at him in pleased surprise. When had their Sheng-pao—standing before them his head bound in a towel cloth, his old rice bowl in his hand—when had he become so intelligent and eloquent? Why, he was almost as good as Chairman Chen-shan! . . .

Sheng-pao sat down on one of the stools opposite Liang and continued to press his point.

"The only way we can get prosperous and have property to leave to our sons and grandsons is to make the whole community prosperous. That's what Chairman Mao says, and he's absolutely right! Some day, there won't be a single wretched peasant in all China. Today, we've started the mutual-aid teams. Later, we'll have farming co-ops and after that, collective farms. We'll plant with machines, have trucks to cart the manure and carry the crops. . . ."

Old Liang had been rather moved by Sheng-pao's remarks about exploitation. But now, hearing what he considered wild flights of imagination, he lost interest in the whole discussion. He laughed scoffingly, the wrinkles around his old eyes deepening.

"When will that be? When will we start planting with machines? Next year? The year after?"

Sheng-pao couldn't say exactly. There had been no discussion of the specific details of the Party's plan in the study programme he had attended during the rectification campaign. An honest fellow, Sheng-pao wouldn't invent anything. Smiling he replied:

"The members of the Party Central Committee probably know how long it will take. . . ."

"Don't give me that! Even Secretary Wang of the Huangpao District doesn't know!" the old man shouted triumphantly. He was confused about many things. To him, the secretary of the district Party committee was more important than a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Secretary Wang was someone concrete; a member of the Central Committee to Liang was just an abstraction. He only believed what he could see.

Though he made Sheng-pao and Hsiu-lan laugh, he didn't mind. The old man felt he had scored, and he quickly seized the initiative.

"Look at Chen-shan," he said. "He's in the Party too. Why isn't he always floating around like you? After land reform was finished, he stepped back and buried himself in his own affairs. But you're still chasing after your socialism! The way you divided

the seed today, you'll lose your pants long before you ever get there! That's as true as I've eyes in my head! . . ."

Sheng-pao merely smiled. He didn't want to discuss the shortcomings of another Communist in the old man's presence. It would only make matters worse. As long as they didn't have a complete split, he was confident he could gradually talk his stepfather around. Besides, he was in a hurry. He finished his meal quickly and set out for his friend Yu-wan's place.

As he was going through the gate, his sister Hsiu-lan caught up with him in the moonlight. She told him how Kai-hsia had been inquiring about him. . . .

VIII

Everyone has a love of beauty. To pursue beauty is one of mankind's instincts.

But Sheng-pao had two contradictory ideas. At times he thought: Kai-hsia is lovely, and she has a fine character. He definitely wanted to marry her. From the way she behaved towards him and judging by the light in her eye, he was pretty sure she would agree. The greatest obstacle was the stubbornness of Kai-hsia's mother, but even that wouldn't be too much of a problem if the young people really insisted.

At other times, he said to himself: "Forget it! Kai-hsia's already a third-year student. She's probably got more ambitious ideas. I'm just a plain peasant. I ought to ask someone to make a match for me with some village girl, marry her and be done with it."

That would be more practical, he thought. He had enough to do trying to build up a high-yield mutual-aid team. He didn't have the time for a lot of chit-chat about love. Sheng-pao had been tending to feel this way recently because that day by the Lu River Bridge Kai-hsia had struck him as being somewhat cooler than before. The way she scuffed pebbles with her toe — probably she was having some second thoughts. She looked undecided. . . . Nobody is more sensitive than a young man in love. He is conscious of the slightest flicker of a change in his beloved.

Yet Sheng-pao couldn't put Kai-hsia's beautiful fair face and large expressive eyes out of his mind. Her graceful small hand had once rested on his hard palm, leaving a warm and tender impression. It kept cropping up in his memory and returning to his hand, making it tingle with a longing to reach out and snatch her heart.

Sheng-pao wished there was someone he could talk to about his conflict, someone who could help him make up his mind. But who? Who could help him with that kind of a decision? Once he was about to pour out his troubles to District Party Secretary Wang. The words were in his throat, his lips and tongue were ready to make the sounds, but his purposeful intellect forced the words down and drove them back into his heart.

"Go to the organization with this?" Sheng-pao laughed at himself. He felt that to be all tied up over some purely personal problem was a far cry from striving for the general good of the community.

After dark, the day he distributed the seed, Sheng-pao walked south along the same road Chairman Chen-shan and Kai-hsia had followed the evening they talked about her entering a factory. Sheng-pao was looking for Yu-wan. First, he wanted to criticize him for losing his temper with bald-headed Liang the Eldest and walking out on his weighing job. You had to be patient if you were going to see agricultural co-operation through. He also wanted to talk to Yu-wan about Kai-hsia, and get his advice.

He couldn't put it off any longer! Now that he had bought the seed, he had to get ready to take the team to Mount Chungnan. They'd be leaving shortly after the Spring Clear and Bright Day. The marriage problem was distracting him from his duties. If he could make up his mind to propose to Kai-hsia, maybe he could get her consent before the team left for the hills. He ought to speak up, and take his chances!

Smoke from the stoves that had cooked the evening meal still floated above the barley growing in the paddy fields. Strolling along the ox-cart road through the darkness, smoking his short pipe, Sheng-pao was pleased over his success with the seeds.

How would Kai-hsia feel about what he had done, Sheng-pao wondered.

Ah, you tender grass by the roadside, you water flowing in the ditches, you barley in the paddy fields, why don't you tell this young lover what Chairman Chen-shan said before you to Kai-hsia?

At the fork in the road, Sheng-pao halted. A dark figure was approaching on a raised path through the paddy fields to the east. Although Sheng-pao couldn't see him clearly or recognize the sound of his footsteps, he knew because the path led only to Yu-wan's thatched hut that he had found the person he was seeking.

"Where are you heading, Yu-wan?" Sheng-pao called in the moonlight.

"What about you?" the militia captain countered.

These questions were really unnecessary. Both knew they were looking for each other. Ever since the mutual-aid team movement for bumper rice harvests began, these two young fellows were together a great deal of the time, drawn by their enthusiasm for a common cause. The only reason Sheng-pao hadn't told Yu-wan about Kai-hsia yet was because Yu-wan was too brash. He was afraid the bluff young militia captain might suddenly decide to kid him in the presence of others and reveal his secret.

"Come on, Sheng-pao. Let's go to your place!" Yu-wan, in a black cap, took the arm of Sheng-pao, whose head was covered by a white towel cloth. "A bachelor's room is a good place to talk! I wanted to jaw with you last night, but I figured you must be tired from your trip and needed a night's sleep. But tonight I've already told my missus I won't be home until morning."

Sheng-pao made no move. Smiling, he scanned his friend's round face in the moonlight.

"Didn't she ask where you're going?"

"She knows I'll be sleeping at your place. Don't worry, she trusts me. She knows I've never looked at another woman since we married."

"Doesn't Golden Sister mind your always staying over at my place?"

"I've told her it's about our mutual-aid team; she hasn't said a word. I'm not bragging. Before we married I told the go-between plainly: Neither my wife nor my mother-in-law is to hold me back in my work in any way. If they do, I'll drop them!"

"Oho! So you take as firm a stand as all that?"

"Of course! A man without a standpoint is like a tree without roots. You'll see. Sooner or later I'm going to be just like you."

"What for? You mean they're going to drive you out and you'll become a bachelor again?"

"Not on your life! I'll be the same as you — and join the Party!"

"With that hot temper you showed when we were giving out the seed today? When Secretary Wang was helping us draw up a production plan what did he tell you? If you want to convince the peasants to go for mutual aid and co-operation, you've got to be patient. Have you forgotten? The way you're acting, do you think we can get everyone pulling together by the time the busy season starts in April?"

"That temper of mine is a devil. Once it starts up, I can't hold it," Yu-wan said regretfully. "I was sorry the minute I left your compound. I said to myself: 'What are you doing? No control at all! See how steady Sheng-pao is!' But I didn't have the face to go back. I was just on my way to your place to criticize myself. Come on, we can talk in your hut!"

Young Yu-wan was built like an ox, and he dragged Sheng-pao by the arm down the road. These two were probably the best farmers in Frog Flat. Except for Iron Man, there was no one who could compare with them for work in the rice fields. They had learned their skill during long years as hired hands. Yu-wan was better than Sheng-pao, in that he had amazing strength. When transporting lumber from Mount Chungnan, he could carry eight logs to a normal man's four. What made him inferior to Sheng-pao was his explosive temper. Whenever anyone said or did anything that displeased him, he acted as if his heart were being boiled in oil. But he always realized that he had been foolish after he cooled down.

Sheng-pao understood him best. He knew that Yu-wan's character had been formed in childhood and that it would be

difficult for him to change all at once. Don't people say that the three unhappiest events in a man's life are to lose a father as a child, to lose a wife in middle age, and in old age to lose a son? Well, Yu-wan and Sheng-pao were both fatherless since early childhood. The difference was that while Sheng-pao had found the protection of a step-father when his mother remarried, Yu-wan had soon lost his mother as well. Before Yu-wan was old enough to work for a living, he roamed the streets of Hsiapao as a homeless beggar child.

Yu-wan's family name originally was Kao; he was related to poor peasant Kao Tseng-fu. Two years before, a widow had given her only child, Golden Sister, to him in marriage on condition that he become a member of their family. Yu-wan had adopted the family name — Feng.

As a child, before he learned to think clearly, Yu-wan only knew how to hate. He hated the people he saw eating when he was hungry, he hated those he saw warmly dressed when he was cold. And when he thought of his ma, he hated the children he saw walking with their mothers. . . . When he grew up a bit and had more sense, this hatred which had already become part of his being was converted into a violent disposition. Yu-wan knew he was wrong to be like that but in a tense moment he could barely control himself. He often felt like clouting a man to pound some backward peasant trait right out of him.

In spite of Yu-wan's shortcomings, Sheng-pao was very fond of him. For Yu-wan's bitter childhood not only gave him certain failings, it also gave him determination and a sense of justice. A person who has been through the school of hard knocks as a child is worth ten who were spoiled and pampered. Yu-wan's absolute fairness, his abhorrence of evil, the way he immediately stepped forward when public interests were involved — these made Sheng-pao very happy to have him on his mutual-aid team and increased his confidence that the team would bring in a bumper harvest.

The two friends sprawled comfortably on Sheng-pao's brick bed. They blew out the lamp and began to talk.

Several things had happened in Frog Flat while Sheng-pao was away buying seed, said Yu-wan. First, the two Li brothers had another fight over the boundary between their fields. Second,

after Pai Chan-kuei, former corporal in the Kuomintang army left for Sian, his sexy wife Blue Moth got busy. Every two or three days she was seen going into Huangpao Town. She probably was playing around with someone again. Finally, Yu-wan told Sheng-pao how poor peasant Tseng-fu had come to him with the report that rich peasant Yao was shipping out his grain. Yu-wan said that Chen-shan was not taking the lead in developing the mutual-aid teams, that the peasants of Kuan Creek Hamlet were downcast and divided among themselves, that Tseng-fu seemed very depressed. . . .

The conduct of Chen-shan, a Communist, was an internal Party question. As usual, Sheng-pao was careful not to indicate how he felt about such matters to this impetuous young man. It wasn't until he told Yu-wan that he wanted to marry Kai-hsia that their conversation became lively.

"*Aiya*, wonderful! Why didn't you tell me before?" Yu-wan poked Sheng-pao, lying opposite, in considerable dissatisfaction. But a moment later he laughed and asked, "When did you first get the idea?"

Sheng-pao said it was after Kai-hsia had broken off the engagement that had been arranged for her.

"I don't believe it!" cried Yu-wan. "I'll bet during land reform that you two —"

"Not so loud!" Sheng-pao cautioned him with a push. "My ma and Hsiu-lan are in that hut opposite. Do you want them to hear you?"

Yu-wan lowered his voice.

"When you two were working together on land reform you must have. . . . Come on now, confess!"

"We were together a lot," Sheng-pao admitted, "but I swear nothing happened! Because my child bride was always so sickly, some people made a lot of wild guesses. But they were all wrong. You know I'm not the sort who messes around."

"Didn't you do any hugging?" Yu-wan demanded crudely.

"No!"

"No kissing either?"

"No! Aren't you ashamed to talk so dirty?"

Unabashed, Yu-wan laughed. "How else do a boy and girl get to like each other?"

Gripped by a deep emotion, Sheng-pao for the first time gave a moving account of how he and Kai-hsia came to fall in love.

They had gone to attend a conference of young activists in the county seat that lasted for several days. Every evening the young delegates strolled along the town streets. Kai-hsia had suggested to Sheng-pao that they take a walk in the outskirts. They went out the east gate and wandered along the Lu River that encircled the town wall. This was their only private talk. Kai-hsia poured out her dissatisfaction with the engagement which had been arranged without her consent, and asked him to help her think of a way to break it off. He recommended that she get the chairman of the village deputies whose prestige was high, to win over her mother.

Kai-hsia expressed her sympathy over his unfortunate marriage, attacking it as one of the innumerable crimes of the old society. He could see in her eyes her tenderness towards him. . . . At that moment, he admitted to Yu-wan, if he had put his arms around her, she probably wouldn't have pushed him away. But he didn't do it. He was sure that later she loved and respected him all the more because of his decent attitude towards women. He could see it.

"You're a lucky devil!" Yu-wan, who had been listening entranced, exclaimed. "But you'd better move fast. What you're telling me happened two years ago. Kai-hsia has plenty of suitors after her now!"

"I'm not afraid of them."

"Quit bragging! Even a clay idol can be moved by a slick talker, to say nothing of a young girl. They're all educated fellows!"

"You mean Shih-fu's son Yung-mao?"

"He's one. And I hear there's also a school teacher and a district government man. . . . Can a muddy-legged peasant win out over fellows like that? They've got good clothes, they're clean and scrubbed, they smell of soap. . . ."

"I'm not afraid of them," Sheng-pao repeated. "It doesn't matter how many are after her. What counts is Kai-hsia herself. If her heart's changed, and she's fallen for some fellow who's been to school, I won't compete! If her thinking's changed, that means she's not one of us any more. Right? We've de-

cided to take the road to mutual aid and co-operation. If she doesn't want that too, I wouldn't have her even if she were one of the Heavenly Beauties!"

"Right! You're absolutely right!" Yu-wan admired Sheng-pao's practical attitude. "You ought to have a talk with her. Yes or no, once and for all!"

"That's my idea exactly! . . ."

Of course Sheng-pao hoped she hadn't changed. What lovelorn young man won't spend a little time analysing the state of his beloved's affection? And quite rightly too, for it can greatly influence his life. Only if he saw some concrete proof that Kai-hsia had changed, would Sheng-pao be willing to eradicate her from his heart. He was very anxious to talk with her.

But it was hard to see her without attracting attention. The slack winter season was over; there were no more social activities in the countryside at which they could "accidentally" meet. After Kai-hsia started school, her Youth League affiliation was transferred to the school branch, so he couldn't even see her at meetings. At night, if Kai-hsia shouldn't happen to come out, Sheng-pao wouldn't dare to enter her compound with its persimmon tree. Although the wall around it was only as high as a man and a person could look over it by standing on tiptoe, to the ethical Sheng-pao it was equivalent to an insurmountable sky-high barrier. What could he do?

Lying on the brick bed in the thatched hut, the two friends conferred in low tones, trying to think of how the lovers could meet unobtrusively.

The paddy fields of Frog Flat basked in the warmth of the morning sun. Liang the Third and Sheng-pao were digging water chestnuts about three hundred paces south of the thatched-hut compound. The creepers, which had been exposed to wind, frost, rain and snow all winter, were beginning to rot. Father and son pulled them up and heaped them in a pile. Then with his spade Sheng-pao turned over clods of earth while the old man picked out the water chestnuts and put them into his bamboo basket. After Hsiu-lan, who was home from school, had finished breakfast and gone off, her mother came to the field with a sieve and helped.

A few score paces away, on a small terrace by a creek, were a number of little grave mounds covered with golden spring flowers. Beneath one of the newer mounds slept a thin young girl who in life had been Sheng-pao's pitiful child bride. Last year, she and the old couple had gathered water chestnuts here together. Now she had already left this world. It was no longer necessary for Sheng-pao to call a doctor for her, or go into Huang-pao Town to buy herbal medicines. A warm bright sun, a lovely spring day in the fields, today these meant nothing to her. The girl had been only eleven years old when she came to them as a child bride, and old Liang had loved her like a daughter. The sight of her grave pained him. Wiping a few tears from his eyes with his fingers, he faced north as he picked the water chestnuts so that he wouldn't have to see it.

The sun grew hotter and Sheng-pao began to sweat. Removing his padded jacket, he placed it on an embankment, spat on his hands, and again plied his spade. He was dressed in only a white sleeveless undershirt and his strong arms were bare.

"You'll catch cold!" his mother warned.

"He's all right." Liang gave Sheng-pao an expert's glance. "It's time for tillers to remove their padded tunics. He can't put any energy into his work with that thing on." Liang was just talking to take his mind off his dead daughter-in-law.

Theirs was the last patch of undug water chestnuts on the banks of the Tang Stream. From this bit of land they should get about six hundred catties, which at the prevailing market price would bring in over forty yuan. Both the land and the return from the sale of the water chestnuts had been included in the mutual-aid team's production plan. The land was to be combined with a water chestnut plot belonging to Sheng-lu to serve as rice sprout fields. The money was to be used as an advance to tide the team members over while they were in the mountains cutting bamboo. Sheng-pao had delayed digging up the water chestnuts because he was afraid some family need might arise and he'd have to spend the money before it could be loaned to the others.

Old Liang felt none of the pleasure a peasant usually enjoys when he's harvesting. He wasn't a bit enthusiastic about this job. In fact, it left him cold. He didn't object to the team

members raising rice sprouts on the plot. The fertilizer they would spread would enrich the soil. He'd be able to get more rice out of the autumn crop. But to give the water-chestnut money to the team as an advance—that was like a lump in his chest; it made him uncomfortable.

"Little Treasure. . . ." An old straw hat on his head, Liang began to argue in spite of himself. Squinting in the sun, he demanded, "That money we're lending everyone—when are they going to return it?"

"As soon as we come back from the mountains," Sheng-pao replied as he dug. "We'll have time enough to buy our fertilizer."

"I'm not so sure!"

"There you go again! They'll make money, cutting bamboo. What are you afraid of?" the old woman put in.

"I'm not so sure!" Liang repeated. "Take a middle-aged man like Jen the Fourth with a house full of kids. Their mouths are bottomless pits; you can never fill 'em. He'll promise to pay back when he borrows, but when the time comes he won't have the money. In this society what can you do about it? My idea is that we get each team member to pay a little interest. 'No peasant likes to be saddled with interest payments. He'll go without food to get rid of his debt,' as the old saying goes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Holding the spade handle, one foot on the blade, Sheng-pao threw back his towel-covered head and laughed up at the blue sky.

"What's so funny? We wouldn't be doing it to earn interest," the old man explained, "but only to prod them into repaying quicker!"

"That's a great brain you've got, pa. Didn't you say last night that you were against exploitation? Have you changed your mind? Our mutual-aid team's on the road to socialism, but you want us to use the old capitalist ways! Why don't you come right out and say it: 'Jen the Fourth, you're finished! I'm going to walk off with your cooking pot!' That's what it amounts to. That's really what it means. Aren't you ashamed, pa!"

"He's not a bit ashamed!" Sheng-pao's ma gave her husband a dissatisfied glance. She searched for water chestnuts in the overturned clods of earth, her muddy hands moving rapidly, as

if she were racing someone. She warmly approved of what Sheng-pao was trying to do, but not because she was prejudiced in favour of her son as the old man claimed. It was due rather to her faith in the district Party secretary who had lived with them a few days while helping to draw up the team's production plan — or, to put it more accurately, it was due to her faith, via Secretary Wang, in the Communist Party.

Old Liang gave an embarrassed laugh. For the time being, he was silenced. Inching his small stool forward, he plunged his muddy hands into the overturned clods. As he probed for water chestnuts, head down, there was a shamed expression on his seamed face. He had lost the first round of the argument. But a few minutes later, Liang's expression changed — to a look of wounded justice and angry dissatisfaction. He started round two.

"Your cousin Sheng-lu had a *mou* of water chestnuts. Why didn't he lend the money he got for them to the mutual-aid team, instead of buying land?"

"Did he really do that?" Sheng-pao asked his mother.

"Yes, he did," she replied. "Those few days you were away in Kuo County, Sheng-lu bought a *mou* and more from Limpy Li on the other side of the stream."

"By which creek?"

"The one near Sheng-lu's gate — right by his threshing field!" Old Liang inserted enviously. "Very near his place, it is. Practically right under his feet!"

"Hoho!" Sheng-pao understood. No wonder Sheng-lu wouldn't lend him even a single yuan when he was setting out on his seed buying expedition. Sheng-lu had already secretly decided to purchase more land!

Sheng-pao stopped digging and looked to the west. A hundred paces away, an axe tucked in his belt, Sheng-lu was climbing the big white poplar that soared into the sky from the western part of his courtyard. Liang the Eldest, his bald pate gleaming in the sun, stood below, catching branches as his son cut them off. The year before father and son had frequent disagreements. This year they seemed to be completely in harmony.

Sheng-pao begged his step-father not to compare him with his cousin. Sheng-lu had a lot of land, and plenty of draught animals and farm implements. He was already on a different level —

not up to Shih-fu perhaps, but nearly the equal of Iron Man. He was burning with ambition to build up the family fortunes.

"How can you compare me to him?" Sheng-pao asked disdainfully. "I'm a Communist!"

"So's Chen-shan!" cried the old man, more sure of himself.

Sheng-pao had no answer to this. Spitting on his hands, he again took up his spade.

"You're the only sap!" Thinking that Sheng-pao was retreating, Liang attacked with greater vigour. "He gains something from being a Communist. You just lose out!"

As he dug, Sheng-pao pressed his lips together to keep from laughing aloud at his step-father. But then he remembered what Yu-wan had told him the night before — that the people of Kuan Creek Hamlet were without leadership because Chen-shan wasn't keen on mutual aid and co-operation — and his face darkened. It was true, the thinking of the chairman of the village deputies had taken a dangerous turn recently. Chen-shan was moving further and further away from what the Party demanded. During the land reform he had relied on the poor peasants. Today his emotional ties with them were growing steadily weaker. His thoughts and feelings were all concentrated on his thatched-hut compound, his yellow ox, his fields. Sheng-pao hated to think what the result would be if Chen-shan kept on in this manner. While he was sorry that Chen-shan's prestige should have faded so quickly, he was even more concerned about the effect Chen-shan's behaviour would have on the work in Fifth Village. The damage wouldn't be restricted to Chen-shan alone. It was the Party and the people who would suffer first of all!

Sheng-pao recalled what had happened when the land was being divided.

"Let's give the chairman a better piece of land!" Blabbermouth Sun had been one of the liveliest and most active people at the meeting. "We've all seen how Chen-shan has run around, neglecting his own work, going without food and sleep — just for us," said Blabbermouth. "Who unearthed Miser Lu's deeds? The village cadres? No! It was our Chairman Chen-shan of Frog Flat! And who was it who stood up before thousands of people at the big struggle meeting and shook his finger under the nose of Tenant-skiner Yang and talked him down? Who but

Chairman Chen-shan? He did these things not for himself but for all of us. Therefore I say, if he was so good to us, we must show our gratitude. Give him land a bit better than the ordinary peasants', but the same amount, and the land reform team won't have any objections. That's my idea. What do the rest of you say?"

The rest of them — the members of the peasants' association committee and the leaders of the various small groups — couldn't very well refuse in Chen-shan's presence. "Right!" said some. Others echoed them, although actually they were opposed.

"No, no!" said Chen-shan. "You can't do that! I wouldn't want anything that's not open and above board!"

But when he was allotted a plot of land that was all first-rate paddy fields, he took it. He merely thanked everyone for their sympathy and kindness.

Some individual poor peasants and hired hands may be stingy, but when they act collectively, they're very generous.

At the time Sheng-pao, who was then both a member of the peasants' association committee and captain of the people's militia, for better or worse had said nothing. The sense of accuracy which he had acquired in the Youth League told him that Blabbermouth was exaggerating. Credit for the land reform in Frog Flat didn't belong to Chen-shan alone!

In the winter of 1952, during the Party rectification campaign, the village branch held a big meeting which non-Party activists were invited to attend. This was at the time of the check-up on the way the land reform had been carried out. Several Communists wanted to know why Chen-shan had been given the best grade of land. Someone reported how Blabbermouth had urged this, repeating his speech word for word. The audience was absolutely sickened. District Secretary Wang, who was also at the meeting, turned pale with rage.

"Comrade Chen-shan!" he thundered. "If everyone had to be rewarded like you, what would the Chinese people have to do to show their gratitude to Chairman Mao? Blabbermouth wasn't decorating your face with gold, he was smearing it with dog dung! Not only didn't you mind, you even recommended him for membership in the Party! Don't you realize what dangers ideas like yours can lead to?"

Squatting on his heels in a corner, Chen-shan hung his head. His bristly cheeks were as red as pig's liver. He had introduced two candidates for Party membership — Blabbermouth and Sheng-pao. Blabbermouth had been rejected. Everyone said his motives for joining weren't pure. . . .

Sheng-pao's young mind had been severely shocked at that rectification meeting. Later when he was being sworn into the Party in the council room of the Hsiapao township government, he took his vow before the red flag and the picture of the Party leader which were hanging on the wall. After the ceremony, he stared at the picture of the man he now felt closer to than ever and said in a deeply stirred voice:

"Chairman Mao! I began life as a beggar child. My ma and I came to Frog Flat as refugees in the dead of winter when I didn't even have a pair of pants to cover my backside. When I grew up, I worked like mad to build up some family property. But all that's past! Today I'm joining your glorious Party — I want nothing else. When all poor peasants are able to get along, I'll be all right too! I'll never sully the Party's name. . . ."

He spoke solemnly, with tears in his eyes. All the new and old Hsiapao Township Communists present were moved.

From then on, Sheng-pao frequently recalled Chen-shan's taking the best land as a warning to himself. His step-father couldn't understand his feeling. The old man kept comparing him with this one or that. Sheng-pao could give him a clear explanation regarding Sheng-lu, but what could he say about Chen-shan? It was a question within the Party. He hadn't uttered a word of his dissatisfaction with Chen-shan even to his ma or Hsiu-lan.

The sun moved from above Huangpao Town to the sky over Frog Flat. Sheng-pao had already turned over the sod of half the water-chestnut field. The old couple would have enough to do for a while. Sheng-pao sat down on the pile of rotting vines and lit his pipe. After his smoke, his mouth was rather dry, so he washed a few water chestnuts in the nearby creek and ate them. Then he resumed his digging.

"Hey! There's a rugged young fellow for you!" cried the heavy voice of Chen-shan. "Neatly done! You're sure to be named a model worker soon! . . ."

Sheng-pao paused and looked up. The bristly-cheeked chairman of the village deputies, a roll of papers in his hand, stood on the cart road on the other side of a field of pale green barley. He spoke in the superior tone of a pompous official or a member of the older generation. Sheng-pao had the feeling that Chen-shan was being sarcastic, and he was rather annoyed. But he joined his mother and step-father in inviting the chairman to have some water chestnuts.

"Come on over!" The old man was the warmest of them all. He respected no one more in Frog Flat than this "clever fellow."

"The longer water chestnuts stay in the ground, the sweeter they are," he called. "Come on over."

But Chen-shan remained where he was.

"Been at a meeting in the township all morning. Still haven't had my meal!" With the air of one so wrapped up in his work that he never gave a thought to himself, Chen-shan said, "Comrade Sheng-pao, could you come here a minute? I've something to tell you."

Sheng-pao dropped his spade and strode across the chestnut field. His step-father, after washing the mud from some water chestnuts in the creek, also went up to Chen-shan. A fawning smile on his face, the old man insisted on forcing them into the chairman's hands. Chen-shan couldn't refuse. He squatted down and put the chestnuts into his round felt skullcap. Holding the cap in one hand, he said to Sheng-pao:

"Public meeting tonight. At noon, tell all the family heads in your election ward."

"What's it for?"

"To push low-interest grain loans."

"Oh."

"What's the matter?" Chen-shan asked, surprised. "Didn't Huan-hsi tell you? Don't get so involved in production that you

The Tractor's Just Left by Lei Yung-hou →

Lei Yung-hou was born in Fuhsun County, Szechuan Province in 1928. He studied in the Provincial Art School in Chengtu and later in the Szechuan Art College, where he is now teaching. He specializes in painting in the traditional style and his *Blooming Camellias* (a traditional painting) was exhibited at the art exhibition of the fifth World Youth Festival.



forget about politics!" He gazed at Sheng-pao compellingly as if he, Chen-shan, were the only one with a communist ideology!

Sheng-pao remembered what Secretary Wang had said — that the most important political objective in the countryside today was mutual aid and co-operation in farming. But Sheng-pao couldn't bring himself to speak out. Blinking a bit, he scrutinized Chen-shan's serious face. "You only open your mouth to criticize others, is that it?" he thought, sorry for Chen-shan's sake.

"The loans aren't going to be easy to arrange this year," said the chairman. "After you beat the meeting gong, you'd better go from door to door to make sure people come."

"Right."

Chen-shan walked away a few steps then turned and called: "Sheng-pao!"

"Eh?"

"I hear the rice seed you bought is very good."

"It's not bad. It's a high-producing strain. . . ."

"They say lots of people want it."

"I've given it all away."

"Didn't you leave a couple of measures for me?"

"I don't even leave enough for my own family. If you'd come yesterday I could have given some to you!"

"I was out cutting grass for the ox with Chen-hai. I was sure you wouldn't forget me. Never mind, forget it." Chen-shan sounded a trifle hurt.

But Sheng-pao could only be faithful to the Party and the people, not to an individual Chen-shan. Returning to his spade, he spat on his hands and rubbed them together, then gazed after Chen-shan's big frame as the chairman walked off towards Kuan Creek Hamlet.

"Chen-shan, Chen-shan!" he murmured regretfully. "Am I supposed to give you some kind of return because you introduced me into the Party? . . . It looks like the lesson you got during the Party rectification discussions didn't teach you much! . . ."

The more he thought the more worried he became about the future political work in Fifth Village. When an able leader starts going downhill, words can hardly describe the misery in the hearts of honest comrades under his leadership!

As the clash of the gong announcing the meeting faded away in the twilight, the paddy fields and Kuan Creek Hamlet grew lively with shouted calls and responses, the banging of gates and the barking of dogs, and the voices of people walking towards the schoolhouse. The moon had not yet risen.

By the time the smoke from the fires of the evening meal had been blown from the rice fields, the village had quieted down. Those who wanted to attend the meeting were already at the primary school. Those who didn't want to go had already barred their compound gates and snuggled into their bedding; even if you called them they wouldn't have answered.

The night was very dark. The peaks and gorges of Mount Chungnan were no longer clear to the naked eye, nor could you distinguish the bluffs and cedars of the plateau north of Hsiapao. Walking along the paths through the paddy fields, the peasants could see to the north and south only undulating lines touching a dark blue sky that was densely sprinkled with stars.

In the Frog Flat school, where only the first two grades were taught, Blabbermouth Sun, who had been the crier, put down his gong and lit a pressure lamp. After pumping it up, he hung the hissing lamp on a rafter. Its glare lit up every corner of the room. The blackboard on the white-washed wall, the coloured slogans and maps, the picture of Chairman Mao, the rows of desks and benches lined up on the brick floor, could be seen as plainly as in daylight.

Not more than twenty or so peasants were seated around the classroom. Although they lived on the plain, they were as tattered as the poorest mountain dwellers. Some were smoking raw tobacco, others were leaning on the desks deep in gloomy thought. Their faces were sharply illuminated by the glaring pressure lamp which had been bought, at Chen-shan's suggestion, with part of the funds confiscated from landlords during the land reform. These unhappy people were worried about how they were going to get through the coming idle spring months.

Although in a crowd of a hundred peasants perhaps you wouldn't particularly notice these twenty, you needn't be surprised

that they were gathered here! Just a few years before, landlords and the old Kuomintang government were squeezing the marrow from their bones. True, the people's government had given them land and loans to buy draught animals, and encouraged them to organize teams and farm together, but there was no magic which could suddenly transform them from poor into rich. It wasn't necessary to explain this to them. They understood it quite well.

They knew there was no hope of low-interest grain loans this year. Neither the rich peasant Yao nor the leading prosperous middle peasant Shih-fu had come to the meeting! Other middle peasants with surplus grain were watching from the nearby peach orchard, or peeking over grass-grown mud walls.

These men, seeing that Yao and Shih-fu, the two most prosperous peasants, were not there, thought — what can small peasants like us do? In previous springs we were only able to lend out a few measures of grain each. If you don't chop down the big trees, you can't get much firewood! What's the use of just twigs and bits of grass? Let's go home and sleep!

And as they were getting into bed, they said to the wives beside them: "If our deputy comes calling for me at the gate again, you answer. Say that I left for the meeting long ago!"

It was the most depressing mass meeting held in Frog Flat since liberation.

The better-off peasants, after joining forces with the hard-up peasants to wipe out the landlord class — which had seriously threatened the middle peasants as well as cruelly exploiting the poor — again began breaking away. Farmers like Yao and Shih-fu, who were economically strong, exerted secret pressure to hasten this split. The twenty or so poor peasants seated in the Frog Flat classroom couldn't have put it into words, but they instinctively knew that this was the situation.

Many of the slightly better-off peasants, seeing that there was no likelihood of the meeting being held, gradually slipped away. But the twenty or so really hard-up peasants stayed where they were. They would stick with the Communist Party and the people's government. They wanted nothing else.

Of course if a needy peasant had been willing to write down a description of a section of the plot he had received during land reform — its name, size, location, boundaries — on a loan con-

tract which he secretly placed in the hands of a well-to-do peasant with a surplus, he would have been able to get grain. But what a bleak merciless prospect that was! To the hard-up peasants it seemed that to do such a thing would be a bit abnormal somehow, a bit irritating, a bit out of step with the way this society was going—like a man walking backwards, with his spine ahead of his chest.

So they remained in the classroom, firmly determined to rely on the Communist Party and the people's government. For with all the strength and ardour of the hearts beating beneath their tattered garments they supported that Party and the government it led!

See! Chen-shan and Lu, the township Party secretary, were standing in the darkness in a field of alfalfa east of the school heatedly discussing some point. They were sure to be trying to do something. Were they fixing a new date for the meeting? Or were they talking of arranging loans to tide the peasants over? . . . In any event they wouldn't leave without first telling everyone what measures would be taken.

What's more, Sheng-pao had grabbed the only middle peasant who had come, the timid, earnest Iron Man, and hauled him off to the peach orchard west of the school, where militia captain Yu-wan had joined them. They all squatted beneath a peach tree that was ready to burst into bloom, with Sheng-pao and Yu-wan, one on each side, talking in low tones, working hard to convince Iron Man of something, to get him to accept some proposal.

Why shouldn't the hard-up peasants wait when both of the Communists in Frog Flat were striving to help them? Their main hope was reposed in Chen-shan, the Communist who was also chairman of the village deputies. He would think of something. His mind was very keen. Compared to him, Yao and Shih-fu were nothing at all.

This confidence in Chen-shan was a concrete manifestation of the needy peasants' faith in the Communist Party. Extremely practical, they were not accustomed to thinking in terms of abstract principles.

Those who stayed away from the meeting were mostly people with twenty or thirty *mou* of land, a good draught ox, and two

or three able-bodied adults in the family. They thought they could get along on their own, be masters of their own fate! Some of them even said lightly that the Communist Party wasn't so bad—the Communists spoke reasonably, they didn't swear at people or beat them up, they imposed no harsh taxes, and they didn't extort. Bosh! What these well-off peasants really wanted was for history to remain forever where it was—at the New Democratic stage. The word "struggle" frightened them, and they didn't care much for this queer-sounding term "socialism". . . .

But the peasants gathered in the small schoolroom, men who had formerly been ground down to the lowest level, were longing for socialism to arrive quickly—tomorrow morning! If history halted at the point where they received land, if they made no further progress from now on, they would soon revert to the tragic circumstances which were theirs prior to liberation in 1949. Of course the Communist Party would never permit that! Chairman Mao had led the way brilliantly: Land reform had been carried out, the Party had gone through a rectification campaign and was ready to push on. The hard-up peasants were determined to go forward with the Party! They could no longer be satisfied with a few *mou* of land, with their bellies perpetually being only half full, with wearing one padded jacket for ten years, with having their shoulders swollen by heavy carrying-poles. No! Only a fool would accept that. Chairman Mao Tse-tung had the answer. They would follow him.

They sat very quietly in the glare of the pressure lamp, their stillness a manifestation of their inner calm—for they were neither impatient or upset. Although the blood they had inherited from their parents and their childhood environments made them differ in temperament and character, poverty had given them common ideas, emotions and mannerisms. The twenty-odd needy peasants sat there like one man, a unity of ideas in their minds, a unity of feelings in their hearts.

Thin, grave, determined Tseng-fu, cotton hanging from the torn sleeves of his old padded jacket, holding his sleeping little boy in his arms, sat on a bench in the rear of the first row of school desks, hating his crafty next-door neighbour. He had pounded on Yao's black-painted compound gate until his hand ached. Only then did Yao's wife call from somewhere deep



inside to say that Yao had gone to Huangpao Town. Twaddle! Tseng-fu had seen him at dusk.

But what could Tseng-fu do? The black compound gate was shut tight without even a crack to peek through. Besides, he was dealing with a woman. He hated himself for being a people's deputy who couldn't serve the people properly. If he weren't so tied down with cooking and looking after his motherless child, rich peasant Yao wouldn't have escaped him even if he'd sprouted wings. Tseng-fu would have arrived in his courtyard before dark and taken him

to the meeting as soon as Yao had finished his meal. Once he got him there, Tseng-fu would have spoken up.

"Why can't you help the needy peasants get through spring?" he would have demanded. "You have no surplus grain? What's happened to it? You've been sneaking it into Huangpao Town and lending it out at high interest, haven't you? Let's have the truth! The land reform has only just finished and you're right back at exploiting again. . . ."

But what could Tseng-fu say now? Yao and his wife were already asleep on their fancy brick bed with its lacquered railings.

A despondent expression shadowed Tseng-fu's unsymmetrical thin face. He didn't know how he and his boy were going to eat until summer, nor where he was going to get the money for fertilizer. His prospects for the coming two months looked as black as the night outside.

Still, he wouldn't let his troubles get him down. Like the other former poor peasants and hired hands sitting with him in the classroom, he believed in the people's government which had given him land and a loan to buy a draught animal. Although he had to live half like a man and half like a woman in his struggle to maintain his household, strengthened by this belief he was very active in his duties as people's deputy in the township government.

To bow-backed Jen the Fourth, squatting on a bench at the head of the first row of school desks, he said: "You live pretty far, and you've got a house full of kids. You ought to start back early. There isn't going to be any meeting tonight, can't you see?"

Jen shook his head. He had come to the meeting as a manifestation of his support of the Party and the government. Taking a bronze-tipped pipe stem out of his mouth he said, "I'm waiting for my team leader. I'll go back with him."

"Oh, you're waiting for Sheng-pao. With a mutual-aid team like his, you don't have to worry!" Tseng-fu said enviously.

"We're not worrying," Jen admitted with a laugh. "Though we haven't much ability, we've a good neighbour to rely on. 'A relative far away isn't as helpful as a neighbour close by,' as the saying goes. It's the truth! If Sheng-pao's broad shoulders weren't carrying all the problems of our year-round mutual-aid team, I'd have more worries than any of you. It's the truth! But we're getting along. After the Spring Clear and Bright Day, our team's going to Mount Chungnan!"

Jen's words and his air of satisfaction aroused the interest of the other tattered peasants. They moved up gradually from the rear desks to the front of the room, as if drawn by a ray of hope.

But as they crowded round Jen and asked about Sheng-pao's plan to take his mutual-aid team into the mountains, they could only admire in vain. Their thatched homes were scattered in every corner of Kuan Creek Hamlet and all along the stream. Their other neighbours were former tenant farmers and semi-tenant farmers who originally were able to farm rented land or had a bit of land of their own, to which more was added as a result of the land reform, so that they now owned as much land as middle peasants did prior to liberation. They had become like the old middle peasants in their ideas too — today they were sweating mightily

to improve their family property. With their poverty-stricken neighbours they would form only temporary mutual-aid teams at certain seasons of the year. They weren't like Sheng-pao — willing to go all out for the general good!

Now the twenty or so former hired hands and odd-jobs men moved closer together and discussed organizing a mutual-aid team of their own.

"Why don't we form one ourselves?" a tall thin peasant suggested, his eyes shining. "Tseng-fu can be our leader!"

"Where would we get the draught animals?" a short fat man demanded. "We can't plunge into this blindly!"

"If we have no animals, why can't we pull the ploughs ourselves?" cried a third enthusiastically.

A stern ruddy-faced peasant didn't like all this wild talk. "Rot!" he said sharply. "Two men might pull a plough on dry land, but not through a flooded paddy field!"

"Then what are we going to do?" several peasants exclaimed in a disappointed chorus.

"It's going to be a tough spring," Tseng-fu said with a heavy sigh. "Let's wait and see what our Party people say."

"Anyhow Chairman Mao won't let a single person starve!" a voice cried airily from the rear.

The needy peasants turned around to look. It wasn't one of them. The speaker was Pai, formerly a corporal in the Kuomintang transport company which had been stationed in Huangpao Town at the beginning of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. When had he arrived?

As a matter of fact when they were discussing forming their own mutual-aid team, there were two other people in the room. One was Blabbermouth Sun, sitting at a desk near the wall, hastily filling in a form which he wanted to ask Secretary Lu to take back to the township government office. Pai was at the desk nearest the door, smoking a cheap cigarette. There was a flip-pant expression on his long thin face.

Holding the sleeping Tsai-tsai in his arms, Tseng-fu turned to confront him.

"When did you get back, Pai?" he asked.

"Yesterday." Pai puffed on his cigarette.

"Where've you been?"

"Sian."

"On business?"

"Collecting junk, just like always."

"That was during the day. Where'd you stay at night?"

"With a friend."

"Which friend?"

"A second-hand odds and ends pedlar. Would I know anybody richer?"

"This friend of yours — what street does he live on?"

"Minloyuan," said Pai. His carefree manner had vanished. Gripping his cigarette between his fingers, he demanded angrily: "What are you driving at? Why are you asking so many questions? You're not the security section chief, and you're not the captain of the militia!"

"I'm a people's deputy," Tseng-fu retorted evenly. His thin face was very serious.

"Well, you don't represent our upstream section. You've got no say over me!"

"I'm a people's deputy of all Hsiapao Township!"

Two pairs of eyes exchanged stares. Tseng-fu's icy gaze was fixed on Pai's long ashen face. "Forget it!" the other peasants urged him. "Why get angry over nothing?" But the loyal people's deputy didn't feel that this was "nothing." He didn't want this fellow with the unsavoury background to keep worming himself in among the needy peasants.

Prior to liberation when peasants bought substitutes to serve for sons who were about to be conscripted into the Kuomintang army, Pai sold himself five times. And each time, as the new troops were setting forth from the "recruitment camp," he managed to escape and return home.

During land reform, after the People's Republic had been established, Pai pretended a fanatic zeal. But he never was given the chance to exercise his "brilliance" and "genius" in the new society. His scheme to get himself an administrative post in the village government did not succeed.

And this is the kind of "peasant" he was: In 1942, when the Kuomintang unit stationed in Huangpao set out for the Chung-tiao mountains of Shansi, Blue Moth, who was then his mistress, concealed Corporal Pai until the army was gone. He became a

kind of odd-jobs man for various farmers around Frog Flat, though he did his work in a very sloppy manner. A plough share could drop off while he was tilling a field and he wouldn't know it; when he finally discovered the loss, he would have to go back and dig with his hands through the turned up earth to search for the missing implement. Towards the end of the anti-Japanese war he gave up farming altogether and just specialized in "selling" himself.

After liberation, he received a few *mou* of paddy during the land reform. The soy beans he planted on the embankments between the fields he harvested by pulling up vines and all. These he hung on a tree before his thatched hut and when the wanton Blue Moth, whom he had by then married, wanted to prepare soy beans for dinner, she would knock off as much as she needed with a stick. The couple had no children, and on market days in Huangpao they would go into town, husband and wife together, like properly enlightened people, and eat boiled mutton in a restaurant as equals.

The previous winter, when a team came to check on the way land reform had been carried out, it was this same Pai who borrowed a megaphone from Blabbermouth Sun, the civil affairs committeeman, and went running through village streets bawling: "We're having a second land reform! No one's to leave for the mountains!" Not only did he stop the needy peasants who, having finished their autumn harvest and planting, were about to go into the hills to burn charcoal and fell lumber, he tried to arouse the whole of Frog Flat to re-classify rich peasant Yao and well-to-do middle peasant Shih-fu as landlords, saying that compared to the "skinny" landlords these two had much more "fat." Only after Chairman Chen-shan hotly berated him did Pai behave himself a bit.

Although Pai and Blue Moth had received a total of four *mou* during the land reform, it seemed to Tseng-fu that they bore no resemblance to genuine peasants. The cheeks of Blue Moth's face were almost as chubby as the cheeks of her backside. . . .

Good must triumph over evil! Under Tseng-fu's stare, Pai was forced to drop his wicked triangular eyes. With a contemptuous laugh, he turned his head away.

Tseng-fu pressed his advantage.

"As a township people's deputy, why can't I question you? You went to Sian to collect junk, you say. It's not planting time and we're not harvesting. What made you come back?"

"Is that any of your business?" Bridling again, Pai glared at him with beady eyes.

"Maybe not," said Tseng-fu. "I'm only asking. Can't I ask?"

Bow-backed old Jen the Fourth stood up, removed the pipe from his whiskery mouth and said with a smile: "That's easy. I'll bet I can guess the answer to that. Pai, you came back from Sian because you heard that our village was arranging low-interest grain loans. Right?"

Pai bared his tobacco-stained teeth in a grin.

"Well, this year we can't swing it," said Jen. "So you've made a trip home for nothing."

"Even if we could, we wouldn't give you any loan, Pai," Tseng-fu said coldly. "We gave you one last year and the year before, but we were wrong. What kind of needy peasant are you? The only reason you go to market is to stuff yourself in some restaurant. . . ."

The ex-corporal couldn't bear any more. He leaped to his feet with a quick move of his agile, well-trained body. Everyone thought he was going to lunge at Tseng-fu. Instead, he rushed out of the classroom door. They could hear him cursing in the courtyard:

"Any dirty beggar can become a cadre these days! A fine people's deputy! . . ." The slam of the compound gate cut off the rest of Pai's remarks.

Tseng-fu's eyes blazed. Obviously the dog was swearing at him. Tseng-fu wanted to go after him, but little Tsai-tsai was still sleeping in his arms. The other peasants urged him not to soil his hands on the likes of Pai. Besides, they said, although Pai wasn't a village cadre, in several campaigns, he had followed the lead of the activists. It's true that he was an insolent fellow, but he could be very enthusiastic at times and work hard.

Tseng-fu didn't agree. "That bird is no good!" he exclaimed. "Two years ago when we gave him a low-interest grain loan, what did he say? 'In the land reform, we ate off the landlords. With the low-interest loans, we're eating off the rich and middle peasants!' So you see, when he borrows grain, he has no intention of

returning it. We can't let him creep into our ranks, pretending to be a needy peasant. He's not a village cadre, you say? If that rascal ever became a village cadre, I'd quit!"

Everyone was impressed by Tseng-fu's responsible attitude. No matter how difficult a time he might be having, spiritually he was always like a white poplar by the side of the Tang Stream — straight and clean, taller than the surrounding elms and willows and thorny locust trees, the tips of its highest branches gently touching the white clouds in the blue sky. By unspoken consent, he had become the spokesman of these hard-up peasants. Their eyes were all upon him, watching to see how he intended to tide over the idle spring months. Everyone wanted to go along with him.

The twenty-odd peasants were quite anxious by now. Secretary Lu and Chen-shan were still talking in the alfalfa field. What could they be saying? Did they want to postpone the meeting? Or were they giving up the idea of low-interest loans altogether because they were evolving some new way to aid the needy peasants? . . .

No! Except for low-interest grain loans and co-operative farming, the two Communists in the alfalfa field knew no other methods. There were strict rules against diverting funds from the purposes for which they had been allocated. Money intended for deep-cutting ploughs, well windlasses, fertilizer and insecticides, could not be used for low-interest grain loans. Any such unprincipled juggling would be harmful to agricultural production and was quite illegal. The limited funds the government had on hand for relief were distributed only to those old folks who had lost the sole supporters of their families through some unexpected disaster. There were just a few of these relief cases, at most two or three in a village. Since the needy peasants were ten times their number, there obviously wasn't enough relief money to care for the old folks and the needy peasants too. The solution could be found only by increasing production. . . .

Chen-shan's big frame loomed darkly in the alfalfa field. His bristly face tense, he ground his teeth in hatred of Yao and Shih-fu — one at the east end of Kuan Creek Hamlet and one at the west, two strongholds of the go-it-alone forces of spontaneous development. These strongholds menaced not only his prestige, he

thought, but all the work that had to be carried out in Hsiapao Township from now on.

"If we could get them to come to a meeting, I could do something," he complained to Secretary Lu. "I've got a mass backing, they have none! I'm not boasting — if I could speak to them, I'd make them cough up some grain! But they're stubborn, those two, and they're slippery as minnows. They refuse to come. . . ." Chen-shan angrily smacked together his toil-thickened palms.

Standing two feet away, his hands wrapped around his flashlight, a padded jacket over his shoulders, Secretary Lu didn't appear to be much interested in this line of talk. There was nothing spectacular about Lu. He was a solid, four-square Communist who didn't approve of exaggerating your own importance when you did a piece of work successfully. As to those who boasted even when they failed in their jobs, it seemed to Lu that only men who wanted to cover up their own faults and shortcomings did that. As secretary of the Party branch in Hsiapao Township, Lu met many people. He knew the psychology of persons of that sort.

About the same age as Chen-shan, Lu was shorter, more ordinary-looking; his features were quite unimpressive. Although he wore the high buttoned tunic favoured by China's cadres, his clothes didn't change his essentially peasant appearance — big hands and feet, powerful arms and legs, back and shoulders somewhat bent with toil. China has millions, tens of millions, of men like Lu. They may be dressed in the cadre's tunic or the fine cloth uniform of a general or even a marshal, but they're inevitably



warm, kindly people, unpretentious and, easily approachable, men who were and are in direct touch with innumerable plain folk.

Secretary Lu smiled quietly. "Don't keep harping on Yao and Shih-fu," he advised. "If everyone were progressive, what use would we Communists be? The first thing in every job is to see whether we're doing our own part well. For instance, we held two meetings in the township to discuss how to handle the low-interest grain loans this year, but when you got back to your village you didn't prepare well. You're still careless, comrade. You don't pay enough attention to the township's ideas. If you had gone around, as you were supposed to, and talked to a number of ordinary middle peasants who have a few extra measures of grain they could lend, you wouldn't be in the fix you are today! You rely too much on 'crash' tactics. They won't do, Chen-shan! From now on, you've got to be more painstaking in your work!"

Chen-shan expelled a long breath through his hairy nostrils.

"Ay! No one can clap with just one hand, old friend!" he protested. "We've only two Communists in all of Frog Flat. Our Comrade Sheng-pao has buried himself in production. He's not interested in the political side. The first time I called a meeting, he was in Kuo County buying rice seed. His team had to send young Huan-hsi. Now Sheng-pao is back, but he's never got in touch with me. That young fellow's become a little proud since he joined the Party. . . ."

Secretary Lu couldn't stand any more of this. To Chen-shan, whom he knew well enough to joke with, he said bluntly:

"Your brain's getting mildewed! After that whole Party rectification campaign, you still can say mutual aid and co-operative farming have nothing to do with politics! Have you forgotten what Secretary Wang told us last winter at the meeting of our Hsiapao Party branch? If all you do is urge peasants to pay their grain taxes, hand out the agricultural loans, fill in statistical forms, write complaints for people going to court and certify applicants for marriage licenses — is that what you call politics? The Party wants us Communists not just to stick to administrative work, but to get out and organize the people, to lead their production. There's a difference between production through mutual aid and going it alone; you'd better get that straight! Since you claim that Sheng-pao isn't interested in the political side, why should you expect him

to get in touch with you? As a matter of fact, it's you who ought to be taking the initiative to help him!"

Small drops of perspiration appeared on the bridge of Chen-shan's nose; his bristly face flushed. His group was a mutual-aid team in name only. Actually they were all working for themselves. Even in the dark, Lu could see his embarrassment.

For several moments, Chen-shan could think of nothing to say. He rubbed the stubble on his cheeks with his two thick hands, as if hoping in this manner to bring down the burning temperature of his face. Finally — thank heaven! — he thought of a reason to explain away his failure.

"I've often felt," he said regretfully, "that our government's putting an end to the land reform was a mistake."

"In what way?"

"As soon as the land reform period was declared over, Yao and Shih-fu raised their heads again. In the average home on seasonal festivals, the peasant worships his family's ancestor tablets. The rest of the time he worships the deed that was issued to him during the land reform. Our job isn't easy. . . ."

"What do you think we ought to do, then? Have a land reform every year? End by confiscating the middle peasant's land? Put all peasants on exactly the same footing?"

"Listen to him! Am I that ignorant of policy? What I'm saying is not that we should have a land reform every year, but that we shouldn't declare it ended either. . . ."

"And keep everyone permanently in suspense?"

"Just the rich peasants and the well-to-do middle peasants."

"Wouldn't the ordinary middle peasants be held in suspense too?"

"Maybe. But it wouldn't affect production. . . ."

"What about the great mass of poor peasants? Wouldn't they also be unsettled, unable to concentrate on going forward?"

The glib talker Chen-shan again had no answer.

Controlling his anger, Lu warned him in a tone that was displeased yet friendly: "Instead of picking faults with the Central Committee's line, comrade, you ought to be examining your own work to see whether you've done it properly. Or maybe there's something wrong with your thinking? You travelled a lot in the

old days when you were peddling crockery, you've seen much more than the average peasant. But compared with our comrades on the Central Committee we — you and me both — well, we're pretty ignorant. We've seen many pictures of Marx and Lenin; their faces are quite familiar to us. But what, actually, did they say? Do you know? If you don't, you'd better make a real honest examination of yourself. I hear you've been getting very pally with that kiln owner outside the north gate of Huangpao. You ought to remember who you are!"

"Who told you I've been getting pally with him?" Chen-shan demanded hotly.

"If you haven't, there's no need to get excited," Lu said patiently. "Now go into the schoolhouse and tell the needy peasants to go home. Explain to them that after all the villages in the township have held meetings and discussed this thing, we'll figure out how to solve it. Hurry up and go in. I've got a padded jacket on, but you haven't. Be careful you don't catch cold!"

"Who said I was pally with that kiln owner?" Chen-shan persisted, unconcerned with the chilliness of the spring night.

"We'll talk about that some other time. Don't keep the needy peasants waiting."

"No! I must know who's inventing stories about me!"

"Keep your shirt on. Our Party branch will get to the bottom of the matter. You go in and cancel the meeting!" Turning on his flashlight, Secretary Lu, his padded jacket over his shoulders, walked brusquely away along a small path through the field of alfalfa.

The peasants were surprised and disappointed by Chen-shan's announcement. They had pinned so much hope on him. He had run up to the door of the classroom, proclaimed that the meeting couldn't be held, then dashed after Lu, not even pausing to pick up the form which Blabbermouth had filled in. Chen-shan was determined to find out who had been talking about him to the secretary!

After Blabbermouth had departed with his pressure lamp, the needy peasants gathered around Sheng-pao in the dark schoolyard. Several of them asked that Sheng-pao's mutual-aid team be expanded to include them. Taken by surprise, Sheng-pao stood amid

the tattered peasants, one hand rubbing the back of his neck, a wry smile on his face.

"My team has just been put on its feet, neighbours," he said awkwardly, "and this is only my first year as team leader. Let me get another year's experience under my belt and next year, if everyone thinks I manage all right, next year we'll see. I'm young, I haven't much ability. I'm afraid I'd make a mess of things for you."

"We've got eyes. Buying that new rice seed — you handled it very well," said one.

"You shouldn't only be taking care of your nearest neighbours!" the tall thin peasant said with a laugh.

"We live a bit far from you, but our paddy fields are right next to yours!" the solemn ruddy-faced peasant said.

Sheng-pao was very upset. He was as fond of these people as of the members of his own family. If he accepted them into the team, he was afraid it would become too big and unwieldy. What's more, none of them had any draught animals of his own. This would put even more of a strain on the team's already insufficient traction power. No, it simply wouldn't do. He remembered what Wang Tsun-chi, the model team leader, had said at the county meeting: "To build a good mutual-aid team, it's better to start off small." He couldn't go plunging ahead without a firm foundation.

Yet Sheng-pao felt very sympathetic to these hard-up peasants who couldn't even plough unless they worked with others. Their neighbours — middle peasants and former sharecroppers — formed temporary mutual-aid teams with them at certain seasons of the year. The needy peasants had to labour for their better-off neighbours in order to obtain a loan of their draught animals. But in the inactive period that followed the planting season, though the hands of hard-up peasants were itching to work, no one helped them organize side occupations.

And so, they perpetually remained "needy peasants," who each year had difficulty getting through the slack months of spring. Their plight aroused not only Sheng-pao's sympathy, but also his sense of responsibility; as a Communist he had to help people in trouble. He felt it would be shameful to evade these ragged peasants and slip quietly away.

"Yu-wan!" he shouted.

"Here!" the militia captain responded from the darkness in the rear of the crowd.

"Yu-wan, let's have a talk and see if there's any way we can revise our team's plan."

While waiting for the meeting to begin, Sheng-pao and Yu-wan had urged Iron Man to lend two *tan* of grain to the needy peasants of his own election ward so that their families would have enough to eat while the men were away transporting bamboo brooms out of the mountains. They were to accompany Sheng-pao's team, which would be felling the bamboo and making the brooms. That was the original plan. Now Sheng-pao's idea was to switch the needy peasants from Iron Man's ward over to bamboo felling also, and put the needy peasants from all the other wards on to the porters' work. In this way every needy peasant in the village could be given a gainful employment and part of the problem would be solved. . . .

"But where will we get the food grain for them?" Yu-wan asked doubtfully.

"We'll find a way," Sheng-pao mused. Then he repeated more positively, "We'll find a way! As soon as they start delivering the bamboo brooms, the consumers' co-op will give them an advance. They won't have to turn in the whole amount before getting paid. The co-op is a community project. It won't be too rigid. That will give their families some grain anyhow. Then we'll have time to think of what to do next. . . ."

Listening to this conversation, the hard-up peasants were overjoyed. Sheng-pao had removed a heavy burden from their shoulders; they felt greatly relieved. In the light of the newly risen moon, they looked gratefully at Sheng-pao's honest face. What a pure good heart was beating in his breast! They wanted to throw their arms around him. All raised their voices eagerly.

"I'll go!"

"Me too!"

"You've got to take me along, no matter what!"

The school courtyard bubbled with life. Still holding his little boy who had just awakened, Tseng-fu stood quietly among the crowd, urging the peasants to be calm. But although externally he appeared cool, Tseng-fu was inwardly very excited. Like a

spirited horse seeing other steeds starting to run, he couldn't restrain his desire to plunge into the race. The way Sheng-pao had gallantly risen to the occasion had stirred Tseng-fu to his loyal depths. Cradling his child in his arms, he poked Sheng-pao with his elbow and said:

"Turn the organizing of the Kuan Creek Hamlet porters' group over to me! You concentrate on getting the bamboo hewers together."

All the peasants indicated their approval. Sheng-pao asked:

"What about the kid? How can you go into the mountains with him?"

"Never mind!" said Tseng-fu. "That's my worry. I'll settle it myself. You just go ahead organizing the bamboo-felling group, and leave the porters to me! . . ."

On the road home, Jen the Fourth kept sighing.

"What's the matter, old uncle?" Sheng-pao asked. "Is something bothering you?"

"I'm thinking that you're acting very bold for a young man. This is a big job you're taking on. Are you sure you can handle it?"

Sheng-pao spread his hands, palms up. "What else could I do?" he asked, his face clouded with pain. "Watching these needy peasants starve is like a knife through my heart! If a Communist won't help them, who will?"

X

The roan mare tethered outside the high wall that enclosed Yao's handsome compound had started to shed her long winter hair, and the rich peasant was working her over with a curry-comb. Squatting, he cocked his head which was covered by a felt skullcap, and watched from underneath the movement in the mare's distended belly. It wasn't a little mule that was twitching in there, but three hundred yuan. Maybe more, certainly not less!

"Soon!" Yao said happily to himself. "In half a month at most, she'll foal. . . ."

His wife was expecting a baby, his mare was going to produce a mule colt—an increase in his family and an increase in his property. The rich peasant's heart felt warm, joyful, comfortable beyond words.

"Dirty bastard! A fine people's deputy! What a son of a bitch!" Who was that, cursing as he came up the lane? Yao turned his head and looked. Oho! Ex-corporal Pai!

"Who's been stirring you up?" Yao wondered contemptuously. He ignored Pai and went on examining the belly of his mare.

During land reform, and the subsequent re-check on the way it had been carried out, Pai's insane jealousy had made Yao quake with terror. He was afraid at the time that if the Communist Party believed the madman and classified him as a landlord, his land and surplus property would be distributed. What's more, he would have to allow several poor peasants to share some of the rooms of his big compound. Yao had been so distracted he couldn't eat or sleep. He wished he could take his pig-slaughtering knife and kill Pai. Of course whenever Yao met him on the street, he forced himself to hail the rascal as if he were a village cadre. "Had your meal yet?" Yao would ask courteously.

Now, humph, now even Chen-shan didn't scare him. Why should he worry about a piss-pot like Pai?

Yao stood up. With one hand he patted the mare's full round flank while with the other he squeezed the animal's teats. He wanted to make a more exact estimate of when she would foal. Staring haughtily at the sky—Yao's right eye had a scarred lid—he assumed a chilly reserve, as if Pai were a complete stranger whom he'd never seen before.

"Who says you can't push people around in the new society? Son of a bitch! He never lets me breathe!"

After nearing Tseng-fu's thatched hut Pai turned and

started walking back. On the dirt path along the wall opposite Yao's compound he halted, hitched up his trousers and angrily squatted on his heels.

"Does that stinking bird think he can build a nest in my hair! I'll show him that Pai's a dangerous man to rile!"

Yao thought it peculiar. Why should Pai curse a village cadre in his presence? Was it being done deliberately for his benefit? If, on the road to the Huangpao market, he heard someone damn any of the supporters of the new society, Yao was always interested. He would automatically move closer to the person and listen. It did his heart good.

But why should the fanatic of the land reform period come before him and revile a people's deputy? What for? In spite of himself, Yao left off examining the mare and turned around, rubbing his hands together to remove the dirt that had been transferred to them from the horse's teats.

"What makes you so upset, this early hour of the morning?" he asked with a smile of curiosity.

"What? I'll tell you what! Last night at the school, Tseng-fu pointed his finger at my nose and lectured me! I don't have to take that from him! I've never done anything against him, but he wants to pin a counter-revolutionary label on me! . . ."

Aha! So the ex-corporal in the Kuomintang army had come to pick a quarrel with Tseng-fu. But Tseng-fu had gone off somewhere with his little boy. When Pai saw the lock on his door, he had raved even more wildly, and squatted down in front of the rich peasant.

Yao laughed.

"What are you talking about? How could he call one of the activists of the land reform a counter-revolutionary?"

"Easy there! Who says I was an activist? . . ."

"Didn't you run around like crazy? The only thing was, they didn't make you a village cadre."

"Good Brother Yao! Don't piss in my face." Pai had the air of a man seeking forgiveness.

Yao ridiculed him with increasing boldness.

"I don't know why they didn't—the way you sucked up to them. You yelled 'Lóng live the Communist Party' so loud the whole world could hear you. Was all your shouting in vain?"



Pai tilted his shaven pate, which was covered by a towel cloth knotted in front. He heaved a long despondent sigh and begged sorrowfully:

"Don't talk about the past. Let's say that I was blind! Yao, old man, I can't get along on these Tang Stream flats. . . ."

"Why can't you? Isn't this a good place? 'The whole Lu River valley can't compare with a bend in the Tang!' as the saying goes."

Yao gazed at him mockingly. Pai drooped like a blade of grass stricken at the root. The rich peasant couldn't resist the temptation to get back at him. He lectured the scoundrel in a loud voice:

"You needn't think we can have a land reform every year. The land reform team can't come each winter and clean people out, like harvesting a crop. You got a few *mou*, didn't you? You ought to buckle down and learn how to farm!"

"Ai!" Pai sighed again. "How can I farm? I've got no ox, I've got no donkey. I don't even have any food. . . ."

Yao immediately knew that something was amiss. He regretted having paid any attention to this shifty idler. He coughed once and, without a word, picked up his currycomb from the hitching post and walked quickly towards his compound gate.

Pai hurriedly followed and caught up with him in the entrance way. Grasping the sleeve of Yao's clean black padded jacket, Pai looked at him with a rascally gaze.

"Lend me two measures of white rice. . . ."

"What? Where would I get —"

"I'll give you wheat in return as soon as the summer harvest is in."

"Huh! Listen to you! Let go of me! I haven't even got black rice. . . ."

"Good Brother Yao! Don't hold a grudge against me! That great tide of two years ago hurt many good neighbours. It made us all enemies."

A moment before, Yao had been considering pushing Pai out into the lane and bolting the gate. But after hearing Pai's frank pleas, Yao had another idea.

"The fellow's a dog," he said to himself. "Throw him a scrap to eat, and he'll wag his tail. Stir him up and he'll attack you. I'll get him to turn his teeth on the village cadres!"

As Yao stood thinking, Pai could see that there was hope for him, and he laughed ingratiatingly.

"It was Blue Moth's idea. She told me to ask you for the rice. . . ."

Recalling his affair with Blue Moth before liberation, Yao smiled. The memory of Blue Moth's tender backside moved him much more readily than Pai's fawning expression.

"All right! Now let go of my sleeve."

Releasing the rich peasant, Pai revealed his discoloured teeth in a broad grin.

"I have troubles, too," said Yao. "That's why I didn't dare go to the grain loan meeting last night."

"I know. Of course I know. . . ."

"We've got to do this quietly! You're not to breathe a word! I don't want people saying I've got a river of grain!"

"Don't worry. I'm not a child. Those two measures of rice will take care of Blue Moth while I'm away in Sian. When I come back at barley cutting time —"

"Well, then, bring a sack after dark! . . ." Yao said generously.

That night Pai, a sack of grain on his back, bent far forward, his rump up, trotted like a dog out of the gate of the handsome compound. At that moment the harmony — born of mutual understanding and pity — which prevailed in the rich peasant household during the dangerous years of struggle, ended abruptly.

Yao's mother, a fat old woman in her sixties, simply could not understand her son's foolish conduct. Famed throughout Kuan Creek Hamlet for her "piety," she worshipped idols in her central apartment in the main wing, kowtowing three times a day and burning incense once in the morning and once at night. Her response to any evil word or action was always one simple phrase which included everything — "Buddha preserve us!" She had uttered it innumerable times in recent years during the class struggles that were part of the village mass movements. Ex-corporal Pai who, shouting and ranting, had demanded that her family be classified as a landlord, had inspired her to tireless

prayer and entreaties to the gods that they crush the wicked creature like an insect. Yet today her own son had given him a loan of grain. Buddha preserve us!

She followed Yao to the east wing and then to the west wing. When he went to the stable by the gate house to give his roan mare some hay, she followed him there too. She stood before him, nagging, her flabby lips never resting, demanding to know why he had loaned grain to Pai. It seemed to her that it would have been better to dump it in the trough and feed it to the horse, or scatter it in the courtyard for the chickens, rather than lend it to that man whom the gods were going to punish.

A ladle in one hand, a stick in the other, Yao was mixing a mash of bran and hay. He was doing his utmost to remain patient and not lose his temper with his religious mother.

"Ma," he said, "it has to do with the new society. You couldn't understand."

"Yes, I would. You tell me. I'll understand."

"What do you understand? Eh? What? When I bought a picture of Chairman Mao during land reform, you wouldn't let me hang it. The true hero doesn't reveal his courage on his face; it's in his heart!"

The old woman's flabby countenance registered a recognition of her error.

"If you had told me it was just to show the village cadres," she said, "would I have stopped you?"

"And then when that relative came visiting at New Year's time, you spilled everything. Luckily he was a rich relative. If he had been a poor one. . . ."

When he thought of what an awful impression the exposure of his hypocrisy would have made upon his neighbours, Yao glared balefully at his mother and banged the stick against the wooden trough.

"Buddha preserve us! Buddha preserve us!" The old woman piously lowered her head at the sight of her son's worldly display of temper. Supporting herself with her hands on the frame as she stepped backwards through the doorway, she hastily fled.

She continued to intone "Buddha preserve us!" as she walked across the flagstone paved courtyard in the darkness and returned to her apartment in the east end of the main wing.

Yao went to his own apartment, which was in the west end of the main wing. His wife, over thirty but still girlishly petulant, sat pouting on the brick bed. With a twist of the hips, she turned the back of her black glossy head to Yao when he came in, stubbornly refusing to let him see her rosy well-nourished face. . . .

Yao took a paper spill from the drawer of the cupboard to light his water-pipe. He smiled, pleased by the woman's jealousy. Even after two or three years, it took only the shadow of a suspicion to kindle it again.

Wrapping himself in manly dignity, he lit the paper spill in the flame of the oil lamp, then started puffing at his gurgling pipe. He was careful not to look in his wife's direction. Although he felt full of vigour after sending Pai off with the two measures of rice, he had no intention of reviving his affair with Blue Moth. Yao knew how careful a rich peasant had to be under the new government.

What made him so energetic was the fact that the scabby dog who had been attacking him for two or three years had come now to lick his hand. When the government gave Yao a new land deed and announced that his class status had been finally determined, he had sensed that he was safe. Pai's subservience today was a concrete proof, you might say, that his instinct was correct. Of course, to have a fellow like Pai on your side didn't mean you were travelling in luck. But it was better than having him against you. Pai could make a lot of trouble.

Her pregnant abdomen protruding, Yao's wife began spreading the quilts for the night, flouncing and sulking to demonstrate her indignation. She waited for her husband to say something, but all she heard from him was the sound of his water-pipe. Unable to bear it, in the end she was the first to speak.

"You've only been behaving yourself a couple of years. Are you going to start running wild again?"

"What have I done now?"

"You'd better be careful! That militia captain Yu-wan is a tough young fellow. He's liable to tie you and Blue Moth together and haul you both down to the township government in Hsiapao!"

"Aiya! What do you take me for? In this society do you think I'd dare go to Blue Moth's hut even in my dreams?"

"Then what are you giving grain to Pai for?"

"Don't worry. He won't be eating it for nothing."

"Give him a *tan* of white rice, why don't you, and see whether he'll eat it for nothing!"

"I'll give him two *tan*!" Yao snarled with a savage conspiratorial grimace. "I know what I'm doing. Two years ago when you heard him yelling long live the Communist Party, didn't you tremble? If he'd got his teeth into me then, you'd have had to go down to the county jail if you wanted to see me!"

The woman understood. Lowering her head, she glanced up at him and burst into giggles.

Yao's grandfather had died towards the end of the Ching dynasty at the turn of the century. In paddy area today there were only a few old men over sixty who had ever seen him. It was said that he had expired from a peculiar slow disease called "greed consumption."

Nearly everyone in Frog Flat had known Yao's father, whose nickname had been "Iron Claw" because he was so cruel and grasping. Most of the stories about him concerned his winnower. If a poor sharecropper wanted to borrow it the answer was—nothing doing! Iron Claw had written on it: "For rent, not for loan." The charge was a measure of grain per day. If you worked far into the night and couldn't return the winnower until the following morning, Iron Claw insisted on two days' rent. His face hardened if you mentioned your difficulties, and he said: "It's a rule. There can't be any exceptions. . . ."

That was the kind of blood circulating in Yao's robust body. His lifelong ambition had been to be able to sit down at the table as equals with the big landlords Tenant-skinners Yang and Miser Lu. Being "King of Frog Flat" didn't satisfy him.

But the nation-wide liberation in 1949 shattered his dream. In the land reform that followed in 1950, the fields which he had been letting to sharecroppers at exorbitant rents were confiscated. Another stroke of the pen wiped out his practice of usury. As to debts still owed him, a stroke of the pen wiped these out also—when the interest already paid equalled the

amount of the original loan. At mass meetings, members of the land reform team repeatedly stressed the need to isolate the rich peasants. They urged his neighbours to make a clear class distinction between themselves and him, to guard against the rich peasants' sabotage.

Ay! Before liberation all matters of importance in Frog Flat had been decided by him. When he walked down the road between the paddy fields, the peasants working on both sides had always paused to greet him. Then land reform threw him down to the lowest level in the village. All of Frog Flat was one family, but Yao was an outcast. This treatment infuriated him. Not only did he hate the Communist Party, he hated every peasant in Frog Flat who supported it. . . .

The morning after Pai borrowed grain from him, Yao was seated in the main house of his hollow square of buildings, eating breakfast from a large rice bowl. He heard someone give a deprecatory cough in the entrance way.

"Is Brother Yao at home?" the visitor called.

Yao's heart contracted. His mouth full of food, he swore under his breath: "That bastard Pai! Chen-shan must have sent him to spy on me. That son of a bitch! He probably cursed Tseng-fu just to lead me on. And I fell for it! Ay! The dirty bastard! . . ."

In an instant all the terror of the wrath of the people which had gripped Yao during land reform flooded back on him, and he grew dizzy with fear. He remembered how a great crowd of poor peasants had charged into the compound of Miser Lu in Hsiapao and pinned him against the wall. They had demanded his land deeds and his usury account books, shouting in voices that had caused Yao's hair to stand on end.

Today, Yao was frightened that his opposition to the low-interest grain loans had aroused the fury of the needy peasants, and that, led by his enemy Chen-shan, they would come surging into his compound.

Of course, he might say, "I have no extra grain," but to this they could retort, "Oh, you haven't, eh? Then how could you lend some to Pai?" He would be stumped. Yao very much regretted having loaned any grain to the ex-corporal. He had been

hasty, stupid! With the whole crowd yelling at him, he wouldn't be able to explain himself even if he had a thousand mouths. . . .

But strange! Through the bamboo curtain, the person Yao saw entering his flagstoned courtyard was Kao Tseng-jung, his bare feet shod in straw sandals. He didn't seem angry, and there was no hostility in his eyes. What was this all about? Very strange! He looked the way poor peasants used to before liberation when they came to Yao in desperation to beg for a loan. Tseng-jung stood humbly in the centre of the courtyard, waiting for the master of the house to acknowledge his presence.

Yao couldn't believe his eyes. Hadn't people's deputy Tseng-fu been one of the most vehement in urging the peasants to shun him as a rich peasant? And who was now calling on the rich peasant but Tseng-fu's elder brother Tseng-jung? For more than two years, on his brother's advice, Tseng-jung hadn't set foot in this compound. . . .

Yao rose, set down his bowl and strolled out to the wide brick porch. He didn't invite his shabby visitor to enter the house.

"What do you want?" he asked.

Tseng-jung's sandalled bare feet mounted the brick porch. He sighed feebly.

"Ah! You don't know my troubles. Would I be here to bother you if I could help it? You've probably heard — there won't be any low-interest grain loans this year. . . ."

"You still think you can isolate me!" Yao crowed mentally to chairman of the village deputies Chen-shan and people's deputy Tseng-fu. Aloud to Tseng-jung, he said lugubriously, "Oh! But you can't blame the administrative men. These past two years have cleaned everybody out. . . ."

The clumsy Tseng-jung squatted down on the brick porch and scratched his head. He clucked his tongue and sighed.

"Ay! You don't know my troubles. My brother's lining up people to go into the mountains with Sheng-pao's mutual-aid team and carry out bamboo brooms. It's not a bad idea. At least he'll earn enough to eat. But my wife's about to have a baby and she can't leave her bed. I can't get away!"

"Even Chen-shan doesn't have any magic charm to save the pauper devils, what can a young punk like you do?" Yao silently addressed Sheng-pao with this contemptuous remark. To Tseng-

jung he sighed, "We all have troubles. Every man has his own troubles. . . ."

The brother of the people's deputy gazed pleadingly at the rich peasant's emotionless face. Haltingly, he asked:

"Do you think . . . you could lend me . . . two measures —"

"Aiya! Don't be fooled by my good buildings. Nowadays the good buildings are empty. It's the thatched huts that have the grain."

"Even if the interest is a little high, it won't matter. . . ."

"In our new society, who's looking for high interest? If I had any surplus grain I'd offer it voluntarily, just as I did last year and the year before. I'd ask the village cadres to distribute it. It would be an honour!"

"You have a lot of connections. Couldn't you ask a relative, or a friend. . . ?"

"I'll make some inquiries for you. But I may not be able to find anyone!"

All that morning Yao thought hard: How was he going to answer Tseng-jung? As he squatted on the floor smoking his water-pipe, or carried a bucket from the well, or put some fresh earth down in the stable, two Yaos were battling in the cranium beneath his old felt skullcap with the broken edge. One Yao was opposed to giving Tseng-jung a loan: Tseng-jung's brother was a man Yao hated. But the other Yao approved: Tseng-jung was a fool; he'd lick the hand of anyone who threw him a few crumbs. When the village cadres were able to help him, he made a clear class break with the rich peasants. When the low-interest loans fell through, he turned to a rich peasant to plead.

"That sort of fellow can be useful," Yao told himself. He recalled that Tseng-jung was in Tseng-fu's mutual-aid team. Maybe through the brother of the people's deputy he could strike at the people's deputy himself and ease some of the hatred in his heart. . . .

"Chen-shan!" he muttered under his breath, suddenly thinking of his worst enemy. "Your sorcerer's bag is empty! All you've got left is mutual aid and co-operative farming. That's a weak charm. I'm not afraid of it. As long as the government leaves it on a voluntary basis, you can't do anything to me. And I think you know it!"

From the top of his head to the tips of his toes Yao felt delightfully comfortable. It was as if he had drunk some wonderful elixir. He went about his chores brimming with energy. Even his cough was vigorous, and he spat phlegm like a bullet. Standing on the brick porch, hands on his sturdy hips, Yao was the picture of imperiousness revived.

In spite of the fact that most of the other hard-up peasants had banded together to go into the mountains with Sheng-pao's team as porters of the bamboo brooms, after lunch another muddle-head needy peasant — seeing that there was no hope for a low-interest grain loan, and that Chairman Chen-shan apparently didn't have any ideas — wandered into the handsome compound at the western end of Kuan Creek Hamlet.

The rich peasant grew bold. He felt competitive. Yao decided to lure as many men off the bamboo broom porter work as possible. He would pretend to be eager to assist the needy peasants, to be quite sympathetic and helpful. His doubts were gone. It was no longer necessary to beat about the bush. This was not only trying, it consumed too much time — Yao had to go out and find a maid to look after his wife during her approaching confinement period. Putting on a jovial smile, he came directly to the point with his caller.

"I suppose you want to borrow some food grain?"

"Why, you can read my mind! . . ."

"How much do you need to last you till barley harvest?"

"Three measures would be about enough. . . ."

"It's a pity. I don't have any grain. But tomorrow I'm going to market in Huangpao. I'll ask one of my relatives whether he has any. If he does, of course you may have to travel a little distance, but you can run into town and carry it back."

"I'll never be able to thank you enough —"

"Ho! In this difficult society, can I stand by and see my dear neighbours suffer? There's only one condition — don't tell anyone I told you, or you're liable to stir up a tempest."

"I'm not a child —"

"Just say you found the man yourself."

"Right. I understand."

Yao was extremely pleased with his phrase "this difficult society." Originally he had been thinking of saying "these diffi-

cult times," but the words changed in his mouth. A man's psychology is a subtle thing. How true it is that "words are echoes of the heart." Yao had watched the spineless poor peasant intently as he mentioned "this difficult society," but the man's face had not registered any particular disagreement. Yao became bolder, more joyous.

In the afternoon, instead of going out to look for a temporary maid for his expectant wife, he remained at home and worked on his vegetable garden in the rear-courtyard, hoping that other needy peasants would call. The worried expressions of people short of grain gave him pleasure. He enjoyed nothing more than speaking to loan-seekers. The Communists not only had deprived him of this happiness, but ever since their coming he had lived with an uneasy sense of criminal guilt constantly hanging over his head.

Now he had thrown off his depression. The clouds in the sky, the breezes of the sunny spring day, seemed particularly invigorating! In the old days, spring with its food shortage was always his best time of the year. Could those times be coming back? Was his isolation as a member of the rich peasant class ending? Could he straighten his spine, raise his head?

He still had his handsome compound, his front building was full of grain. Yao felt he was in a much stronger position than Chen-shan. Although just because he was a Communist Chen-shan might shout and bluster, Yao considered himself superior. "Whoever has grain is king of the village!" That was the truth! The past two springs, when the low-interest loans were made, the needy peasants had eaten the grain of Yao and Shih-fu, but gave their gratitude to Chen-shan. That was finished now. The men with the grain at last had their new land deeds securely in their hands!

Yao was a hard worker. He quickly prepared plots for egg-plant and peppers, loosened the soil around the scallions with a small hoe, and watered two grape vines. After working a while he squatted on the well platform and smoked his water-pipe and calculated how many market days it would take to dispose of the grain he had shipped to Huangpao. Yao planned to go to the town every market day and lend the grain out at high interest. He would say that it belonged to someone else. . . .



"Son," his mother called. Her lips were thick and rubbery. "Aren't you going to see about that maid?"

"Soon."

"Your wife's big and clumsy. She ought to start resting."

"I know."

The old woman scrutinized her son with a pleased gaze. His distress was her distress; his joy was her joy. She knew now why her son had loaned grain to ex-corporal Pai. From his forceful cough and renewed verve, she could see that his spirits had risen. She was swept along and encouraged by his mood. Unable to restrain herself, she

asked, her thick lips trembling.

"Are you going to make deals with both of them?"

"What sort of deals?"

"Have we got enough grain?"

"Now ma, don't bother with things that don't concern you!"

"Don't try to fool me, son. I never leave the courtyard; I won't spill a thing. But you'd better be careful of our neighbour!" The old woman pointed with her fat flabby chin in the direction of Tseng-fu's thatched hut.

"He doesn't worry me!"

"Buddha preserve us!" said the old woman piously. "Watch out for him, I say!" She waddled off to the front courtyard.

Yao remained squatting on the well platform. Holding the brass bottle of the water-pipe, he haughtily addressed himself to the bucket:

"So, Tseng-fu! What good has playing up to the Communists done you? Are you still so eager? Maybe you're thinking of asking the Party to issue you a wife?"

Tseng-fu's misfortune gave Yao the utmost satisfaction. It was Tseng-fu who had submitted to the land reform team the evidence of Yao's usury. It was Tseng-fu who continually reminded his neighbours to keep their distance from the rich peasant class. Yao believed that the death of Tseng-fu's wife was a retribution that heaven had inflicted on his behalf.

"You may have plucked a few fuzzy hairs from my body, but you're a widower today," Yao thought with satisfaction. He had nothing but contempt for his former hired hand. Now that he felt strong again, Yao had a growing desire for revenge. . . .

He went out and walked along the streets of Kuan Creek Hamlet. Not only was his ebullience reflected in his face, the grain in his front building was reflected in the straightness of his back and the briskness of his walk. He had thirty-odd *mou* of paddy, a roan mare, a hollow square of fine buildings that stood out like temples among the thatched huts of Frog Flat. During land reform the possession of these things had made him tremble with fear. Now, they bolstered his spirit, as of old.

He was very pleased with his "far-sightedness." Long ago he had steadied himself with the advice: "Stick it out! The real hero is the man who knows when to squat down quietly as well as when to stand up straight. Only a clod refuses to bend his knees. The world is bound to settle down; things can't always be so tense. Squat! You'll be able to stand up later. If you don't get down now, people are liable to knock you down."

Yao had squatted for two years during the land reform period. Today, he could once more rise to his feet.

It seemed to Yao that the people he met on the street looked at him differently than before. The light in their eyes appeared less hostile. Although Yao was a trifle disappointed that only two peasants out of the hundred residents of Frog Flat had appealed to him for a loan, on the whole he was satisfied with the change.

At the eastern end of the hamlet, he saw Shih-fu walking towards him. While they were still quite far apart, Yao hailed him cordially:

"Shih-fu! Where are you going?"

"To Hsiapao Village." Shih-fu noted Yao's gay manner and slightly narrowed his eyes. "What about you?"

"My wife will be starting her confinement soon. I'm going down to the paddy area to see if I can find a maid. Let's go together."

"Come on!" Shih-fu agreed.

Glancing at the old man, Yao had to laugh. During the check-up on the implementation of the land reform and before the new deeds were issued, this prosperous middle peasant, if he hadn't been able to avoid Yao in the first place, would have invented some excuse to shake him off. Now that Yao was in the lending business again, he was as confident as a landlord with many tenants, or a warlord with many soldiers. He couldn't resist twitting the crafty old fox.

"Uncle Shih-fu," he said with a grin, "aren't you afraid to be seen walking down the same street with a fellow like me?"

Shih-fu gave an unnatural laugh.

"You'd better be careful!" Yao teased him. "If you say one word to me, you're liable to be classified as a rich peasant yourself! Ha-ha-ha! These past two years you cut me deader than any poor peasant or hired hand."

This remark hit Shih-fu where it hurt. The old man's wrinkled face was serious as he explained:

"It's not that I didn't want to be friendly, but the times were wrong. Now that the mass struggle meetings are over, you see I don't avoid you any more." Shih-fu tried a placating smile.

When he thought of how this fellow who had always come to him for advice before liberation had played up to his enemy Chen-shan after liberation, Yao was strongly tempted to give him a few more nasty digs and make him squirm. But of course he knew that Shih-fu's flattery of Chen-shan was pure hypocrisy, and that while the prosperous middle peasant had pretended to be far removed from him, Yao, in fact they were very much akin. Yao decided to adopt a different line. Why not? Now that Shih-fu had received a land deed confirming his holdings he was quite cool to Chen-shan. On the low-interest grain loans he had openly taken the same position as Yao. Since the man was once again making up to him, why say anything to hurt his feelings?

The owners of the only tiled-roof compounds in Frog Flat walked in single file along a narrow grassy path between the paddy fields. The sun, already on the western side of the spring

sky, threw their shadows closely together on the green barley sprouts.

"There's nothing doing on the low-interest loans," Shih-fu reported with relish.

"Naturally not!" Yao, walking ahead of him, commented smugly.

"I'm thinking of going over to the villages on the other side of the stream to see whether they've raised any loans there. . . ."

"You needn't bother. Of course they haven't! The past two years people were afraid. They were afraid of mass struggle meetings against them. Tell the truth now—were you really willing to let the village cadres lend out so much of your grain? Were you some simpleton who couldn't count?"

Shih-fu laughed bitterly, indicating that he hadn't been willing but was unable to prevent it.

Yao, who had turned his head to note Shih-fu's reaction, was encouraged to go on more boldly with his discourse.

"Just think. When that gang of paupers divided up the land of the landlords, they yelled long live the Communist Party. When they borrow our grain, they also yell long live the Communist Party. Is that fair, I ask you?" Yao demanded aggrievedly.

Shih-fu's head, bare of its felt skullcap now that spring was here, swivelled hastily from left to right to see whether anyone was nearby in the paddy fields or outside the thatched huts. Although the tumultuous land reform was over and the village had settled down, this Yao was a dangerous fellow. His wild words made Shih-fu's heart flutter.

Only a few children were in sight, pulling weeds on the paddy field embankments, gathering brushwood and grazing cows along the banks of the stream. They could not hear what the men were saying, nor did they pay any attention to the unusual sight of these two walking together.

"Forget it!" Shih-fu urged. "What's past is past. We ought to be thankful that we brothers weren't 'struggled' against."

Shih-fu, a people's deputy himself, had been fond of saying "we brothers" when talking to Chen-shan, the chairman of the village deputies. Now he was using this same intimate term in his chat with the local rich peasant. It warmed Yao's heart. He couldn't resist turning his head and giving Shih-fu a smile.

Feeling more and more triumphant, he asked the prosperous middle peasant about his enemy Chen-shan.

"He's weakening!" Shih-fu hurried two steps to catch up. Walking side by side with rich peasant Yao, he repeated happily in a low voice, "He's weakening! They say that after Secretary Lu criticized him, he didn't come out of his door for two days."

"Why did Lu criticize him?" Yao asked curiously.

"That's kept inside the Party. I don't know," Shih-fu replied softly. "It looks as though Lu suspects he's not very keen on mutual aid. That boy of Liang the Third, Sheng-pao—he's the great favourite now."

"Bah! What does he amount to? Bones and all, he's still a light-weight!"

"You mustn't underestimate him!" Shih-fu warned. "He doesn't bluster like our friend Chen-shan, but he's got a will of iron! He's taken the problems of all the poor peasants of Frog Flat on to his own shoulders!"

Shih-fu told Yao about the Hundred Day Ripener. The plan of Sheng-pao's team to plant rice and wheat alternately in the same fields fascinated this prosperous middle peasant who all his life had been trying to get more out of his land. To sow wheat after the rice was in had been his aim for dozens of years, he confessed to Yao in a dreamy voice. He had never expected that a youngster would make the attempt ahead of him.

Shih-fu said to earn the money needed for enough fertilizer to raise a double crop, Sheng-pao's team was going into the Chinling Mountains to cut bamboo. The prosperous middle peasant had only to sell a little grain in the Huangpao market and he could bring the fertilizer back on his rubber-tired cart. It hurt him to watch Sheng-pao pushing on towards the experiment, regardless of difficulties, while he himself could have done the same thing with so little effort. Shih-fu told how he had hung around Sheng-pao's hut when the seed grain was being distributed and had offered to give a high price for just a few measures, but had been refused by Sheng-pao. The thing still rankled him!

"If I weren't building that three-room house this spring," said Shih-fu, "I'd go to Kuo County and buy some Hundred Day Ripener myself!"

Yao halted and faced him.

"Is that strain of seed really good?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Is the soil here all right for it?"

"Why not? The soil's the same all along the foothills of the Chinling Mountains."

"Then go to it!" A revitalized Yao, the craving for vengeance burning in his breast, cried with a mad fervour: "Go to it! You take a trip to Kuo County. We'll split the travel expenses in the same proportion we share the seed. The two of us have more paddy fields than all of Sheng-pao's broken-down mutual-aid team put together. We can't let that young punk be the only one to succeed. He'd go bragging all over the village."

"Right! My idea exactly!" Shih-fu's whiskery mouth exclaimed vehemently.

XI

It was the winter of 1950. Poor little Tsai-tsai was then only two years old and his mother was still alive. They stayed all day in their thatched hut west of rich peasant Yao's handsome compound. Tseng-fu, leader of the peasants' association group in west Kuan Creek Hamlet, was hardly ever at home. Once the land reform movement started to roll, Tseng-fu was so busy that he had time for only two meals a day; at night, if he came home at all, it was always well after midnight.

One morning after a heavy snowfall, the peasants of the hamlet arose and swept the snow from their courtyards. Instead of setting out on his activities as usual at the crack of dawn, Tseng-fu also swept his courtyard and remained at home. While waiting for his wife to make breakfast he stood in the middle of the room and, with the bottles, dishes and plates in the cupboard as his audience, practised his accusation speech.

The oppression and exploitation which he and his father before him had endured for years as hired hands had been selected by the comrades of the land reform team as points to be stressed. They wanted him to speak before a mass meeting of all the people of Hsiapao Township.

But somehow Tseng-fu couldn't string his talk together. Whenever he practised, this time he would forget this, that time he would forget that. He was very worried about it, and had already suggested to the land reform team comrades that maybe it would be better if he didn't speak at the meeting. Their answer was simply: "Have more of the spirit of the new masters of society! Don't you want to sharpen the political awareness of the average peasant?" Tseng-fu's class self-respect immediately overcame his doubts about himself as a public speaker, and he began to practise whenever he had a free moment.

"Neighbours! Even if I talked for three days and three nights I couldn't finish telling you what my family suffered for five generations as hired hands. . . ."

While Tseng-fu was rehearsing, the door of his thatched hut swung open. Turning his head, he saw coming in none other than his wealthy next-door neighbour Yao, breathing icy vapour from his nose and mouth.

"Ah, Brother Tseng-fu, so you're home?" Yao said with a flattering smile.

"H'm," Tseng-fu retorted coldly. He gazed at his former employer with the superiority it was right for the leader of a peasants' association group to feel towards a rich peasant.

Yao smiled servilely.

"You've been so busy since the movement began, you're never home, Brother Tseng-fu. I've been longing to have a chat with you, but I never can find you. Luckily it snowed this morning and you haven't gone out. I've come to invite you over to my place for a little talk." Yao took the group leader by the arm and tried to pull him towards the door.

"No, no." Tseng-fu jerked the sleeve of his padded jacket from the rich peasant's grasp and said stiffly, "If you've anything to say, say it here."

Inwardly, he was cursing his former boss: "Dirty swine! Why weren't you so friendly in the old days? The land reform has just reached the stage of deciding everyone's class status, so you come sucking around, do you? If you think you can bribe me, you're blind — you can't see who you're dealing with!"

Indeed, Yao's eyes couldn't see that the group leader was swearing at him in his heart.

"Good Brother Tseng-fu. . . ." Again he grasped the sleeve and hung on persistently. "For the sake of our friendship after years of working together, do me this honour. You needn't worry! I guarantee that coming to my place won't in any way hurt your job at the peasants' association. I know where I stand. I've had a little schooling, I can read the newspaper, I know a bit about the policy today. They won't classify me as a landlord — I work in my own fields all year round! The only thing is, alas, in the old society, a man was often narrow, greedy. I had more land than the average peasant and more grain than I could eat. People were always borrowing from me, and I took a tiny bit of interest. Of course that was wrong, absolutely wrong. Today, my ideas have changed greatly. . . ."

"You've got a slick tongue!" Tseng-fu, who was afraid he couldn't express himself at the accusation meeting, unceremoniously cut Yao short. "You blame having a lot of land on the old society; you took interest from people only because they insisted on borrowing your grain. And I suppose you sweated me as a hired hand because I wanted to be a hired hand? Who likes not having any land? Who likes going hungry? Does anyone enjoy being a hired hand? Does he? Let go of my arm!"

Having received his class education in the ranks of the poor peasants and hired hands, it wasn't at all difficult for Tseng-fu to reduce his ex-boss to silence.

Yao was as numb as if he had been suddenly stricken. Docilely he dropped Tseng-fu's sleeve. He obviously had underestimated the new development of his former hired hand. A trifle panic-stricken, for the moment Yao didn't know what to do.

"It seems to me your ideas haven't changed at all!" In keeping with the spirit of the people's democratic dictatorship, Tseng-fu bluntly criticized this man whose feudal tail still needed amputating.

"They've changed," Yao said with a shame-faced smile. "Let me finish, brother."

"Tell me how you've changed."

"There's been a big change in my ideas. I've said to myself: 'I'm one of Chairman Mao's citizens now. I want to live together with the poor peasants and hired hands. Mine isn't some lone family out by itself in the paddy fields; we're right here in

Kuan Creek Hamlet. I can't be cut off from my neighbours forever.' That's exactly what I've been thinking. If one word isn't true then I'm a four-legged animal! I wish I could rip my heart out so that you could see for yourself what's in it. Today you're the person who runs things in west Kuan Creek Hamlet. I beg you for enlightenment — how can I live together with the rest of the community? The land reform law doesn't allow donations of land. I'm really worrying myself sick. What do you think I should do, brother? . . ."

"Just be a good law-abiding rich peasant, and no one will touch a hair of your head."

"Law-abiding! Of course I'm law-abiding!" Yao retorted fervently. "Heaven above! Would I dare to go against the law? What I'm afraid of is this 'isolation.' Help me think of something. Isn't there some little gift I could make to the poor peasants and hired hands of Kuan Creek Hamlet so that they wouldn't isolate me any more?" Yao gazed hopefully at the thoughtful face of the leader of the peasants' association group.

"*Aiya!*" Tseng-fu thought to himself in surprise. "The little man has big ambitions! He wants to use me to buy over all the poor peasants and hired hands of Kuan Creek Hamlet. All right, I'll pretend to play along with him and find out what exactly he has in mind. . . ."

"What is this gift you want to make?" Tseng-fu asked, assuming a more flexible attitude.

The thoughtfulness and change in attitude of the group leader raised the rich peasant's hopes still higher. Again Yao took Tseng-fu by the arm and urged in an affectionate tone:

"Come on, brother. We'll go to my place and talk this over. . . ."

"We can talk here. Tsai-tsai's ma keeps her mouth shut."

"You're an administrative cadre now. Someone's liable to come looking for you here. Come on, let's go!"

"All right, we'll go then! But let go of me. You don't have to pull. . . ."

Although the paths had been swept that morning they were covered again by a fresh snowfall, and the two men walked across white-blanketed ground to Yao's big compound. Heaven above! The rich peasant's whole family, young and old, had come out

and were standing in the flagstone-paved courtyard to receive their former hired hand like an honoured guest. The superstitious old mother, Yao's wife, his young married sister — now living in another village — several children . . . all waited with obsequious, flattering and flirtatious smiles. The younger sister, dark brows arched over large eyes, was a striking beauty. She hurried up to Tseng-fu and after brushing the snow from his torn padded jacket with her ringed hand, pressed close to him as they walked across the courtyard towards the house. Her full elastic breasts jounced under her padded black tunic with every step she took, the one nearer Tseng-fu rubbing against his arm.

"Are you very busy these days, brother?" she simpered.

"Mm, busy," Tseng-fu muttered. To himself he said angrily, "What do they think they're doing — catching a sparrow in a snare?"

Doubling his vigilance, the leader of the peasants' association group was swept into the parlour by the family of his former boss. For an instant he was dumbfounded. In the centre of the room was a square red-lacquered table surrounded by armchairs. On the table were four dishes of expensive tid-bits, a pot of wine, wine cups and chopsticks. When Yao's alluring younger sister had bumped his arm with her plump breast, Tseng-fu had only felt uncomfortable and prickly all over. But now the sight of the table made him want to vomit. Yao rated him too low — the sheer simplicity of the trick was insulting. This place was a trap. He couldn't stay here another minute.

"Sit yourself down. We'll have a chat." Fawningly courteous, bustling about, Yao turned and instructed his wife and sister, "Start the food. Cook us some hot dishes. We brothers will drink as we talk. Tseng-fu is busy. He hasn't much time."

Staring blankly, Tseng-fu remained standing on the tile floor. "But if I leave now," he thought, "I won't find out what this bird is up to. . . ."

"Sit down, sit down!" Yao pushed Tseng-fu towards a chair. "It's difficult to entertain a guest who's standing. You see, the whole family is having to stand too. If you sit down, we'll all be able to do what we're supposed to."

Tseng-fu was very upset. He couldn't sit down here! The rich peasant's food and drink were scraps for a cur. How could

an honest hired hand who was preparing to attack feudal oppression and exploitation before a mass meeting of the entire Hsiapao Township play the dog to a rich peasant? He scornfully ignored the delicacies on the table. Just seeing them made him sick. Although he was a man whose stomach knew mostly corn-meal gruel and muffins of coarse grain, he felt he was far superior to this rich peasant spiritually. Yet if he didn't sit down, he wouldn't be able to discover what Yao was scheming. He knew that Yao wanted to give a bribe, but he had no other details.

"Sit down! What are you afraid of?" Yao naturally couldn't understand Tseng-fu's nobility of spirit, but guessing that some conflict was going on inside his former hired hand's mind, he increased the vehemence of his urging. "Don't worry, brother. None of our neighbours will know we're drinking together. Not one of them has set foot in my courtyard since land reform. . . ."

By then, Tseng-fu had a new idea. Again adopting a flexible attitude, he said:

"I'm not afraid of people knowing. It's just that I'm busy. I've had my breakfast and I have to go to a meeting. I understand your good intentions. After the land reform is over, some dark night when I've nothing to do, I'll come and drink with you. Now, suppose you tell me what's on your mind."

"All right. There's something in what you say, brother. Once the campaign is over, we'll have a quiet little drinking session." Yao stared at Tseng-fu's long thin face, trying to estimate his sincerity. The rich peasant hesitated.

Tseng-fu prodded him. "If you've nothing to say, I must be going. . . ."

Yao hastily grabbed him. "Don't go yet."

"Then hurry up and speak."

"I will. . . ." Yao was still staring at Tseng-fu's face, still unable to make up his mind. "I'll speak. If it's all right, we'll do it. If it's not all right, then we'll pretend I never said it. Right?"

"Go ahead."

"Don't forget — if it's not all right, we'll pretend I never said it!"

"Just listen to you! Are you going to speak or not?"

"I'll speak! I'll speak!"

"Then hurry up!"

"Have we finished determining everyone's class status in our hamlet yet?"

"Not yet."

"Soon?"

"Soon."

"Look after me, can you?"

"What do you mean?"

Yao made a great effort, and said tensely, "Tell me how much grain is needed and I'll deliver it — as a present to our hamlet's poor peasants and hired hands. . . ."

"Go on. You haven't finished."

"I can't stand being isolated. I want to become progressive. All peasants under the sky are one family! All Kuan Creek Hamlet is one family — except for me. I'm excluded. I can't bear it. . . ."

"Go on. Finish what you have to say."

"Classify me as a middle peasant. If you and the other poor peasants and hired hands of the hamlet say I'm a middle peasant, the land reform team will go along. It'll follow the mass-line!"

"Pah!" After hearing Yao out, Tseng-fu spat on the floor and angrily stalked from the room.

That same morning Tseng-fu told the comrades of the land reform team and Chen-shan, chairman of the peasants' association, what had happened in detail. A special mass meeting was called to criticize rich peasant Yao for attempting to corrupt a cadre, bribe the masses, and sabotage the land reform. Chen-shan's stentorian voice made the walls of the buildings tremble as he shook his finger under the nose of the man who had fought with him in the old society. He castigated Yao till the rich peasant didn't dare to lift his head.

From that day on, Yao was much more cautious in his words and actions. But you could see from his expression that he thoroughly hated Tseng-fu and Chen-shan.

Yao behaved himself for the period that immediately followed the land reform. But once the land was measured, the productivity of the various plots estimated, and the new deeds issued in the winter of 1952, Yao raised his head again. Tseng-fu, who had been watching his rich neighbour carefully everyday, observed that

Yao was again cherishing the family property which he once had feared would lead him to disaster. He had resumed too his rich peasant's conceited air. Before, no matter how he hated Tseng-fu, he tried not to show it, and would greet him first whenever they met. Now, Yao seemed to feel that it was no longer necessary to pretend. If Tseng-fu failed to hail him on the street, Yao would walk haughtily by without a word. His manner said plainly: "I dare you to get tough with me again!" That much, at least, was obvious to Tseng-fu.

Tseng-fu was extremely unhappy. When the land reform period was proclaimed at an end and the land reform law terminated and the ownership of the various plots of land confirmed, the stricture against the sale of the land and the private lending of grain was also removed. On market days in Huangpao Town, you met them all along the road — rich peasants and well-to-do middle peasants from both banks of the Tang Stream, heads high, full of jolly talk and laughter. It worried the poor peasants and hired hands. Obviously the prosperous peasants were getting out of control. Unless some new law were passed to check them, who knew what might happen? In another few years, nine out of ten poor peasants and hired hands would be right back to the poverty they had suffered before land reform.

Today, Tseng-fu had no wife. He had been forced to sell the ox which he had bought with the government loan. The people's deputy was very worried. Was the road ahead bright or dark? If he lost his land again, if he had to go back to being a hired hand, how could he bring up little Tsai-tsai? Lately, he had often sighed to the small boy sleeping in his arms: "Tsai-tsai, oh Tsai-tsai! Why couldn't you have been born into another family? Why did you have to be born in this thatched hut?"

Although he had endured more bitter hardship than could be told in three days and three nights, Tseng-fu wasn't afraid of difficulties. Whenever you saw him, his thin face was taut and his jaw was set firm. There was courage in his heart. He was ready to meet whatever tests life put him to. But one thing he had never expected: That the low-interest grain loans recommended by the government, instead of helping the needy peasants get through the idle months of spring, would give the tricky dangerous rich peasant Yao a chance to strike back at him.

When Tseng-fu learned that his brother Tseng-jung had gone to the rich peasant to borrow grain, he stamped with exasperation. He went immediately to look for him. But Tseng-jung was out gathering brushwood at the Mount Chungnan Gap; he didn't return until dusk, a large bundle of brush tied to his back. Again Tseng-fu hurried to his home. As soon as Tseng-fu entered the gateless compound with the earthen wall, he cried:

"How could you be so stupid?"

"What do you mean?" Tseng-jung asked, surprised. Sweat was still running down his dust-covered face as he untied the bundle of brush.

"How could you throw yourself into the arms of a rich peasant? Why did you —"

"Ah!" Tseng-jung understood. He smiled apologetically. "We have no grain to eat. Is it against the law to borrow grain from a rich peasant?"

"But your class standpoint? . . ."

"My dear brother! If you have a firm stand but no food, you're still hungry, aren't you?"

"Hah! You! . . ." Tseng-fu was ready to burst with rage at his brother's craven words. "Bowing your head to that rich peasant — you're a disgrace to our dead father's bones! This is straight from the shoulder: To die of hunger is a small thing compared to betraying your loyalty! . . . Haven't I told you? Right after Clear and Bright Day, all the needy peasants are going into the mountains with Sheng-pao's team to transport bamboo brooms. We'll have money to buy grain. We won't let you starve!"

"I can't go, my knees hurt," Tseng-jung whined. "You know I caught rheumatism working for the landlord in the wet paddy fields in the old days."

"If you can't go, let me leave Tsai-tsai here and I'll go."

Tseng-jung could make no reply.

His wife, who had recently given birth and was still resting, put in a word from the hut's brick bed.

"Dear brother!" she called weakly through the window. "It's better if each of our families tends to itself. It's hard enough for you to look after yourself and your son. How can you look

after us too? Besides, I'm not out of bed yet. How could I take care of your little boy? . . ."

It was clear to Tseng-fu. There was no point in his saying any more. What was there to say? He knew that his brother's wife ruled the roost. She made all the decisions. Actually, she wasn't Tseng-jung's legal wife. After her first husband died, leaving her with a child, she had taken Tseng-jung into her house. He did what she told him, and her orders were work, work, work! She must have got him to suck up to the rich peasant.

"I'd rather be a bachelor for a hundred thousand plus eight generations than live with a woman like that!" Tseng-fu said to himself.

Angrily, he stalked out. At the gap in the compound wall he ran into Yao, who had been listening outside. The two enemies did not greet each other. Tseng-fu walked on, and Yao entered the courtyard.

"Tseng-jung, that grain you wanted to borrow — I've found out where you can get all you want!" Yao said cordially, speaking loudly to make sure that Tseng-fu would hear and be enraged.

(to be continued)

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

Illustrations by Li Hu

Lotus Flower and Paddy Bird (45 cm. x 127 cm.)
by Chu Ta →

Chu Ta (1626-1704), or more commonly known as Pa-ta-shan-jen, was a famous artist who specialized in ink paintings of flowers and birds and landscapes. He broke away from the traditions of past schools and created an individual style of his own with free and forceful strokes.



SHA TING

A Writer's Responsibility

I would like to start with the question of a writer's duty. After listening to the reports by Lu Ting-yi, Chou Yang and Mao Tun at the Third Congress of Chinese Literary and Art Workers I feel that the question of a writer's duty has been further clarified. The duty of a writer is to make great efforts to raise, through creative writing, the level of communist consciousness and communist moral qualities of the people of the whole country. This is the task outlined for us by the Party and the masses because the socialist society for which the Party, leading the people of the whole country, struggled so tenaciously has today become a reality. Now it is the great ideal of communism which inspires men to advance courageously further.

This task is both arduous and glorious. It can be accomplished if we in our writing make correct use of the method of integrating revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. As I understand it, this method of writing should be embodied first and fore-

Sha Ting, well-known novelist, was born in 1905 in Anhsien County, Szechuan Province. In 1926 he began to take part in revolutionary work and started writing novels in 1931. His main works include the novels *The Gold Miners*, *The Caged Animals*, *Return to My Hometown*, and *Rushing Through the Trial* as well as several collections of short stories: *The Beastly World*, *An Autumn Night*, *The Doctor*, *In the Chibsiangchu Tea-house*, *Transformation* and *Lu Chia-hsiu*.

He is at present the chairman of the Szechuan branch of the Chinese Writers' Union.

most in the depiction of heroic characters. For generally speaking, it is the characters in a work of literature in which the readers are primarily interested and which exert the greatest influence on them. The writer himself often devotes most of his energy to characterization too. It follows that a writer should work hard to create characters of the communist type for this great age of ours, using these vivid figures to inspire millions of people to go bravely forward.

There are ample bases in reality for the creation of characters with a communist style, for many new men and women of this type have emerged in our great and stirring life today while new things containing in themselves the buds of communism can be seen on every side. I lived for some time not long ago in Wusheng, a red-banner county of Szechuan, which has undergone tremendous changes. Lian People's Commune in this county has extremely poor soil, particularly in the first and second production brigades, where the land is like a river bank covered with pebbles. But our heroic people have covered its hills and plains with green crops. They have been able to achieve this miracle not only because they want to increase their grain output but because the task is linked closely to a great ideal. My contact with the masses made me understand this fully. I have been tremendously moved by these heroic people, who are working to effect a rapid transformation of our country's backwardness, its "poverty and blankness," and for the earliest possible advance to communism.

If time permitted, there is much I would like to say about the boundless drive and energy of the broad masses of people in this county. I must, at least, mention a meeting I attended in Liehmien District where different people's communes were having an emulation. Because Chiaoting People's Commune was short of sweet potato vines and fertilizer, it lagged a step behind in production and came out badly in the contest. The Party secretary of Liehmien People's Commune, a big, strong man made a point of challenging it and urged the other people's communes not to let Chiaoting off. However, in the end it was he who took the lead in pledging help: We haven't got fertilizer, but, we'll lend you two thousand catties of potato vines. Come and get them tomorrow morning. He left the noisy meeting hall there and then to call

up his own people's commune and ask it to get the vines ready. Just as in all parts of our country, stories showing this communist spirit of mutual assistance are not lacking in the villages of Szechuan since the setting up of people's communes.

Works of literature and art are powerful tools of the Party for educating the people with the ideas of socialism and communism. In order that they may play a better part in educating and inspiring the broad masses, we must fully idealize the characters we create. Of course, this idealization must be based on real life, having nothing in common with fabrications divorced from reality. For these new men and women with a communist style do exist in real life and their ideas and qualities have been formed in the complex struggle of the socialist revolution and socialist construction. The further idealization of our characters simply means the epitomization of the communist qualities of many people in actual life and the stressing of new, not yet fully developed features, which will become even more prevalent in future. In other words, it is elevation on the basis of artistic generalization from actual life. When Chairman Mao Tse-tung mentioned in his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature*, the difference between things in their natural state and literature and art which are ideological forms, he pointed out that literature and art as ideological forms "ought to be on a higher level and of a greater power and better focussed, more typical, nearer the ideal . . . than actual everyday life." Chairman Mao expounded this brilliant directive very clearly and thoroughly. It should be a principle followed by all of us when idealizing our characters, for it is a scientific conclusion reached from summing up the whole experience of creative writing.

In order to do what Chairman Mao asks of us I think we must have, in the first place, a rich experience of life, then we must analyse and study our experience thoroughly from the Party's viewpoint and in line with Party policies so as to provide a solid and reliable base for focussing and summing up in creative writing. More important still, we must be able to look far and wide, we must stand at the pinnacle of communist ideology to comprehend and then reflect this great, stirring life of ours so that our works are permeated with the inspiring spirit of revolutionary romanticism. In the past year, I have been thinking over the artistic

method of integrating revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. More and more I feel that revolutionary romanticism should predominate. For the thought of revolutionary romanticism always reminds me of the Marxist-Leninist theory of uninterrupted revolution, and the theory of uninterrupted revolution is a strategical line which guides the class struggle. To my mind, if we consider the question of revolutionary romanticism from this angle we can give more conscious and profound reflection to our splendid, stirring life in which "twenty years are concentrated in one day" and to the spiritual outlook of the broad masses; we can sing with even greater fervour of the heroes and heroines who are continuously conquering difficulties, overcoming all kinds of ideological obstacles and opening up a road for the new life so that the broad masses of readers will march forward courageously with the characters created in our works.

In the group discussions at this congress many comrades have spoken about the great achievements attained in our writing in recent years. Many popular works gained a greater power to move readers because of the depth of their reflection of life's actual struggles and their fine characterization. Take for instance, Liang Pin's *Keep the Red Flag Flying*, Liu Ching's *The Builders* and Wu Chiang's *Red Sun*. All these novels embody the spirit of revolutionary romanticism in different ways and degrees. With great warmth the authors praise those heroic figures who work selflessly for the collective and revolutionary interest. As for our short stories, when we read Liu Pai-yu's *A Heart Warming Snowy Night* we cannot help being encouraged and reminded of the heroic spirit of all the labouring people of our country who are striving together to realize a great ideal. When I think of the chief character in Ma Feng's *My First Superior*, so exhausted yet able to "swing briskly along" with the aid of a stick when confronted with an urgent task, and the Party secretary in Wang Wen-shih's *A Crucial Moment* who is able to rouse the despairing members of his people's commune to plunge into new battles together, I cannot help recalling the many village cadres I have known who are striving dauntlessly for a great ideal, and I long to write about them.

I have mentioned the works of a few professional writers only. Much has also been achieved by workers, peasants and soldiers writing in their spare time to meet the demands of the Party and the masses, especially by those young writers among the workers, peasants and soldiers who have appeared since the big leap forward. Take Szechuan for an example. In that province there are quite a few workers, peasants and soldiers who write pretty well. Of course for them it is still just a beginning. But I am always very moved when I remember the old worker on half time in Tsai Feng's *Spring Night* who secretly learns how to sew from a widow and secretly practises swinging a hammer. He is determined to regain the use of his arm disabled after a flogging in the old society so that he can go back to the work he loves to help our country to surpass England in less than fifteen years. I also think of the communist style described in Tou Fu's *Welding*. Then there is the nurse, blinded on the battle-field of Korea when rescuing a wounded man, who later learns massage despite many difficulties and treats the sick with infinite patience — she is surely worthy of the epithet "A Flower That Will Never Fade," which Huang Mo-yuan has made the title of this story. . . .

When young friends discuss with me how to embody in writing the method of integrating revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism, especially how to embody the spirit of revolutionary romanticism, I always call to mind those reminiscences of revolutionary struggles which have educated our broad masses (perhaps because these writings are useful in explaining what I mean). These works made me realize that a writer must, in the first place, be himself a proletarian fighter who is one with the people, sharing their fate and struggling continuously for the realization of the great revolutionary ideal. This is the only true solution to the problem. For this is the basic reason why these works not only give a correct picture of the history of revolutionary struggles but, at the same time, are full of the spirit of revolutionary optimism and revolutionary heroism. Blood must flow from blood vessels, water-pipes can produce only water. I wrote a short story called *Terror* around 1931, meaning to expose the bloody crimes of the reactionaries, but as a result I revealed my own mood of despair. I am sure I would not write anything of this sort now. But this tale written thirty years ago, makes it

fully apparent that creative writing is always directly influenced by its author's thoughts, feelings and spiritual condition, his whole world outlook.

We all know the saying "style is the man." I think today we should give new meaning and content to this saying. That is: If a writer wants to fully embody the method of combining revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism in his works, he himself must be fully imbued with a communist style. The rich experience gained since the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* in 1942 prove that this can be achieved if we continue to abide honestly by the teachings of Chairman Mao, make a thorough study of Marxism-Leninism, plunge deep into life's struggles for long periods of time, and identify ourselves with the masses in thought, feeling and deed, advancing resolutely along the road of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers.

LIU CHING

Our Attitude Towards Life and Writing

If we may compare history to a river, a very long stretch of it may be calm and smooth, another stretch may have swift and strong currents, still another stretch may be a wild and roaring torrent. As to the stretch of the river of life down which we have sailed in the last few years, if we say that one day on it equaled twenty years, we are not exaggerating in the least. In 1953, the first year of the First Five-Year Plan, when the Party put forward the general line of the transition to socialism and we held the Second Congress of Chinese Literary and Art Workers, the entire country was just beginning to experiment with the establishment of agricultural producers' co-operatives. Now, less than seven years later, we are holding the Third Congress of Chinese Literary and Art Workers, and the whole world knows what changes have taken place in Chinese society. If you admit that the Yangtse River and the Yellow River are joyously flowing on, that the Wuling Mountain Range is solemnly towering over the land of China, you must agree that the people's communes are as much a part of our existence now as the Yangtse and the Yellow River and the Wuling Mountain Range, that the people's communes will remain as eternally youthful as the mountains and will flow on for ever like the mighty rivers.

The spiritual strength of Marxist-Leninist theory and the writings of Mao Tse-tung is stirring our hundreds of millions of peasants. Within a few years they have of their own accord, eager to forge ahead, radically transformed a society which for thousands of years had been backward and disunited. Now the

whole country has but one aim — to continue our big leap forward. The movement for technical innovations and technical revolution has reached down even to the canteens of every production team. Peasants who used to burn incense and kowtow to the gods on every occasion are now people's commune members daring to think, to speak and to act. They are not only liberated politically and economically, they are liberated ideologically as well. This is a great change in the spiritual character of the people. Such changes are happening in every family, in every working man and woman.

The age has set present-day Chinese revolutionary writers a glorious task — to depict the birth of the new society and the growth of the new man. It is by no means a light task. We must strictly follow the directives of Chairman Mao, and wholeheartedly and for an indefinite period merge ourselves with the mighty current of the people's life. Only by so doing and by dint of hard study can we gradually solve the series of problems, both ideological and technical, which confront us in our writing.

What political thought to take as a guide and what class ideology to accept is always a writer's most fundamental problem. If we do not consider this aspect as the primary criterion, but look first to artistic technique, then we cannot form a correct opinion of any writer, whatever the age he belongs to. Those who try to avoid ideological remoulding always invoke the aid of Tolstoy and Balzac, but these two writers of the past cannot help them. For us, ideological remoulding is of primary importance; if a writer does not study Marxism-Leninism and the works of Mao Tse-tung, if he has no love for the common labourer, then no matter how much of a literary genius he may be, he cannot produce the kind of works people want today. Every writer who has attained some success in his work owes it primarily to the victory of Mao Tse-tung's thought on literature and art. Overestimating the role of individual talent is an expression of bourgeois thought in literature and art.

For a writer, the most important thing is infinite loyalty to the Party, firm adherence to the line that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. Only then can he be full of self-confidence and resolve as he advances along the path pointed out by Chairman Mao. Self-confidence and resolve are

the spiritual qualities of a revolutionary: the conviction that one is engaged in a just, people's cause; the conviction that one is adopting the correct line; the conviction that there are no difficulties in the world which cannot be overcome; the conviction that the people's cause will always march from victory to victory — this is the ideological basis of revolutionary self-confidence and resolve.

Half a century has passed since Lenin's *Party Organization and Party Literature* was published in 1905, and eighteen years have passed since Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature* was published in 1942. Proletarian literature has won great victories in attacking the rule of the bourgeoisie and in inspiring the people in their struggle for liberation. But the description of China's socialist construction is a task which has barely started, and all of us must exert great efforts and seek to link better the new political and ideological content with art. If you lack self-confidence and firm resolve, if you fail even in the slightest to draw a clear demarcation between yourself and bourgeois and revisionist thought in literature and art, you cannot advance along the Party's literary path. When you are living with the revolutionary masses, the earth-shaking, mighty spirit of the labouring people inspires you every day with revolutionary confidence and revolutionary resolve. The factors which cause success or failure in art are complex. In any creative activity, it is sometimes quite inevitable that a man with a correct line may nevertheless meet with failure in writing, we should remind ourselves: "No matter what difficulties there may be in artistic creation, I must remain with the people, always be an active revolutionary."

We should pay attention to literary technique, but not make it out as something mysterious. To learn from past examples is necessary, but only when we have a rich experience of life ourselves can we learn more from past masters. The term "creativity" is related to the law of dialectical materialism that "all things are in a state of continuous development." Only by following the instructions of Chairman Mao wholeheartedly, by making a thorough study of society and men, by "dissecting spar-

rows,"* by holding a telescope in one hand and a microscope in the other, can we find the proper way to solve the problem of the technique of expression in a creative manner. Provided we do not consider things from a personal angle but remember all the time that this is the Party's and the people's cause, then no wrong theories and irresponsible talk inside or outside the country can utilize the difficulties confronting us in our advance to lure us from the correct path.

We must not confuse self-confidence and resolve with complacency and arrogance. In our socialist society, complacency and arrogance run completely counter to the collective nature of our social tasks and social life. To act with modesty and caution is not only good for our work, but also good for ourselves. In the case of a writer, complacency must lead to stagnation, arrogance must lead to isolation from the masses. Shouldn't the books we write be the common spiritual wealth of the Party and the people? Sometimes when you are writing in your room, you may fancy you have expended considerable energy, but if you go out and look at the work-site of some water-conservancy project with its thousands of workers, you can see that the bit of work you have done counts for very little compared with the mighty collective cause of the Party and the people. Without these great causes what could you write about?

I want to say a word too about the sense of moral responsibility of a revolutionary writer. Three years ago I had a talk with a bourgeois writer from Western Europe. He said that he simply wrote down what he saw and did not care whether it was correct or not. The more deeply he could stir people the better he was pleased. If one of his readers should commit suicide after reading his book, he would feel no responsibility. On the contrary, he said, it would prove the "success" of his writing. You can see how disgusting and rotten to the core is such bourgeois literary thought!

*This is a figurative way of speaking, meaning when a writer goes deep into life he must, like a physiologist dissecting a sparrow, make a concrete analysis and thorough study of the things he sees in order to know and understand every aspect of what he has experienced.

We revolutionary writers must always bear in mind these three questions: What have I seen? Have I seen it correctly? Is it beneficial to the people if I write about it? If a revolutionary writer constantly examines himself on these three points, he can not only separate himself strictly from bourgeois writers and revisionists, but can also use his writing to beat revisionism. If a comrade doing some practical job, before deciding on certain measures has to consider their effect, shouldn't we also in our writing consider what influence our work will have after it is published? We should strive to observe things more penetratingly and express them more accurately, so that our writing may be of greater educational value to the people.

Third Sister Liu, a Kwangsi Opera Performed in Peking

Third Sister Liu, which attracted wide attention on its first appearance on the Peking stage in late summer this year, was performed by the folk opera group of the Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region. This folk opera, in nine scenes, is based on a popular folk legend of the autonomous region.

Legend has it that there once lived in Kwangsi a village girl of Chuang nationality who sang and danced beautifully. Her name was Third Sister Liu. Through folk songs she praised the beauty of nature and of labour and exposed the crimes of the feudal ruling class in exploiting and oppressing the working people. For this she won the love and respect of the labouring people but was hated and persecuted by the authorities, who forced her to move from place to place. But wherever she went she took her songs which won the hearts of folk in all parts of Kwangsi. The local people called her their Goddess of Song. This legend has been popular in Kwangsi for more than a thousand years.

The main theme of the opera is the struggle waged by the labouring people led by Third Sister Liu against the landlord Mo Hai-jen, one of the feudal ruling class, when driven from Locheng, her native village, by local tyrants she made her home in Yishan with relatives. In the scene "Seize the Tea Grove" our heroine, together with the people, launches a sharp struggle against Mo Hai-jen who tries to seize a hillside planted with tea by the people. Mo refuses to accept defeat. He schemes to take Third Sister Liu as his concubine in order to isolate her from the rest of the masses. But the clever singer sees through his plot. She forces Mo to accept a challenge to a singing contest, in accordance with the Chuang people's custom at a betrothal. To win the contest, Mo hires three "scholars" to represent him. However, the three "scholars" are no match at all for Third Sister Liu's quick wit and intelligence, and they have to flee in disgrace. By showing forcefully the cleverness of the heroine and the stupidity and viciousness of the feudal landlord and his lackeys, the scene "The Singing Contest" brings the opera to its climax. In the next scene, "Songs Are Banned" the landlord at his wits' end allies

with officials to put a ban on singing. Again he meets with ignominious defeat. To the labouring people, folk songs are a weapon in the class struggle which can neither be silenced nor banned.

The opera made use of folk songs popular for centuries with the Chuang people of Kwangsi. These songs, which have stood the test of time, are even more beautiful since the script writers have further polished them, making them deeply moving. This opera combines the music of folk songs with the tunes of the local opera. A great deal has been absorbed from the acting technique of different local operas and the performers succeeded admirably in interpreting their roles. *Third Sister Liu* is an outstanding opera with a strong national flavour.

A Documentary Records the Conquest of World's Highest Peak

On May 25, 1960, overcoming countless difficulties with dauntless courage the Chinese mountaineering expedition succeeded in planting the five-star red flag on Jolmo Lungma, the world's highest peak, 8,882 metres above sea level. The coloured documentary, *Conquering the World's Highest Peak* is now being shown. It was filmed by a camera group sent by the Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio together with the heroes who scaled the Jolmo Lungma.

The film includes many splendid shots, two of the best of which were taken by Comrade Chu Yin-hua on the morning of May 25 at an altitude of 8,700 metres when he was on his way down from the world's highest peak. One shows the indistinct tracks left by our heroes on the eternal white snow of the Jolmo Lungma; the other present a sea of clouds from which different crests of Himalaya mountains emerge like bamboo shoots springing from the ground. These rare scenes could hardly be taken through a telescope at a lower height due to the constantly changing weather at the top. Other exciting shots were taken at altitudes above 7,600 metres by the mountaineer Shih Ching. These include a shot of the heroes pushing doggedly onwards at an altitude of 8,100 metres, despite their lack of oxygen and physical exhaustion. Shih Ching also photographed the spot where formerly mountaineers of capitalist countries met with defeat, together with the remains of their tent and other equipment. He also filmed the making of the expedition's final assault camp at a height of 8,500 metres. In the past, Western physiologists considered an altitude of 8,000 metres and above a "lethal zone" for human beings. But all the shots mentioned here were

filmed at or above the 8,000 metre level. This required more than ordinary courage. Mao Sen, a cameraman sent from the studio, also went up as high as 6,800 metres and worked there for nine whole days though this was his first experience of mountaineering. The courage and tenacity displayed in the filming of *Conquering the World's Highest Peak* are equally remarkable as the ascent itself; thus a new, significant chapter has been written in the history of cinematography.

Fine Performance of the State Ensemble of the Soviet Tatar Autonomous Republic

The State Ensemble of the Soviet Tatar Autonomous Republic came to Peking during the capital's beautiful early autumn. They brought not only their delightful dances and songs but the fraternal friendship of the Soviet people.

Thirty-one items were performed at the premiere. Following the solemn and magnificent chorus, *Ode to Lenin*, F. H. Nasretidinov, people's artist of the R.S.F.S.R. and of the Tatar Autonomous Republic, led in singing *To Our Chinese Friends*, a choral piece specially composed by D. Faizi for the ensemble's current tour of China. His ringing and expressive voice conveyed the deep friendship of the Soviet people for the Chinese people. The ensemble's rendering of the familiar *The East Is Red* in Chinese and the Chinese folk song *Half a Moon Crawls Up the Sky* in the Tatar language delighted the Peking audience. Among the dances performed, *The Tempest in the Missionary School — A Past Occurrence in Tukay* and *Hired Peasants*, two traditional dances newly revised and improved, exposed, through forceful and vivid movements, the oppression suffered by the poor students and hired peasants before the Revolution, as well as their revolt. Dances portraying the Soviet Tatar people's new life such as *The Last Dance of Youth* and *Friendship* have attained a very high standard. F. N. Abdulina, M. A. Catiatulina and A. N. Latepov, merited artists of the Tatar Autonomous Republic, gave successful solo and collective performances in the *Dance of the Little Accordion*, *Tease the Bridegroom* and many others. With fine and humorous movements, they showed us the different aspects and varied interests of the life of the Tatar people.

Chu Teh, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, attended a fine performance of the ensemble.

Film Week of Korean Democratic People's Republic

August 15, 1960 was the fifteenth anniversary of the glorious day when the Korean people shook off the rule of imperialism and gained complete liberation. In order to commemorate this great day of the liberation of the Korean people, sixteen cities in China, including Peking, Shanghai and Tientsin organized a Film Week of the Korean Democratic People's Republic and showed the Korean feature films *Love for the Future*, *9 A.M. Sharp*, *Song of Unity* and *Girls on the Keum Kang San* as well as a documentary in colour, *Keum Kang San*.

These films show the glorious tradition of the Korean people's fight against imperialism and their happy life after the liberation. *Love for the Future* depicts how Korean underground Communist Party members and other revolutionaries, led by the Korean Communist Party (now called the Korean Workers' Party), dealt heavy blows at the invaders to liberate their motherland from the rule of the Japanese imperialists. *9 A.M. Sharp* tells how the brave and resourceful public security forces and the workers of the Korean Democratic People's Republic capture a whole gang of secret agents sent by the U.S. imperialists and Syngman Rhee to sabotage their peaceful construction. *Song of Unity* describes the feats of the heroic Korean working class, who rallying around the workers' own Party and raising high the red banner fight heroically and resolutely against the Japanese aggressors. *Girls on the Keum Kang San* through a story of the reunion of a father and daughter, husband and wife, presents the struggle of revolutionary artists of the older generation and the rapid growth of young Korean artists under the education and care of the Korean Workers' Party. *Keum Kang San* introduces the beautiful scenery of this well-known and attractive resort of the Korean labouring people. This film week not only gave Chinese audiences entertainment of a very high order but enabled them to understand better the life, struggle and construction programme of their Korean brothers, thus strengthening the close friendship and co-operation between the peoples of Korea and China.

A delegation of five headed by Kim Han Kyoo, Director of the Film Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Korean Democratic People's Republic, came to China and took part in the opening ceremony of the Korean Film Week in Peking.

Performances of the Burmese Cultural and Goodwill Art Troupe

In January this year, the Chinese people warmly celebrated the signing of the Sino-Burmese Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-Aggression and the conclusion of the Agreement on the Question of the Boundary Between Burma and China by the two governments. Six months later, with the same warmth, the Chinese people welcomed the arrival of the Burmese government's envoy of culture and art, peace and friendship — the Cultural and Goodwill Art Troupe of the Union of Burma. Premier Chou En-lai attended the troupe's last performance in Peking. He received U Ba Sein, the leader of the troupe, and had a friendly chat with him and the chief performers.

The troupe of 61 people consisted of some of Burma's most celebrated dancers, singers and musicians, as well as some promising young performers. Its repertoire included an episode from a dramatic ballet with the well-known dancer U Kenneth Sein in the leading role, short amusing pieces by Shwe Man Tin Maung, who is known for his humour and items by the noted dancer Sein Aung Min who combines singing and dancing in his performance. These three outstanding Burmese artists represent three different schools of dancing. Through their performances Chinese audiences gained a fuller understanding of the rich art of the Burmese people's national dances.

The items performed by the Cultural and Goodwill Art Troupe of the Union of Burma included classical and modern dances and songs with a strong national and oriental flavour. The beautiful overture played by the Burmese State Orchestra with traditional Burmese instruments before the performance was one of the most welcomed items. The brilliantly executed and highly polished classical dances of the Burmese artists enchanted the Peking audience. The newly arranged *Dance with Bells and Clappers*, *The Dance of Paddy Cultivation* and *Dance of Unity of All Burmese Nationalities* successfully presented the Burmese people's labour enthusiasm and unity. It also showed the outstanding achievements and creative ability of the artists in developing their national art of singing and dancing.

During their stay in Peking the Burmese artists compared notes with Chinese literary and art workers. After their stay in Peking they toured Shanghai, Wuhan and other cities of China.

The Afghan Orchestra in Peking

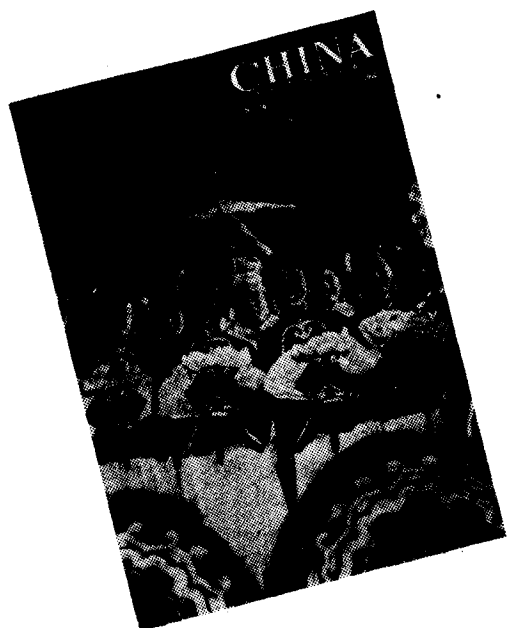
With great pleasure Chinese audiences greeted the fine performance of the first musician's group to come from the Kingdom of Afghanistan, our neighbour on the other side of the Pamir Plateau. Premier Chou En-lai and Vice-Premier Chen Yi attended the opening ceremony and performance.

The group performed mostly Afghan folk songs and music. This orchestra is known as "the flower of Afghan music" at home. The musicians play several traditional Afghan instruments as well as a horn, a mandolin and a hand organ. Although the horn and mandolin come from the West, they were played in such a way as to fit in naturally with the rest of the orchestra. The traditional instruments with their remarkable, time-honoured shapes and playing techniques have their distinctive tones. The charming songs with a national flavour sung by these skilled artists and accompanied by these unique instruments made us feel we were listening to honest Afghan peasants singing their ancient folk songs on the Afghan plateau surrounded by mountain ranges.

Audiences were very interested in a solo on the Afghan drum. The soloist Mr. Malang Nedgrawi produced a rich variety of sounds and rhythm on the drum. Mr. Hafizullah Kiyal's rendering of two love songs by Mr. Abdul Ghasur Brechna was subtle and full of feeling. The Pushtoo folk songs sung by Mr. Mohammad Abrahin Nacim and Mr. Salim Khatan were lively and full of vitality. And the Chinese song *Sinkiang's Fine* was so skilfully sung that it won warm applause.

The Afghan musicians' successful performances won the hearty acclaim of Peking audiences and will enhance the close friendship between the artists and people of Afghanistan and China.

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Coming Shortly

RED SUN

WU CHIANG

This exciting novel describes three major campaigns on the eastern front during the Chinese War of Liberation. The story begins with the second attack on the city of Lienshui by the Kuomintang reactionary army's crack unit, the Reorganized 74th Division, late in the autumn of 1946, and ends with this unit's complete defeat by our troops on Mengliangku at the beginning of the summer of 1947.

This book vividly depicts stirring battle scenes and moving feats of heroism. It portrays the noble heroism of our commanders and fighters and shows the great collective strength of the People's Liberation Army in defeating a stubborn enemy.

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Just Off the Press

MY CHILDHOOD

KAO YU-PAO

This is an autobiographical novel by Kao Yu-pao, a soldier-writer from a poor peasant family. It tells how as a child the author and his family were oppressed and exploited by the Japanese imperialists and Chinese landlords. They became bankrupt because of the inhuman oppression and the whole family fled to Talien, only to encounter added difficulties under the Japanese occupation there. They were forced to return to their old home in the village.

The terrible suffering of the Kao family reveals the deplorable conditions in both urban and rural areas under which the Chinese people lived during the Japanese occupation. The fighting spirit of the Chinese labouring people, under the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party, is vividly portrayed.

21 × 14.5 cm.

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