

CHINESE LITERATURE

Monthly



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WU CHIANG

Prelude to Victory

—An excerpt from the novel *RED SUN*

1

The River Yu, the glossy yellow loess of its banks, the tall poplars, the old ginkgo tree, the trenches and the shelters constructed with such care, their home for the last eight days and nights: it was with tears in their eyes that the troops had said goodbye to them!

In the past two days the three riflemen Chang Hua-feng, Chin Li-chung and Chin Shou-pen and the ammunition-man Chou Feng-shan had covered a hundred and twenty *li* northwards by forced marches. The only sleep they had had, had been three hours at noon the day before, when they had got down behind a stack of sorghum-straw in the open fields to avoid being machine-gunned by enemy aircraft.

Chin Shou-pen felt thoroughly exhausted. His rifle and rice-bag hung from Chang Hua-feng's shoulders, yet even so his progress was a constant alternation between marching and resting, and always and everywhere he was wanting to pause for a rest.

Wu Chiang was born in Lienshui County, Kiangsu, in 1911. He started writing in 1933 and was a member of the China League of Left-Wing Writers in the early thirties. In addition to *Red Sun* his other well-known works include a play, *The Arrest*, two short novels, *He Raises His Gun* and *The Groom*. He is a member of the secretariat of the Shanghai branch of the Chinese Writers' Union. For more information on the novel *Red Sun* see the article *A Novel About the Liberation War* on p. 136 of this issue.

He had always been a talkative man, but these last two days he had become the most silent and uncommunicative of the four.

Squeaking one-wheeled barrows and three-wheeled ox-carts were transporting rice, uniforms and ammunition, and mules and horses were laden with bundles of rifles, some without bolts and some with butts missing or barrels snapped off. Now and then, on top of the loads in the ox-carts, one or two soldiers would be sitting or lying; on one cart a soldier was sound asleep with his legs hanging over the edge of the load and swinging with the jolting of the cart so that it looked as if he might fall off at any moment. The peasants driving the carts were continually cracking their whips and urging their beasts to go faster. One of the ox-carts stopped suddenly, though there was no obstruction in its way. For all the noisy cracking of the driver's whip the black bullock at the left side was quite unable to lift its hooves and a white froth of saliva drooled from its mouth. "Make it go faster!" a fighter sitting up on the cart told the driver. The driver's whip was still being flourished above the bullock's back without actually hitting it. The driver sighed and muttered:

"He's tired, sure enough."

Mingling with the procession of carts, mules and horses were stretchers with seriously wounded or sick fighters, fighters moving in whole units, fighters in twos and threes who had lost contact with their units or who were less seriously wounded or ill and fighters who had fallen behind on the march. By a bridge at the entrance to a village a black piece of board from a door had been set up, closely covered with chalked messages and slips of paper. These were notices left by various units directing members of those units to their rendezvous. There was a crowd in front of the board, and since it was almost dark flashlight beams were dancing to and fro upon it.

Chang Hua-feng squeezed into the crowd and looked over the chalked and written messages but found no mention of a rendezvous for his own unit. He sat down hopelessly on a rock, untied a small five-inch-long pipe from his belt and began to smoke. Chin Li-chung and Chou Feng-shan took off their packs and sat down on the ground beside Chang Hua-feng. Chin Shou-pen put his pack down right in front of Chang Hua-feng, not even having the energy left to shift it slightly to one side. He sat down on

his pack, his back close against Chang Hua-feng's legs, and heaved a long sigh.

They had preserved a kind of silence between themselves ever since they had withdrawn from the firing-line. There were plenty of unspoken thoughts that they felt the need to unburden themselves of, but none of them said anything. They looked at each other, then each head dropped of its own accord. Of the twelve men in the section eight were no longer with them: the section-leader Yang Chun had been taken to a field hospital and the other seven had given their lives in the sacred cause of the revolution. Their hearts were pained and sad; as things were, they felt it would be wrong for any of them to say more than was necessary or to have any more feelings of dissatisfaction with one another; this was a feeling which all four of them shared. They sat there at least twenty minutes while five ox-carts rumbled across the stone bridge; the large cart, drawn by the black bullock, that had dropped out of the procession had also slowly caught up; several dozen mules and horses passed by, but still they sat there; not one of them said so much as "Come on, then." When seven or eight men began cooking a meal in a civilian house they felt the stirrings of hunger; Chang Hua-feng felt the two half-empty rice-bags he was carrying and asked his comrades with his eyes: "Shall we go and cook a meal too?" Chin Shou-pen stood up and suddenly burst out, as if many words had been concentrated into these two short phrases:

"Time to eat! I'm starving!"

They went into a civilian house. On the table was a small bowl of boiled sweet potatoes. They fell upon it and made short work of it.

The hen-run and the sties were empty; the house was clean and tidy, but the domestic animals, clothing and food had all been removed.

The owner of the house, a white-bearded old man of over seventy, said to them:

"All the family's gone. There's nobody to do your cooking for you, and nothing to give you to eat."

He fished out a few baked sweet potatoes from the hot ashes under the stove and put them on the small square table in front of the fighters.

While Chou Feng-shan got a fire going Chin Li-chung washed the rice and Chang Hua-feng poured some water into the cooking-pot, but Chin Shou-pen did not lend a hand: he just sat by the door peeling and eating sweet potatoes.

The white-bearded old man sat on a low stool opposite Chin Shou-pen and asked him:

"Just come down from Lienshui?"

Chin Shou-pen nodded.

"The pagoda there wasn't damaged in the shelling, was it?"

"No."

Sorrowfully the old man launched into a torrent of words:

". . . You don't have to go back all that far: just look what's happened since the first year of the Republic. Those warlords, blind Chang, Pai Pao-shan, Ma Yu-jen, they all came this way, fighting and killing. Then in the sixteenth year of the Republic we heard the army of the revolution was coming: more fighting! *Ai!* And a fine army of the revolution they turned out to be: nothing to choose between the official army and the bandits! And then before the Japs came it was bandits — murder, kidnapping the rich, highway robbery. Even me, with eight mouths to feed from a couple of acres, they even made me one of the rich, and carried off my little three-year-old grandson, so that I was forced to sell half an acre of drained ground to buy him back. When we were fighting the Japs we were better off than some, because in the beginning it was a year before they got here and as you stand here now we've been rid of them for a year, so all told we've had six years of fighting. And now, when we've been free of fighting for just about a year, what happens? There hasn't even been a chance to knock down the earthworks to the east of the village, and the houses that were burned down haven't been rebuilt yet. Didn't you find blackened shells of walls in every village and town that you came through? And now more fighting! You'd think we'd had enough! No hope of setting your mind at rest, no chance to farm in peace! I ask you, comrade, can't someone stop all this fighting?"

As he talked he heaved long and bitter sighs, and his voice was heavy with the resentment and indignation that had been building up inside him over the long years. Chin Shou-pen noticed that tears were trickling down from the corners of the white-

bearded old man's eyes, and he felt sad and angry, too. He hurled a sweet potato skin with all his might far away from the door.

"It's not us that want to go on fighting! It's Chiang Kai-shek!" shouted Chang Hua-feng from the stove.

"I know, but can't you come to terms with him?" asked the old man.

"Chairman Mao went to Chungking and signed a peace agreement* with them last year, but they tore it up!" said Chang Hua-feng, coming across to the old man. "If you don't want to fight and he does, if you want peace and he doesn't, what else is there you can do?"

"So there's nothing for it but to fight?"

Chang Hua-feng nodded and raised his fist as he replied:

"Yes! Nothing for it but to fight!"

The white-bearded old man went into the back room and took a dishful of pickled garlic stalks from a small crock under the bed as a side-dish to go with the fighters' rice. It was the second meal the four of them had had that day.

When they had finished eating Chin Shou-pen felt his strength return and he washed up the cooking-pot, the bowls, the dish and the chopsticks. They then thanked their old host, joined the miscellaneous throng again, and pressed forward in silence.

The night sky was thick with stars, twinkling points of cold light. A couple of enemy aircraft droned a heavy, monotonous lament. One of them dropped two flares, one after the other, and the blackness overhead was suddenly changed to a harsh white; the white glare rocked and danced in the sky, and only after a long interval did it gradually fade away.

The heavy dew of the small hours was like a misty drizzle. The wetted dust underfoot splattered on to shoes and bottoms of trouser-legs, making weary legs and feet more leaden than

* At the end of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression Chairman Mao Tse-tung went on August 28, 1945 to Chungking to talk with Chiang Kai-shek in order to secure peace, democracy and unity for the people. On October 10 an agreement with measures to ensure peace was reached. But Chiang Kai-shek, believing that the Communists' vigilance would now relax, soon tore the agreement to pieces by launching an attack on the People's Liberation Army.

before. At first the front-line troops and re-service troops going along the road had been noisy and talkative; oxen lowed and horses neighed; there had been the occasional flare of a match and now and then one of the men could be heard humming a tune. But as the night deepened all this changed, and although the troops and the mules and horses still pressed on without a pause it was as if they had entered the world of sleep, for there was not a sound to be heard from them. All was stillness, and silence, and loneliness.

After walking all night they were quite worn out, and inquiries among those travelling with them had not thrown any light on where their unit was bivouacking. At dawn, following blindly in the wake of a body of troops with a large number of horses, they came into a large village where the houses clustered closely together in a thick belt of tress.

2

Chang Hua-feng slept right through till midday and not until the sun shone warmly into the cart-shed where they were sleeping did he sit up, still only half awake. He had slept like a top, the first really satisfying sleep he had had for about three weeks. When he had rubbed his eyes open he discovered that Chin Li-chung and Chou Feng-shan were still sound asleep at his feet, but Chin Shou-pen, who had been sleeping beside him, was no longer there. Chang Hua-feng now gently eased the blanket off himself, went barefoot out of the shed, and did not put his shoes on until he was outside. "Where can Chin Shou-pen have gone off to?" Chang Hua-feng walked up and down for a moment in front of the shed, then went down to the pond to see if Chin Shou-pen had gone for a wash, but he was not there: there was only a number of ducks dipping up and down in the water. He scooped up a double handful of water from the pond and rinsed out his parched mouth, then washed his face. Afterwards he went back to the shed, frowning and peering all about him.

He picked up his short pipe and began to smoke, sitting in the sun in front of the shed door, blinking his bloodshot eyes and hunting all round with them for some trace of Chin Shou-pen.

Chin Shou-pen had been woken from sleep with a start by a sudden noise half an hour before. Feeling thirsty, he had gone to a house where troops were billeted to find some water and had run into Huang Ta, the head of the Operations Department at Army H.Q. After a few words with him Huang Ta had taken him away with him.

He was taken in some trepidation to a high-ranking commander who was in the middle of lunch. Chin Shou-pen was asked to join him; he ate his fill and was given a cigarette so mellow that he had rarely had an opportunity to smoke.

"How many left in your section?" asked the high-ranking commander after he had listened to Chin Shou-pen's account of what he had seen of the fighting.

"Four," replied Chin Shou-pen.

"Four what?"

"One's a machine-gunner, one's an ammunition-man, and Chang Hua-feng and I are riflemen."

The commander came round the table and looked Chin Shou-pen up and down with his piercing dark eyes. The sternness that had come into his serious expression made Chin Shou-pen, who had been feeling tense in the beginning, automatically fall back a step. At the same time he himself also examined the other man's face and looked him up and down. A memory came back to him: he seemed to remember listening to a speech by this commander more than two years ago at the foot of a mountain slope south of the Yangtse, but it had been at night and he had been standing too far away to see his face clearly and could not now call it to mind. But that mighty resonant voice had left an impression on his mind that had still not been obliterated. When Chin Shou-pen had first come into the room he had been too busy eating and answering questions to realize or guess at the identity of this commander; now, he had made up his mind: it was his army commander.

Chin Shou-pen now felt that he and the army commander were acquaintances. He was particularly pleased that the commander knew his name, and most of the moodiness and depression that

had beset him the last few days had now evaporated. At this moment, standing before his army commander, he was like a complete child, and a faint smile had appeared on his face.

"You say your section-leader's name is Yang Chun? Isn't it the Little Yang? About the same height as you, a bit stronger built than you, very sturdy? From Tienmushan?" The army commander emphatically repeated these questions that he had asked before, pacing up and down the room as he did so.

Having nodded and said yes to each of these questions in turn, Chin Shou-pen said quietly, twisting at his buttons:

"I'm from Tienmushan, too. Chin Family Bridge in Hsinteng County."

"Go and get them something to eat," the army commander told the head of the Operations Department, Huang Ta, who was standing to one side. "When they've had their meal bring all four of them here to me."

Huang Ta went out, taking Chin Shou-pen with him.

The army commander, Shen Chen-hsin, was a man of medium height whose thick eyebrows were slightly tilted above his flashing dark eyes; his forehead was rather prominent and although a few faint wrinkles had already appeared on his forehead and at the corners of his eyes they in no way detracted from his soldierly air. Chin Shou-pen's simple answers to his questions had started some train of thought in his mind, and now he paced up and down the room with tightly knit brows, his hands clasped behind his back and his fingers continually flicking against one another.

The Lienshui Campaign had comprised two battles. The army commanded by Shen Chen-hsin had been the protagonist and the main force in the two battles. In the first battle his troops had had the task of holding their positions against a frontal assault and had repulsed the enemy without much effort, so he and his troops had won. The second battle had been with the same enemy—the reorganized 74th Division of Chiang Kai-shek's Guards. Both flanks of his army had been strengthened by the presence of neighbouring units and his front by new reinforcements, yet he had lost the battle and the city of Lienshui had fallen to the enemy. Both his own troops and those of neighbouring units had withdrawn from the firing-line helter-skelter. This precipitate withdrawal had caused a certain amount of confusion.

Take Yang Chun's section, for example: only four men were left out of twelve and these had travelled more than a hundred *li* without finding their way back to their unit.

His mind was being gnawed by rats' teeth, sharp and fine as needles, and in the three days since the withdrawal he had been unable to sleep properly; he looked ill, he had lost his appetite, and after lighting a cigarette he would take a couple of draws on it and then throw it away, or else let it burn itself out. He had experienced the varying fortunes of war and he knew full well that there was no such thing as a general who never lost a battle, yet this time he felt particularly distressed and uneasy. The unit had suffered a severe blow and Su Kuo-ying, commander and commissar of his strongest regiment, had given his life: that was one side of the picture. The other side was that he neither understood very clearly how it was that the enemy—Chang Ling-fu's 74th Division—had been able to lord it over him nor was he prepared to take it lying down.

After leaving the army commander's room with Huang Ta, the head of the Operations Department, Chin Shou-pen hurried off towards the cart-shed in great excitement and while yet at a distance he shouted to Chang Hua-feng at the top of his voice:

"Good news! Good news!"

Without giving Chang Hua-feng a chance to open his mouth he added excitedly:

"Grub up! Grub up!"

"What are you looking so pleased about?" Chang Hua-feng shouted back, puzzled.

"The army commander! He sent for me! Asked me about the fighting." Chin Shou-pen's voice was brimming over with elation.

"You mean Army Commander Shen?" asked Chang Hua-feng, getting up. "Is the Army H.Q. here, then?"

"Yes. Here, look at this I've got for you, a cigarette." As he said this Chin Shou-pen took the cigarette out of his pocket and gave it to Chang Hua-feng.

While Chang Hua-feng was still wondering how the army commander had known they were here and why he had sent for Chin Shou-pen, the latter was already waking the snoring Chin Li-chung and Chou Feng-shan:

"Wakey-wakey! Grub up!"

"How d'you make that out?" asked Chin Li-chung drowsily. "The rice-bags are still here."

His excitement getting the better of him, Chin Shou-pen raised his voice:

"We're eating at Army H.Q.! The army commander says the four of us are to go and see him for a chat when we've had a meal!"

Chin Shou-pen's great display of excitement convinced Chang Hua-feng and the others that such was really the case. They now packed their kit and went off to the place indicated by the head of the Operations Department, Huang Ta for their meal, taking their rifles and equipment with them.

After the meal there were quite a number of people in the army commander's room, some sitting and some standing. Chang Hua-feng recognized the army commander and also the army commissar, Ting Yuan-shan and the chief-of-staff, Chu Pin. The conversation was again in the form of questions and answers, most of the answers being given by Chang Hua-feng but the questions being asked by quite a number of people. When Chang Hua-feng, in his account of the counter-attack, said that they had brought back a prisoner who was half dead, the army commander interrupted him:

"What happened to this prisoner?"

"He was sent back to Regimental H.Q."

"What was he? What was his name, do you know?"

"He was a battalion commander, I looked at his chest-badge. His surname was Chang, but I don't remember the rest of his name."

The army commander at once turned to the chief-of-staff:

"Why hasn't this been reported?"

"Get on the phone right away and find out!" Chief-of-staff Chu Pin told Huang Ta. Huang Ta hurried out with great strides.

"How stupid! Capture a battalion commander and don't report it for three or four days!" There was a certain amount of annoyance in Shen Chen-hsin's tone.

"It wasn't a very good show we put up. A lot of comrades didn't want to pull out, and right up till the time the enemy were on top of us Company Commander Shih and Political Instructor

Lo still took the lead in putting up a fight against the enemy. The enemy kept up a pretty fierce covering barrage and they also had air cover from their bombers. They're afraid of us when it comes to mixing it at close quarters and bayonet-fighting. . . . Then later on when we pulled out it was chaos. Broad daylight, shells and bombs coming down like a hailstorm. Our section lost touch with the platoon, and the platoon lost touch with the company. The local people were very good to us and gave us things to eat and drink. Some of them could do nothing but cry when they saw us. And when we thought how many of our comrades had disappeared, and how we'd lost our positions, we couldn't help shedding tears ourselves. And then we thought to ourselves: we're fighters of the revolution and we shouldn't cry; so then we held back the tears that had started coming into our eyes. . . ."

When Chang Hua-feng reached this point in his story, the mention of their shedding tears brought unconscious tears to his eyes. He at once rubbed his eyes hurriedly and wiped away the tears that had come to the corners of his eyes with his hand-towel. He was just going to continue with his story when Commissar Ting Yuan-shan stopped him. Chang Hua-feng's words had touched Ting Yuan-shan's heart, making it vibrate slightly, and he now turned his gaze on the other three fighters. The three of them were sitting there in silence nursing their rifles, their heads bent. He got up and walked a couple of steps away from his chair, then, to break the heavy atmosphere of gloom that had settled on the room, he took a vigorous pull on his cigarette, turned to Chang Hua-feng and the other three with rounded eyes and spoke to them as if having a debate with someone:

"You haven't done at all badly! You've captured some weapons and you've also taken an officer prisoner. You're upset at Yang Chun being wounded and because some of your comrades have been killed, and the commander and myself are also upset. But what's the good of being upset? Shedding tears isn't going to stop the enemy attacking us! We must think of a way to destroy the enemy! The first thing we must do is to think of a way, and you must think, too!"

As he spoke his voice became louder and he flourished his arms continually, so that the attention of everyone in the room was drawn to him. He went on:

"Brother comrades! It's not as if you were recruits fighting your first battle! Chiang Kai-shek has been an 'old friend' of ours many years now; he's nothing to be afraid of! Is he a man of iron that weapons can't pierce? You won't get me to believe that one!"

A faint smile appeared at the corners of Chang Hua-feng's, Chin Shou-pen's and many of the others' mouths, and Ting Yuan-shan himself laughed at this.

Huang Ta had finished telephoning. He returned out of breath to report that right enough, a wounded battalion commander was captured.

"Tell them to send him here at once," ordered Shen Chen-hsin. "We want him here alive or dead!" Ting Yuan-shan quickly added:

"Send a stretcher party for him. And a doctor. He mustn't be allowed to die if there's any chance of keeping him alive."

Huang Ta bustled off to arrange for a stretcher and a doctor to fetch the captured battalion commander from Divisional H.Q.

After the soldiers had recounted how they had made sorties at night and constructed their positions, the conversation between the army commander and commissar and the four fighters at last came to an end.

On the way back to the cart-shed Chin Shou-pen's tongue wagged tirelessly on as he gave a voluble, non-stop description of the army commander's facial expressions, imitated his Hunanese accent, and repeated those of the commissar's phrases that had most impressed him, such as "Brother comrades!" and "Is he a man of iron that weapons can't pierce?"

3

The army commander, Shen Chen-hsin, was lying on his bed. He was not asleep, and after closing his eyelids together for a short while he would open them again. The candle had almost burned out, and the draught cutting in through the crack of the

door was making the grease gutter down the side of it. He lifted his head and looked: his personal guards Tang Cheng and Li Yao were slumped over the table opposite each other, fast asleep; one of Tang Cheng's hands was so close to the candle that it was almost burning his finger.

"Tang!"

Tang Cheng did not hear the commander call him, but Li Yao suddenly awoke with a start.

"Get a fresh candle, and go to bed," Shen Chen-hsin told him, sitting up.

Li Yao lit a fresh candle and placed it farther away from Tang Cheng. He stood a couple of bricks by it to screen it from the draught.

"You ought to go to bed yourself. Even if they bring the prisoner tonight there's no hurry to interrogate him before morning."

As Li Yao said this he poured the commander a cup of tea.

Shen Chen-hsin went across to the table and swallowed a mouthful of the hot tea but said nothing. He stood there in thought, his head on one side. Li Yao looked at him, then resignedly disappeared into the side room to bed.

Shen Chen-hsin began pacing up and down the room, his hands clasped behind his back as usual.

He was awaiting the arrival of the captured battalion commander so that he could immediately interrogate him personally. He glanced at his watch, then put it to his ear and listened; he could hear the whispered beats of its heart. From not far away came the crowing of a cock. It was now midnight.

He patted Tang Cheng lightly on the shoulder as if he were afraid of interrupting Tang Cheng's dreams, and said in a low voice:

"Wake up! Go over to the staff office and have a look."

Tang Cheng rubbed his eyes open and asked in a sleepy voice:

"Have a look at what?"

"You take some waking up! Look at what? Look and see if the prisoner's arrived."

Tang Cheng went out, and as he opened the door a gust of cold wind swept into the room and blew the candle out. Shen Chen-hsin resumed his pacing up and down in the darkened room. Li Yao came in from the side room, wakened by the cold gust of

wind. He switched on his torch and when he saw that the commander was still pacing to and fro from the east wall to the west he felt puzzled and disturbed. He closed the door, lit the candle again and said in a loud and worried voice:

"If you go on like this you'll crack up and what will we do then?"

"You go and get some sleep in," said Shen Chen-hsin, still pacing to and fro.

"If you're not going to bed I'm not, either!" said Li Yao obstinately, squaring his jaw.

Having stood by the door for a moment, he picked up the cold remains of the tea, replaced it by a fresh cup of hot tea and took it over to the commander. The commander did not take it, so he stood there holding it and waiting.

Many of the cadres and fighters in this unit had fought with Shen Chen-hsin in the Second Revolutionary Civil War and in the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression both south and north of the Yangtse. At the sound of their footsteps or voices he could tell exactly who they were, what their names were, and could even tell you which of them carried the scars of wounds, and whether they were coarse-natured or pleasant; nothing escaped him. Now, some of them had left him for ever. Su Kuo-ying, a regimental commander, had been one of the political instructors under his command at the time of the 25,000-*li* Long March, and through the eight years of the Anti-Japanese War he had shown his heroism as a commander under Shen Chen-hsin's command; at a critical stage in the fighting he had only to send in Su Kuo-ying's troops to snatch victory from the hands of the enemy; Su Kuo-ying had played a part in winning the battles at Yenling, Tungwang, Shanghsiahui, Hsinteng, Chechiao, Huangchiao, Chinantsang and many other places. Su Kuo-ying had been wounded four times and for five years he had worked and fought on as usual with a bullet still embedded in his thigh. Of the seven victorious battles against Chiang Kai-shek's robber band since the thirteenth of July, Su Kuo-ying and his regiment had taken part in five, and in each one they had acquitted themselves gloriously. Su Kuo-ying and Shen Chen-hsin were both Hupeh men, and their homes were in neighbouring villages only two and a half *li* apart. And now, this son of a poor peasant had been killed by

an enemy shell in the Lienshui Campaign. . . . The voices and the smiling faces of Su Kuo-ying and of many other commanders and fighters who had given their lives in the fighting, and also the image of Yang Chun, the labourer who had run away from the house of a Tienmushan landlord to join the army, all these flashed before Shen Chen-hsin's mind's eye and as quickly vanished, whirling round in succession like the figures on a revolving lamp. The scenes on the firing-line that Chang Hua-feng, Chin Shou-pen and the other two men had described to him that afternoon had given him a clearer picture of what was actually going on, but at the same time they had also aggravated his irritability, depression and exasperation.

Tang Cheng returned, his lips thrust out disappointedly, and said:

"The chief-of-staff says leave the interrogation till the morning."

"Has he gone to bed?"

"He's talking with the doctor."

"Tell him to hurry up and get things ready! We're having the interrogation straight away."

Tang Cheng stood there staring at him abstractedly.

He glared at Tang Cheng, then said to Li Yao:

"Li! You go!"

His manner infected Li Yao, who hurried out in an access of zeal.

"I'd like to see just what they're made of!" said Shen Chen-hsin angrily to himself, his pacing becoming faster and faster and his hands, which were clasped behind him, pressing themselves into the small of his back.

In a small room a plank bed had been rigged up and on it lay the wounded prisoner.

Li Yao shone his torch on the prisoner's head, which was thickly swathed in gauze bandages; his left eye was hidden under the gauze and his right was tightly closed; the breath was coming thickly through his nostrils, as if he was finding breathing difficult, and his mouth was continually opening and closing.

"How bad are his injuries?" Shen Chen-hsin asked Chu Pin in a low voice.

"The doctor's examined him and says he's not too seriously injured," replied Chu Pin in an undertone in Shen Chen-hsin's ear.

Lighting a cigarette, Shen Chen-hsin put a further question to Chu Pin:

"Did they interrogate him at Divisional H.Q. and Regimental H.Q.?"

"They did, but he wouldn't say a word."

After pausing in silence for a moment Shen Chen-hsin told Chu Pin to begin questioning him.

"You, there! Is your name Chang Hsiao-fu?" Chu Pin asked the prisoner quietly.

There was no response at all from the prisoner, as if he had not heard the question.

"Come on, speak up!" said Chu Pin, raising his voice. "I'm asking you! Is your name Chang Hsiao-fu?"

The prisoner lay quite still. There was still no response at all from him.

"Are you dead?" shouted Huang Ta, who was standing beside Chu Pin.

The shaft of light from Li Yao's torch rested on the prisoner's face.

"He's shamming dead!" exclaimed Li Yao with exasperation.

"He most probably is," said Chu Pin in Shen Chen-hsin's ear. "He ate a bowl of gruel only a few hours ago."

The prisoner, who was still lying rigidly, suddenly gave a thick grunt, and his breathing gradually became more urgent. The sentries and spectators who stood clustered round the door were talking among themselves:

"That's what all Chiang Kai-shek's officers are like! Spineless lot!"

"All bluff and bluster on the outside, but in their bones they're afraid to die!"

Shen Chen-hsin silenced the talk and after observing the prisoner and thinking for a moment he said in a clear yet stern voice:

"It's no good your refusing to talk. If you want to go back when we've had a chat with you, we'll let you go."

To the prisoner's ears the sound of Shen Chen-hsin's voice was a new sound, different from all the others that he had heard inside and outside the room, and his right eyelid opened slightly

for a moment. Li Yao happened to notice this faint movement of his. He quickly slipped noiselessly to Shen Chen-hsin and said in a voice that was inaudible to anyone else:

"His eyelid moved."

Shen Chen-hsin stood up and said, raising his voice a little:

"It's easy enough to die, you know! One bullet would be enough. But we're not going to do that!"

The prisoner's eyelid opened again and his head trembled slightly. Li Yao saw this movement, and so did Shen Chen-hsin and Huang Ta.

"Sit him up and take the blanket off him!" ordered Shen Chen-hsin.

The prisoner felt a certain amount of anxiety and his breathing became even more urgent. His hand, which had been resting on his chest, now moved down on to his abdomen.

Li Yao and Tang Cheng sat the prisoner up on the plank bed.

"Come away! Let him sit up on his own!" ordered Shen Chen-hsin.

Li Yao and Tang Cheng let go of him and the prisoner sat unsupported, swaying slightly.

"If you want to smoke you can have a cigarette," said Shen Chen-hsin. He himself lit up.

The prisoner shook his head slowly.

When they saw that the prisoner really was shamming Shen Chen-hsin and Chu Pin exchanged smiles.

"We know you're not seriously wounded," said Chu Pin. "We're going to save you, so don't think you're going to die on us!"

"Do you want a drink? You can have a glass of water," said Shen Chen-hsin, who was drinking tea.

The prisoner's eye opened completely, and he stared at Shen Chen-hsin, trying to work out what he was.

The desire to live made him reveal his true colours, and he finally accepted a glass of water.

Shen Chen-hsin moved the candle to the edge of the table so that the light from it illuminated the prisoner's face more clearly still, then he said decisively:

"No matter how stubborn an enemy may be, we'll eventually put him down. As for you, since you're now a prisoner of war, we no longer consider you as one of the enemy; but you've got

to be straight with us. We're not going to stand any nonsense from you!"

The prisoner trembled slightly, his hands clasped over his chest.

"And now I want you to stand up," said Shen Chen-hsin quietly.

The prisoner trembled again, but he remained seated.

"Stand up!" rapped out Shen Chen-shin in a loud, clear-cut voice.

At last the prisoner was standing by the plank bed, his head bent.

Of the men outside, some were clustered in the gap of the partly-open door staring in and the heads of four or five of them were huddled together in the small window, an array of blinking eyes. Everyone inside the room was holding his breath, and Tang, who wanted to cough, held his hand tightly over his mouth and fought the cough back. An atmosphere of tension filled the room.

"Now I want you to tell me: how many troops altogether did you put into the field for the battle at Lienshui? How did Chiang Kai-shek word his orders for you to attack the Liberated Areas? Did he say that the communist forces were to be wiped out within three months? How many of the weapons at the disposal of the 74th Division are American type? And how many Japanese type? I want a straight answer." Shen Chen-hsin had lowered his voice, but he spoke clearly and precisely.

The prisoner stared vacantly for a few seconds, then blinked and said shakily:

"I'd like to tell you but I'm only a low-ranking officer and so I don't know much about it."

"Tell me as much as you do know, then."

"You won't find my replies very satisfactory, though I'm quite willing to reply."

"Let's hear what you've got to say, then."

"You probably . . . perhaps . . . you won't believe the answers I give you."

"So that's your game!" said Huang Ta angrily. "Probably! Perhaps!"

"Give us a rough idea, then," added Chu Pin.

"Let me think a minute. Oh, my head!"

The prisoner was cradling his gauze-swathed head in his hands and he made this exclamation almost tearfully.

"You're a prisoner now. Don't you realize?" said Shen Chen-hsin, rapping on the table with his knuckles.

But the prisoner suddenly sat down on the plank bed, his injured head held high and his hands resting on his knees, like a normal person, and his wide-open right eye glinting with a violet light, disdainfully.

When it became apparent to Shen Chen-hsin that the prisoner had made up his mind to resist his efforts to interrogate him, he said in a low voice that was nonetheless firmly insistent:

"You'd better stand up and answer my questions."

The prisoner stood up straight, coughed and said clearly:

"I'm a prisoner, yes! You can finish me off! I don't want to live!"

Nevertheless his hands began to tremble as he said this. From inside and outside of the room eyes wide with indignation became fixed on him and Li Yao's hand went automatically to his machine-pistol. But Shen Chen-hsin said with calm deliberation:

"Go on."

"It's easy enough for you to deal with me, to finish me off. But when it comes to dealing with the 74th Division. . . ."

"Yes? What happens then?" asked Shen Chen-hsin calmly, still controlling his rising anger with an effort.

The prisoner looked at Shen Chen-hsin, then at the others, but did not go on.

The volcano of Shen Chen-hsin's anger suddenly erupted as the effort became too great:

"If you won't say it I'll say it for you! You think that when it comes to dealing with the 74th we're helpless. But you're wrong! We're going to destroy the 74th Division! So long as Chiang Kai-shek insists on fighting we shall always be ready to oblige him! And annihilate his army of three millions! We can let you go back and be taken prisoner a second and a third time!"

Shen Chen-hsin's loud, ringing voice reverberated round the narrow room and the prisoner began trembling in spite of himself. Shen Chen-hsin inhaled from his cigarette and blew the smoke out violently before going on:

"You think you're winning? Don't kid yourselves! We haven't started yet! All the blood you've drunk, we're going to have every drop of it out of you! You'll see soon enough if you don't believe me!"

Shen Chen-hsin slammed his hand down twice on the table and went out fuming with indignation; Chu Pin, the chief-of-staff, followed him out.

The prisoner felt his head was bursting, and Shen Chen-hsin's words were hammering on his skull: "All the blood you've drunk . . . every drop of it out of you!" He was beginning to feel afraid. He went down on his knees, almost putting his arms round Huang Ta, and wailed:

"Don't kill me! I'll tell you, I'll tell you! I'll tell you everything you ask me!"

After Shen Chen-hsin and the others had gone Huang Ta continued the interrogation. The prisoner revealed that he was a battalion commander with the rank of major; his name was really Chang Ya-chih but he had changed it to Chang Hsiao-fu after the divisional commander, Chang Ling-fu, who was a hero of his. In addition he wrote out of his own free will some of what he knew about the 74th Division's make-up, strength, operations and so on.

4

It was almost noon before Shen Chen-hsin, having had his sleep out, finally got up, ate two bowls of sweet-potato gruel and went to the operations room.

There, Huang Ta recounted to him how he had continued with the interrogation of the captured battalion commander during the night, and he helped out his story with gestures and facial expressions of satisfaction. Afterwards he took out of his locked case the data supplied by the prisoner in his own handwriting and gave it to Shen Chen-hsin.

It was a small, thick wad consisting of nine sheets altogether, yet the total number of words was less than a thousand, scrawled untidily in irregular lines. Shen Chen-hsin leafed through it and threw it down on the table.

"Have you read it?" he asked.

"He was writing all night and first thing this morning he gave it to the chief-of-staff to read," said Huang Ta, indicating in this way that he had not read it.

"Useless! He hasn't said a thing!"

Huang Ta hurriedly glanced through the sheets and said indignantly:

"He'll have to do it again!"

"No. He's a true son of Chang Ling-fu!"

"He's not his son really. He only changed his name to Chang Hsiao-fu."

"I mean mentally. He's a true son of Chang Ling-fu and Chang Ling-fu's a true son of Chiang Kai-shek."

The sheaf of paper rustled as Huang Ta rolled and unrolled it in his hands.

Yao Yueh-chin, the cipher clerk, bustled in with a signal from Field Army Headquarters and handed it to Shen Chen-hsin. He read it through, thought for a moment, read it through from beginning to end once more, signed his name on it, and handed it back to Yao Yueh-chin.

"Can you run?" he asked her.

Yao Yueh-chin raised a neatly-putteed leg and said with a smile:

"Not half!"

"Just saying so's not enough!" said Hu Ko, a staff officer, teasing her from where he was marking up a map.

"Oh, I suppose I fall behind on the march, too, do I?" was Yao Yueh-chin's barbed reply, and she pouted.

Hu Ko, who had before now fallen behind on the march, rushed at Yao Yueh-chin with the red pencil that he was marking the map with, and Yao Yueh-chin ran off laughing loudly.

Shen Chen-hsin looked at the maps that covered the walls and said to Hu Ko:

"Get rid of some of those maps of the south and put a few more of the north."

With a touch of surprise Hu Ko said:

"You want still more of the north? Are we going farther north still then?"

"Don't you want to?"

"It's all mountains! Look how close all these rings of contour-lines are on the maps!"

Shen Chen-hsin's glance swept across Hu Ko's face with its over-confident expression, and he said:

"You're still a young man, aren't you? Look how energetic Yao is!"

Hu Ko stuck out his tongue, abashed, and hurried off to check over the military maps of the north.

Leaving the operations room, Shen Chen-hsin came to the room of Ting Yuan-shan, the political commissar. Ting Yuan-shan was engaged in conversation with Chen Chien, who had just arrived. Shen Chen-hsin shook hands warmly with Chen Chien and said:

"We've been waiting several days for you!"

"I'm very glad that the command decided that I should come to this army to work," smiled Chen Chien.

As he was saying this deputy regimental commander, Liu Sheng, burst in and said, mopping his perspiring face:

"I did badly in the battle, and now I can't ride a horse! I was nearly thrown!"

"You've come just right: your political commissar's here," Ting Yuan-shan told him, indicating Chen Chien.

Liu Sheng shook hands with Chen Chien and said:

"So you're our new regimental commissar! Glad to see you!"

"Though we'll have to rely on you for the actual fighting!"

Chen Chien pulled Liu Sheng down enthusiastically to sit beside him on a bench.

"In that case they'd better send a new regimental commander down as well!" said Liu Sheng, looking at Shen Chen-hsin.

"And who better than you?" said Shen Chen-hsin.

Liu Sheng stood up and said quickly, his voice rough with surprise:

"How could I do a job like that? What's the good of getting a bullock to ride instead of a horse?"

"A bullock? It's always the better beast for ploughing!" smiled Ting Yuan-shan.

"Those who have been carrying eighty pounds will now have to carry a hundred pounds," said Shen Chen-hsin solemnly, looking at Liu Sheng and Chen Chien. "And later on they'll have

to carry a hundred and twenty! The more serious and tense the situation becomes, the greater courage we shall need to bear our burdens. Come now! You're not going to tell me that you had all the guts knocked out of you in this one single battle at Lienshui? Admittedly Su Kuo-ying's death was a great loss. Yet so long as you two here stick together and work together, our leading regiment will remain as tough as ever it was. To put it plainly, you must give the men of your regiment good leadership and fight hard."

As if taking an oath Liu Sheng said:

"I accept the decision of the leadership! I'll carry a hundred pounds, and I'll carry a hundred and twenty, too!"

"Under the leadership of the higher command we shall unite the commanders and fighters of the whole regiment in the determination to fulfil our tasks!" said Chen Chien briskly, standing up.

After lunch Liu Sheng came in to Shen Chen-hsin with a serious face:

"Chen Chien's been to a university, hasn't he?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?" countered Shen Chen-hsin, looking steadily at him.

"An intellectual! They're smart enough in their talk, but it's a different story when they have to do something!"

"You think all intellectual cadres are all say and no do?" asked Shen Chen-hsin.

"Anyway, we Korlovs* can't get on with them!"

"Are you a Korlov, then? Did you take part in the Revolution in 1905? How many decorations and awards have you won? Have you got so many decorations and awards pinned on you that they reach down to your middle?"

This string of questions from the army commander made Liu Sheng blink and feel at a loss what to answer. He turned to go, but Shen Chen-hsin detained him and said coldly:

"You're not to go back today."

*Korlov is one of the principal characters in the play *The Frontier* by the Soviet playwright Korneichuk. Korlov, a decorated officer and a Communist, is dismissed at the front for pride and conceit, and for the conservatism of his military ideology. The play was performed many times in the armed forces.

"I've got a cadres' meeting tomorrow morning," said Liu Sheng, looking blankly at him.

"I want to have a talk with you."

"Shall I be going back tomorrow morning, then?"

"We can decide on that tomorrow."

Liu Sheng became uneasy and felt that the army commander was in a bad mood. He stood there ill at ease, blowing out smoke and staring out of the door at the grey patches of cloud in the sky. Shen Chen-hsin was also uneasy in his mind, but he was trying his hardest to control his uneasiness; he began pacing up and down the room once again. For several minutes neither of them said a word. Li Yao came in and looked at them in alarm; he was going to speak but did not dare; he went out again.

"I'll have to correct my ideological error, then," Liu Sheng mumbled.

"Ideological error? You? But you're a person who never makes mistakes!"

"I never said that."

Shen Chen-hsin began to feel hot from his annoyance and uneasiness and from his continual pacing up and down the room; he took off his lined woollen overcoat and hurled it on to the bed. He was chain-smoking. He began rummaging nervously in his case in search of some important article, then tipped out the contents all over the table: documents, maps, scissors and a number of other things. Finally he extracted a thin book, but at once threw it down on the jumbled heap. His state of mind at this moment was as confused as the objects on the table. A host of subjects and problems swirled and tumbled in his brain.

There was an awkward silence for a few minutes. When Liu Sheng saw that Shen Chen-hsin had become calmer he said in a pleading voice, like an unruly child who has caused a mishap and now stands before his mother waiting willingly to be rebuked:

"Aren't you going to reprimand me, then?"

Shen Chen-hsin scratched his greying head and sat down; he uttered a humourless laugh but said nothing. He put the jumble of things in order again and replaced them in the case.

"I've weighed all the pros and cons and I know it would be very difficult for me to command a regiment," faltered Liu Sheng.

"Any difficulty that exists is inside you," said Shen Chen-hsin sternly.

"I'm not up to it, I haven't the strength to carry such a heavy burden."

"That's not true!"

Liu Sheng looked at the expression of annoyance on Shen Chen-hsin's face and dropped his eyes.

"Your only trouble is your pride! The defect is in you yourself. Every battle we fight I think we're sure to win, but it wasn't always so. The second battle at Lienshui was vital, because if we didn't hold the enemy in check they were going to make a deep break-through and put us in a nasty fix. So far as this army of ours is concerned it really was a battle lost, a very poor showing. The reasons for our defeat are many, and one of the most important of these many reasons is pride and self-satisfaction on the part of our cadres, a failing which I share and which you also share. I had a talk yesterday with four fighters from your regiment and they told me something about the battle. They're brave men, not afraid to die, but we with our pride and our underestimation of the enemy, and our inability to see our own weaknesses, are throwing their lives away! You say that intellectual cadres have certain shortcomings and aren't easy to get on with, but then you're from the country, the same as me; just think about it for a moment: haven't we got our shortcomings as well? Don't other people perhaps find us difficult to get on with? What was the point of asking the Field Army Command to send down a cadre to be your political commissar? And why have they chosen a cadre who has been to university like Chen Chien to come and be your commissar? Be more humble, comrade! You must look harder for your own shortcomings and for other people's good points; don't think that everything about yourself is all right and that everything about other people is all wrong. I've crossed a few more bridges and travelled a few more roads than you have, and I've run up against many more obstacles and suffered a lot more than you! Liu, old friend, we can't go on making things unnecessarily difficult for ourselves. It's like crossing bridges: those who are proud and conceited are always forcing themselves on to single-plank bridges. You know the proverb: 'A two-plank bridge is easy to cross, but a single-plank bridge is

difficult.' Crossing a single-plank bridge is dangerous, because if you don't watch your step you'll fall into the water and drown! . . ."

Shen Chen-hsin's voice was slow and earnest as he spoke these words from the bottom of his heart. Liu Sheng could find no trace in his memory of the army commander ever having said anything like this before. This year he was a man of forty, and in all the fifteen years he had spent in the ranks of the revolution he had never before had anyone speak to him in this way. His heart throbbed and he drew a long breath.

"If you think what I've said is wrong, you can go on crossing your single-plank bridges!"

"It's right what you say," said Liu Sheng in a heavy voice. "My actions will show you I've taken it to heart."

By now Shen Chen-hsin was quite calm again. He noticed a hole the size of a copper burned through the tail of Liu Sheng's jacket. His broad leather waist-belt had been replaced by the narrow leather belt worn by ordinary privates, and from this the small leather loop was missing. His moustache had grown very long, his eyes were red, and there was a jaded look about him. The movements of his left arm seemed rather stiff, and so he asked: "What's the matter with your arm?"

"Nothing serious," said Liu Sheng, swinging his left arm.

"A fall?"

"Shell splinter took off a patch of skin."

"There's a hole burned in your jacket. Haven't you another one to change into?"

"All destroyed by an incendiary."

"Here, put on this overcoat of mine," said Shen Chen-hsin, picking up the lined woollen overcoat.

Liu Sheng would not accept it, but put it back on the bed where Shen Chen-hsin had taken it from.

"All right, then. After supper you can go back with Chen Chien, but first pay a visit to Divisional H.Q."

When Liu Sheng left the army commander's room he went to see the army commissar to arrange for his regimental commissar to go back with him. As he reached Ting Yuan-shan's door he caught a few words in Ting Yuan-shan's voice from inside: "Whiskers Liu isn't a case of 'all courage and no resource' but of

'more courage than resource.' You must give him every assistance, because he's got plenty of good points. . . ." Liu Sheng stopped at once, turned, and walked rapidly away to the pond in front of the village, where he sat down under a large tree and watched the ducks in the water, diving and coming up, then diving again. He smoked a cigarette as he went over in his mind what Shen Chen-hsin had said to him.

When, at dusk, Liu Sheng and Chen Chien were leading their horses out of the village, Li Yao came racing up from behind and draped Shen Chen-hsin's lined woollen overcoat round Liu Sheng's shoulders. Liu Sheng turned his head and looked back at the house where the army commander was quartered, then put on the coat and sprang on to his horse.

Shoulder to shoulder and stirrup to stirrup for the first time, the new regimental commander and the new regimental commissar went slowly forward.

5

Patchy white clouds moved silently across the sky and behind the white clouds a silver sun was lurking; the bare tree-tops swayed in the chill southing wind; of birds there remained scarcely a trace: only a flock of wild geese in strict formation flying southwards—in exactly the opposite direction to the human formations advancing on the ground below them.

In the course of three days the soldiers had trodden over a hundred *li* of the yellow loess roads of the North Kiangsu plain. The purplish browns and dark greys of the distant mountains gradually impressed themselves on the eyes of the marching men. More mountains and yet more, crowding in higher and higher in an unbroken line till they merged with the clouds to form a single mass which almost filled the grey expanse of the sky.

"Oh, mother! It's nothing but mountains!" was the involuntary exclamation that broke from the lips of some of them, as if they could already feel the crushing weight of the mountains on their bodies. To make the most of the short stretch of flat loess road that still remained, Hung Tung-tsai, the leader of 5 Section, took off his blue cloth shoes and stuck them in behind his pack and

walked barefoot. As if this was something well worth copying, many of the men at once followed his example, among them Chou Feng-shan, who had originally been an ammunition-man but was now a machine-gunner, the recruits Wang Mao-sheng and An Chao-feng and several others, and then it spread to most of the men in the company. Some did it to save their shoes, keeping them to wear over the mountain roads; others did it because they were deeply attached to the countryside they knew and hated leaving the plains. One of the recruits, Chang Teh-lai, said: "We'll let the soles of our feet kiss the loess a few more times! Soon we shan't have a chance to walk on it any longer."

On the afternoon of the fourth day of the long march, when the sun was standing in the southwest corner of the sky and the troops were pressing onwards, Chin Li-chung, deputy-leader of 4 Section, suddenly shouted:

"See it? Great black snake asleep in front there!"

Some put their heads on one side, some craned their necks, all eyes staring to the front.

"Where? I can't see it!" shouted back Chin Shou-pen, the leader of 6 Section.

Shouts now came from a number of the men:

"I can see it!"

"Lying across from east to west there."

"Like a big black dragon."

"A railway! Haven't you ever seen one before? It doesn't take much to amaze you when you've never seen anything of the world, I suppose."

On the south side of the embankment of the Lunghai Railway the new platoon commander Lin Ping, noticing that there were half a dozen stragglers who had fallen behind more than two hundred metres, ordered the whole platoon to rest here.

The soldiers quickly took off their packs and plumped them down on the ground. Many of them sat with their backs to the north looking southwards as if at the face of a dear one whom they would be leaving far behind at this point.

"Have a good hard stare at the south, you southerners!" said the deputy platoon commander, Ting Jen-yu, standing on the railway track. "But don't start running that way!"

"Are we in Shantung when we get over the railway?"

"There's a bit more of Kiangsu to go yet."

"Do they have rice in Shantung?"

"No, but they have its little brother -- millet!"

As the soldiers asked each other these questions some looked to the south, then to the north, comparing the sky, the trees, the houses and the soil on either side of the railway. Taking advantage of a general rush for cover when an enemy plane flew over, Chou Feng-shan slipped away to a thatched hut fifty metres away and drank a large cup of water.

"Where have you been?" Section-leader Chin Shou-pen asked him when he came back.

"To get a drink. Once we get across the railway we shan't have another chance of drinking the sort of water we get here," replied Chou Feng-shan.

When they heard this, a number of the soldiers ran off towards the hut, but Chin Shou-pen roared at them:

"Come back here!"

This shout brought the men from his own section and also those from other sections to a halt, and they stood there uncertainly.

"If you like the water here all that much you'd better take a couple of bucketfuls with you on a shoulder-pole!" Chin Shou-pen went on, still bellowing at them, his eyes glaring. "What do you think this railway is: the boundary between this world and the next? Think we're going to be in Hell, once we get across it? And that even the water over there's too foul to drink?"

Lin Ping, the commander of 2 Platoon, got up from where he was sitting on the railway track and went over to the soldiers. When he saw that they were mostly recruits he said to them amiably:

"Don't you remember what the political instructor said just before we set out? Those who take part in the revolution haven't just got one home: everywhere is their home, everywhere they have brothers and sisters. I'm a southerner and I've been to Shantung, Honan, Hopei. You think Shantung's no good? When you get there you'll realize there's nothing wrong with it. The springs in Shantung are as clear as crystal! You can see your face in them as clear as in a mirror. If you're really thirsty go and have a drink, but don't drink unboiled water!"

Only one recruit, Sun Fu-san, said he was really thirsty and ran to the hut; the rest of them all went back to where the others were resting.

When they crossed the railway many of the men silently scooped up a handful of soil and carried it across; only when they had gone some distance did they finally scatter it away.

Before dark the troops reached the village of Kaochuang where they were to stop the night. Contrary to their expectations things were much the same here as in the south. A large earthenware jar of water had been placed at the entrance to the village for them, and drums were thudding and gongs clashing to welcome the troops from south of the railway. Just as the troops had sat down before going into their quarters, out on to the open space where they were resting came formations of women and children from the Women's Association and the Children's League, beating gongs and drums and dancing the *yangko** as they came. The women spread out into a large circle, singing and dancing, the gaily-coloured silk streamers at their waists fluttering this way and that like butterflies in springtime. Next the men were entertained with performances on the *sona*** and the *panbu**** and with songs.

"These Shantung girls don't sing at all badly!" said Hung Tung-sai, the leader of 5 Section, in Chin Shou-pen's ear.

An Chao-feng, who was fond of playing the *erbbu***** listened to the clear notes of the *panbu* solo with undivided attention.

It was dark by the time the soldiers had contentedly seen the programme through to the end.

When Chin Shou-pen's section went into their quarters they found heaps of straw laid out ready for them to sleep on and the floor swept spotlessly clean. Hardly had they opened their packs and spread out their blankets than the old woman the house belonged to had tea and washing-water all heated up ready for

* Literally "rice-transplanting song," a popular folk dance in China.

** *Sona* — a straight wind-instrument with a trumpet-like mouth.

*** *Panbu* — string instrument similar to the *erbbu* but made of wood instead of bamboo.

**** *Erbbu* — a kind of violin with a small cylindrical body, bowed between the two strings.

them. A large black bowl on the table was filled with roasted peanuts.

"Do you still say Shantung's no good?" said Chin Shou-pen to his section. "Where else would you find people like these?"

"Time enough yet," muttered Chou Feng-shan. "We've only just touched the edge of Shantung so far."

"I'd never have thought it! The way he played that *panbu*!" said An Chao-feng with a thumbs-up gesture of approbation.

"Our people in Haimen gave the troops loquats as well!" said Wang Mao-sheng, boasting of his home town in Kiangsu as he shelled peanuts.

"Your narrow ideas of 'home' ought to be looked into!" said the already annoyed Chin Shou-pen, glaring at Wang Mao-sheng.

Feeling he had been dealt an unexpected blow, Wang Mao-sheng at once turned his face away and went and lay down on his bed. Of the other men in the room some bent their heads and said not a word, while others screwed up their eyes, stuck out their tongues and quietly slipped outside.

Chin Shou-pen, his brows knit angrily, went to see Lin Ping, the commander of 2 Platoon. Surprised, Lin Ping asked:

"Something wrong in the section?"

"I give up! It's more than I can stand."

"If everybody gave up, who'd do all the work?"

"I'd prefer to be a private!"

Lin Ping twisted Chin Shou-pen's averted face round straight and said with a smile:

"Didn't you yourself tell me that the army commander and the army commissar had spoken to you? Is that what they told you to be like?"

The platoon commander's question reduced Chin Shou-pen to a helpless silence. He had no alternative but to go back to his section. The section were busy eating soya-bean and sorghum waffles. Noticing that he was still in a bad humour, Chou Feng-shan put in front of him the helping of waffles and pickled vegetables that had been left for him, while An Chao-feng filled a bowl with millet gruel for him.

But Wang Mao-sheng still lay on his bed and was not eating.

"I was in the wrong, then, all right?" said Chin Shou-pen to Wang Mao-sheng, suppressing his feeling of annoyance. "Let's

agree that your people in Haimen are better and that your loquats are sweeter. All right?"

An Chao-feng drew Wang Mao-sheng over to the table and he now sat there slowly chewing at his waffles.

It was the first time that any of the section had eaten waffles and millet gruel. The millet gruel was soon all gone but many of the waffles were left, especially those made of the red sorghum flour. Chin Shou-pen, too, felt that the sorghum waffles were in fact rather difficult to get down, yet he forced himself to finish his share.

"If you eat so little that you're too hungry to march, don't blame me!" he said, looking at everybody.

An Chao-feng and Chou Feng-shan each picked up another one, broke it into pieces and forced themselves to eat. The others did not eat any more.

Chin Shou-pen went to Chang Hua-feng's section the next day. The latter was sprawled over a small table writing a letter.

"Who are you writing to?" he asked.

"I was just coming round to see you: I'm writing to Yang Chun," Chang Hua-feng told him, looking up.

"Good! Put my name too. Wish he'd hurry up and come back." He sat down at the table.

Chang Hua-feng handed him the nearly-finished letter to read.

". . . Hope you will soon recover from your wound and join us again to lead us into battle and destroy the enemy!"

When Chin Shou-pen got to this point he paused and said:

"We'd better add a few lines telling him that there's been a new batch of troops come to the unit, homesick and afraid of the mountains."

"No, we shouldn't do that," said Chang Hua-feng, shaking his head.

"Why not? If he knows about it he'll come hurrying back. Which'll be a very good thing."

"It'd make him worry there in hospital."

"Chang Hua-feng! This batch of recruits are really difficult to handle. I can't sleep nights for them. They're not well-behaved like the recruits in your section. Yours don't look so homesick."

"What do you mean, can't sleep! You mean you are afraid they might want to leave the army and go home!"

"Yes, I am."

Chang Hua-feng took hold of Chin Shou-pen's wrist, shook it a couple of times and said in a low earnest voice:

"You should trust them, Shou-pen! They've joined up to fight for the revolution. Now listen, when I first joined up I was torn off a strip by the section-leader—the deputy commander of 3 Platoon as he is now. I was very upset by it at the time: I'd only joined the revolution because I was fed up with being kicked around and sworn at by the landlord, so when I came here and got sworn at just the same I suddenly felt different about things and thought of deserting. All that kept me from running away was that later on Yang Chun, who was then the deputy section-leader, was good to me and helped me and talked things over with me as man to man. If it hadn't been for Yang Chun I might not be sitting here with you now. Hasn't Yang Chun ever told you about it?"

"No," said Chin Shou-pen, shaking his head.

These few words of Chang Hua-feng's moved Chin Shou-pen deeply. He thought of the deep, invisible gulf that seemed to separate him from the recruits in his section—and even from the old soldiers. He had never had a heart-to-heart talk with them, and on the march he had often flared up and lost his temper with them. For many days now the recruit Wang Mao-sheng had looked thoroughly downcast and there had been an expression of misery on his long square face with its high forehead. Another effect of what Chang Hua-feng had said was to make him miss Yang Chun even more keenly. Yes, Yang Chun was like a brand-new piece of scarlet silk: not a flaw or spot on him. His thoughts went back: "Yang Chun used to put his heart into caring for me and looking after me. Once I broke a villager's bowl he paid for it out of his own pocket. When I put my head out of a trench in the firing-line once he told me to duck straight away and a second later an enemy bullet just missed the top of my head. If it wasn't for him I certainly wouldn't be sitting here with Chang Hua-feng! And Chang Hua-feng's one of the best himself. When we were pulling out from the battle at Lienshui he carried my pack and rifle for me all the way and now he's even told me

about having had the idea of deserting once! . . . Why can't I treat my recruits the way he treated me?" The more he thought about it the more uncomfortable he felt about it all.

"Tell him this!" he said decisively after a while. "Tell him we're determined to get our sections working as a team and teach them how to fight and destroy the enemy! Destroy the 74th Division! Avenge our comrades who've shed their blood and given their lives!"

"Good idea. I'll add that as well," said Chang Hua-feng, patting him on the shoulder.

Chang Hua-feng put the letter on his knee and added what Chin Shou-pen had suggested. Then each of them signed his name. Before they put the letter in an envelope they read the whole letter through aloud together from beginning to end.

The midday winter sun stood high on the mountain-tops.

Milky white, a sea of clouds swirled up wave upon wave through the mountain gorges.

When Chang Hua-feng had gone Chin Shou-pen remained sitting back alone in the winter sun enjoying its gentle warmth and watching the transfigurations of the sea of clouds. To judge from his expression much of the weight had now been lifted from his mind.

Late that night Chin Shou-pen refused to let Yu Chung-ho replace him when he and Wang Mao-sheng went up on the hill together on sentry duty.

The mountains looked a purplish black in the cold darkness. There was a sticky dampness in the air as if it were going to snow: the whole sky merged with the purple-black mountains and it was only when one had stood for a long time in the darkness and by closing one's eyelids together until only a narrow slit was left that one could with difficulty distinguish the faint difference between mountains and sky.

Their overcoats round their shoulders, they stood on Goose Wing Peak, which was next to Hutou Ko; in their hands were their rifles with bayonets fixed and in the night wind the bayonets made a shrill sound like the twanging of a bow-string.

"Wang Mao-sheng, have you ever been up mountains as big as these before?" asked Chin Shou-pen staring ahead of him.

"No, I haven't," replied Wang Mao-sheng. He, like Chin Shou-pen, was staring at the pass between the mountains ahead of him.

"You're a pretty good shot with a rifle, you know! How many of the enemy did you kill when you were in the guerrillas?"

"I got a Jap section-leader by the name of Sato, a couple of Jap soldiers and a few 'Black Crows'* and 'Yellow-ankled Wolves.'"

For some time now Chin Shou-pen had been meaning to have a heart-to-heart chat with Wang Mao-sheng. Now that the two of them were standing here side by side on this hill-top tonight, he thought that this would be the best time and place to have a conversation with Wang Mao-sheng, and so he went on to ask him:

"What family have you got at home?"

Wang Mao-sheng started slightly but made no reply.

"I've got three at home: my old mother, my wife and a little girl of three," said Chin Shou-pen, hoping this would dispel Wang Mao-sheng's doubt of talking about family affairs.

Wang Mao-sheng was rather surprised that his section-leader should suddenly start talking about his mother and his wife and his child, and it made a deep impression on him, because the section-leader had always been against their thinking too much about home.

Chin Shou-pen turned his head and looked at Wang Mao-sheng, who was standing a metre away; Wang Mao-sheng's eyes were still staring fixedly to his front. Thinking that Wang Mao-sheng had not heard him, he disregarded the pain in his nose and repeated what he had said once more in a loud voice.

"I've only got a wife; there's no one else besides us," said Wang Mao-sheng in a low voice, letting his words be carried on a gust of wind that happened to blow past them just then.

"How does she manage? Isn't it difficult for her?"

* "Black Crows" — contemptuous name given by the masses of Haimen and Chitung (on the north side of the mouth of the Yangtse) to the black-uniformed quisling police under the Japanese occupation. "Yellow-ankled Wolves" — a similar name applied to the officers and men of the yellow-uniformed quisling army.

"She's gone back to live with her mother; we'd only been married a month when we had to part."

"Well, to think of a young fellow like that leaving a wife he'd just married to come and join the army!" was Chin Shou-pen's unspoken thought; he was deeply impressed.

"You should write to her," he said aloud. "But don't you reveal the location or number of the unit in your letter, and you mustn't talk about training or about fighting."

Despite the cold wind, Wang Mao-sheng felt a warm glow in his heart. He turned his head and said to Chin Shou-pen gratefully:

"I shouldn't have been angry with you."

"No, the fault is all on my side," said Chin Shou-pen.

To tell the truth, the thought of writing to the wife he had had to leave so soon had begun stirring in Wang Mao-sheng's mind.

Chin Shou-pen was experiencing a light-heartedness and happiness that were no less strong than those of Wang Mao-sheng. It was as if he had taken off a heavy pack at the end of a long march. The long-standing difference between him and Wang Mao-sheng had been patched up by this short conversation.

The rumbling of wheels from the pass interrupted Wang Mao-sheng's thoughts.

"Movement on the road," said Wang Mao-sheng.

Shoulder to shoulder the two men looked towards the main road going through the pass. On the road there was a procession of carts, men with loads on poles and carrying things on their shoulders, moving from south to north. When they looked more closely they could see a similar procession on the hillside in the distance and along the procession there were small dancing points of red lights — glowing cigarettes.

As the rumbling of the wooden wheels of one cart faded into the distance the sound of another one immediately approached. The slow procession snaked along the dark mountain road as if it would never come to an end.

"Support troops moving rations and ammunition," said Chin Shou-pen without hesitation.

It looked as if it was definitely going to snow: the cold wind had died down and the sky was covered with a thick grey.

"Did you hear that?" said Chin Shou-pen, pricking up his ears and listening carefully towards the south.

"That isn't the sound of carts, is it?"

Chin Shou-pen waved his hand at Wang Mao-sheng and continued listening attentively.

A muffled, long drawn out, reverberating boom was heard.

"Guns!" said Wang Mao-sheng with conviction.

"Listen! There are some to the north as well!"

The reverberating boom from the north was closer than the one from the south.

Wang Mao-sheng now turned his head to listen towards the north, the same as Chin Shou-pen was doing.

"That was a gun too!" said Chin Shou-pen with even greater conviction. "Just like the gunfire in the battle at Lienshui!"

Huddled closely together, Chin Shou-pen and Wang Mao-sheng stood there leaning against a huge rock on the towering Goose Wing Peak.

6

A thick new mantle of snow had been thrown over the mountains; the glittering gullies were like interlaced silver ribbons winding across the slopes and linking hill and hill closely together. It was piercingly cold now that the goose-feather snow-flakes that had whirled for half a night and a day had been cut short by the biting northwest wind.

The Army Headquarters, which four days ago had ordered the present battle preparations and was awaiting the order to move, had late last night sent out an emergency signal ordering all cadres at regimental level and above to go to Army Headquarters in the village of Wuchuang to attend a conference at nine o'clock this morning, leaving only one cadre behind in each unit to look after things.

From the surrounding villages the officers set off on horseback across the white-carpeted hills, galloping towards Army Headquarters with their minds tensed for battle.

The place fixed for the conference was a temple in a shallow depression among the hills near the village of Wuchuang.

A dozen or so braziers of charcoal were burning brightly in the conference room with blue smoke rising from them. Nevertheless the air in the temple was still uncomfortably cold. The officers did not take off their quilted or fur greatcoats, but huddled tightly around the braziers.

The wall was covered in maps and in a prominent position in the centre of the wall was a map giving the present disposition of their own and the enemy's forces and showing the battle situation. The map was marked with red and blue arrow criss-crossing each other closely in all directions. One close look was enough to give one the feeling that the clouds of war were gathering thick and fast, and that a hurricane of fighting was about to be unleashed.

Army Commander Shen Chen-hsin was sitting by one of the braziers talking and joking informally with the officers, and when he saw that it was time to begin, he went over to the map in the centre of the wall and asked the assembled officers as he pointed to it:

"Have you all had a look at this map?"

"Yes!" chorused some of them in reply.

The officers stopped talking and laughing together, put down the twigs with which they had been poking at the glowing charcoal, and looked attentively at Shen Chen-hsin and the map on the wall beside him.

"The situation is extremely serious. The enemy are going to try to annihilate us. They are intent on a final show-down with the three hundred thousand men of the Liberation Army on the battle-ground of East China. They intend to swallow us up at one gulp in these mountains."

He stared fixedly before him as he gave this warning. There was not a sound to be heard in the room now and the atmosphere had suddenly become tense. The blue smoke from the braziers now hung motionless in the air, making the atmosphere in the room even more oppressive.

"The fighting is developing on an ever-increasing scale. Our present information about the enemy is as follows: the enemy on the southern front, based on the city of Hsuchow, are advancing in three parallel columns along the rivers Yi and Shu in the direction of Linyi and constituting a direct threat to us; their strength is eight reorganized divisions, which means twenty-four brigades

and two hundred thousand men. I suppose you've already heard the sound of their guns. At the moment the enemy are less than one hundred *li* away from us. From the north we're threatened by a force of more than three armies and consisting of fifty or sixty thousand men moving in conjunction with the enemy to the south, and coming from the cities of Tsinan, Mingshui, Tzuchuan and Poshan. So at the moment we are the object of a pincer movement from north and south together. Our mortal enemy Chiang Kai-shek has made his greatest—and his last—decision: he is trying to force us into a final, decisive battle in the Yi-Meng Mountains area, so that he can annihilate our East China Field Army. . . ."

Shen Chen-hsin paused a moment and two of the officers took this opportunity to put their heads together and begin whispering.

One look from Shen Chen-hsin's stern black eyes made them stop their whispering at once and straighten up again and wait with serious expressions for Shen Chen-hsin to go on speaking.

"The situation in this war is this: either the enemy destroys us or he is destroyed by us!" said Shen Chen-hsin picking up the flat enamelled teacup that he always carried around with him and sipping at the strong steaming tea; afterwards he put the cover back on the teacup. His expression was calmer now than when he had first begun talking.

Next he went on to announce:

"The Field Army Command has decided that this corps of ours should move the day after tomorrow in conjunction with neighbouring units and take part in the coming battle. We must complete all our preparations within the next two days. It was originally planned that we should go south and join battle once more with Chang Ling-fu's 74th Division; now it's been decided that we are to go north and leave Chang Ling-fu behind—you get more out of a pig if you fatten it up before you kill it. It doesn't make any difference whether we go north or south: in either case we shall destroy the enemy and smash his offensive!"

After Shen Chen-hsin had finished speaking he remained standing for several seconds before he sat down again.

A buzz of excited conversation began among the officers.

"So they're coming to fight us for the hill-tops after all!"

"Three hundred thousand closing in from both sides! That's going to be a fight well worth seeing!"

"I'd rather be going south to have another tussle with Chang Ling-fu!"

"No fun in eating 'overripe grapes'!* I agree that it would be better to have another crack at a 'hard walnut'!"

"You'll find that Wang Yao-wu and Li Hsien-chou are not so easy to deal with, either!"

"I never expected we'd be fighting again so soon!"

"Wonder how it's going up in the northwest? I hear Hu Tsung-nan is intensifying his attack on Yen-an."

The conversation suddenly stopped as the mournful drone of a large formation of enemy planes was heard; then came the sound of bombs exploding and of machine-guns raking the ground at a not very great distance.

It seemed as if the fighting had already begun.

Unperturbed, and with a smile on his lips, Ting Yuan-shan stood up and gestured to the officers to sit down quietly. At the sound of his clear crisp voice the hubbub of discussion stopped. He began to speak in a calm, unhurried voice:

"The Chiang Kai-shek reactionaries originally set themselves a target of three months to settle things once and for all, by which they mean to destroy our forces completely. That was on the thirteenth of July and now it's the end of December! . . . It's already five and a half months, and still they haven't done it! Afterwards they changed it to seven months. So they've still got a month and a half to go, comrades. But Chiang Kai-shek's soldiers are not three-headed monsters with six arms! Nor are they 'steel men on iron horses'! Even if he had the Monkey King's** magic staff, he still couldn't finish the job off in forty-five days! That is a prediction that cannot be questioned. It now appears that they've changed their dead-line once more — this time to one year. Changing his dead-lines, comrades, is becoming an old tradition with Chiang Kai-shek."

"He gave himself three months when he first started fighting the Red Army!" Divisional Commander Tsao Kuo-chu put in.

*The troops called the stronger units of Chiang Kai-shek's bandit army "hard walnuts" and the weaker units "overripe grapes."

**Legendary hero in the classical novel *Pilgrimage to the West*.

All the officers roared with laughter at this, including Shen Chen-hsin himself.

"The flames of war have begun to blaze up in four theatres: the northwest, the northeast, the Hopei-Shantung-Honan Area, and in East China. I really do believe that this revolutionary civil war is going to finally settle things. But of course it is we who are going to do the settling, not the reactionary Chiang Kai-shek. We must destroy the counter-revolutionary forces completely! And now the enemy's launching an all-out offensive. Comrades, on your behalf, and also on behalf of the army commander and myself, I extend a hearty welcome to this all-out offensive by the enemy!"

As he said this Ting Yuan-shan put his hands together as if to clap his welcome.

"Will you be glad to see them?" Shen Chen-hsin asked the assembly.

The officers' laughter and the determined look in their eyes was their affirmative answer to Shen Chen-hsin's question.

". . . We must rid our minds thoroughly of any delusions we may have about peace. Peace can only be won at the cost of war. We must not follow the easy smooth road: we must climb the hills, we must climb the mountains, right up to the highest peaks! The situation is grave and the fighting will be difficult and long drawn out. But with the leadership of the Central Committee of the Party and of Chairman Mao, there can be no doubt of our eventual victory! You must ensure the complete fulfilment of the army's tasks, whether in fighting, in political work, or in keeping up supplies!"

After Ting Yuan-shan had finished speaking the officers were given ten minutes' break. There was a noisy stamping of feet numbed by the cold as they made a rush to gather around the braziers. They resumed their informal conversation:

"That means we won't be able to have a go at Chang Ling-fu now!"

"I shall be glad to see him if he does come! He may be armed to the teeth, but I'd like to see how well he can bite the dust with them!"

"I still think we ought to have a bite at the tough ones; I've no stomach for 'overripe grapes.'"

"A man like Chiang Kai-shek, a good thrashing would make him behave himself!"

"I agree! If we're going to hit him we should hit at the main force of his army: if we can't hit at Chang Ling-fu we should hit at Hu Lien! The 74th Division or the 11th Division, we should get one or the other of them!"

"We can leave the 11th Division and the New Fifth Army to Liu and Teng* to deal with!"

The atmosphere of the conference room and the state of mind of the people in it rose and fell continually, wave upon wave, just like the waves of the sea. Just as the talk and laughter was at its most animated, it was suddenly quiet again. All eyes were on a young woman who had that moment come into the room.

It was the cipher clerk, Yao Yueh-chin.

There were very few women comrades left at the front now, even women members of the cultural and art ensembles. Almost all the officers' wives had been posted to jobs in the rear. It was an unexpected pleasure for the officers to see a woman in such weather as this when all around them was wind and snow and cold, the more so since Yao Yueh-chin was a very attractive girl with dark flashing eyes dancing in her small round face with its smooth fair complexion. Far from detracting from her beauty, the faint flush which the frost had brought to her cheeks made her look more beautiful still. The moment she stepped into the room she suddenly felt completely overawed. Her head bent, she slipped through the crowd with swift graceful steps until she came to Shen Chen-hsin. From the leather case hanging from her left shoulder she took out a signal and handed it to him. Her shyness only served to fix the officers' eyes more firmly and unblinkingly on her. She had no hat on, and the cold wind had ruffled her hair; in it were a few snow-flakes that had fallen from the trees and round her neck was wound a glossy dark green scarf. The fact that it was winter made the green colour of it seem even

* Liu and Teng refers to Liu Po-cheng, the commander-in-chief, and Teng Hsiao-ping, the political commissar of the Hopei-Shantung-Honan Field Army. The 11th Division and the New Fifth Army were the two strongest units of Chiang Kai-shek's bandit army, two of the "Five Mainstay Forces."

fresher and more attractive. It drew many eyes and held them unwaveringly as if it were exerting a powerful spell on them.

After a moment these officers switched their eyes and attention to the expressions on the faces of Shen Chen-hsin, Ting Yuan-shan and Hsu Kun, and to the signal that they were engrossed in. Although the officers had no way of telling what was in the signal and although they were fully aware that Shen Chen-hsin would probably tell them what was in it, they still watched the changes in Shen Chen-hsin's expression closely, trying to guess what news the signal would hold for them. Some of them were even making an effort to find some clue to the contents of the signal from the expression on the face of Yao Yueh-chin, who had been the first to see it.

Shen Chen-hsin's eyebrows twitched as he signed his name on the signal while Ting Yuan-shan pointed to something in it with a faint smile on his lips. These signs, however, as well as the subdued conversation that ensued between the army commander and commissar and some of the divisional commanders, produced corresponding changes in the eyes and faces of the officers.

The break dragged on for half an hour and during this half hour the tension in the room was far greater than it had been when the officers had been listening to Shen Chen-hsin's talk at the beginning of the conference.

"We may be turning round and going south again, where there's something for us to get our teeth into," Liu Sheng said to himself.

"What does it matter which way we go, north or south? So long as we fight!" said Chen Chien, stirring the charcoal in the brazier until it burst into flame.

"I wonder what they've got lined up for us?" said Liu Sheng, taking the twig from Chen Chien's hand and poking at the charcoal with it.

"Later on, if the army commander doesn't give us anything to do, there's always the divisional commander," said Chen Chien.

"It'll be a damned nuisance if we have to stick here until we find ourselves fighting in some little holding operation!"

"That's not impossible, either. It all depends what the Field Army has got lined up for us."

"Quiet, please! Break over!" shouted someone in a loud voice.

As he stood there clutching the signal in his hand, his expression serious and commanding, Shen Chen-hsin looked like a fighter in the firing-line holding a grenade that he was about to hurl at the enemy. He took off his fur overcoat, cleared his throat and ran his eyes over the faces of the men before him, as was his custom.

The officers fell silent, mentally and physically alert to receive their battle orders and watching Shen Chen-hsin's lips with undivided attention.

Yao Yueh-chin, who was waiting to take the signal back with her, now received her instructions from the chief-of-staff who said that the signal should be left here for the time being. She now warmed her frozen hands over a brazier for a moment then went along the wall behind the crowd to the door; she paused in the doorway and stared absently at Shen Chen-hsin's serious face, then turned and went out.

"This is a signal of the utmost urgency from Field Army Headquarters. Our task has not changed but our movements have. This is because the situation is not what it was twenty-four hours ago. That is to say, the enemy on the northern front moving from Tsinan, Mingshui, Tzuchuan and Poshan have set out two days earlier than originally planned and have increased their speed so that they have now reached a line through Hsintai, Laiwu and Tuszukou."

Shen Chen-hsin put the second page of the signal on top and went on:

"Let me read you part of the signal. I want you to pay particular attention to what it says!"

He paused a moment and looked round to make sure that the officers were paying particular attention, then began to read in the loud, ringing voice that was so characteristic of him:

"Your orders are that on receipt of this signal you will move immediately without the least delay and proceed by forced marches all round the clock to the vicinity of Tuszukou to the north of Laiwu, where you will link up actively with neighbouring units and speedily hurl yourselves into battle, conquering all difficulties, to annihilate the enemy completely once and for all!"

He enunciated every syllable clearly and forcibly. His voice was charged with an enthusiasm that gripped the minds of his hearers.

When he had finished reading there was a pause of perhaps two seconds, then there was a sudden burst of applause. It pleased Shen Chen-hsin to hear this burst of applause in response to the call to battle. He lit a cigarette and blew out a cloud of smoke like a man who feels the need for a stimulant at a tense moment on the battle-field. Then he announced in a voice that was light but firm:

"It was originally arranged that we should move the day after tomorrow but now it has been decided to bring time forward to this afternoon. You will go back to your units and immediately begin emergency mobilization. For detailed arrangements you will go to the staff office after this conference and collect written instructions."

Shen Chen-hsin sat down, but a stir went through the conference room and a whispering that showed some uneasiness began. The movement and whispering stopped only when Ting Yuan-shan stood up to speak.

They made a very well-matched pair—the army commander and the army commissar, that is to say. Shen Chen-hsin was resolute, decisive and enthusiastic, and there was a compelling air of soldierly courage about him. His manner of speaking was always so direct and clear-cut that it drew the maximum attention from his audience. Ting Yuan-shan was slightly shorter than Shen Chen-hsin but also slightly stouter. Like Shen Chen-hsin, he made one feel that there was never an enemy before one that could not be defeated, never a difficulty that could not be surmounted. He was the sort of man that anyone could speak his mind to. In the expressiveness of his speech he could be powerfully inspiring, but this inspiring quality took the form of an easy, cheerful delivery with a strong touch of humour. The cadres always felt discontented if they only heard one of them speak at any important conference, and they only felt really satisfied if both of them appeared and if both of them spoke.

Ting Yuan-shan's speech brought the conference to a close on a note of dazzling brightness:

"The main thing that's worrying you all is rations. As soon as you reach your destination they'll be issued to you. So you won't find you've got a mutiny on your hands from your stomachs! We shan't have time to find a large body of civilian porters, but a party of cadres has already been sent to Support Headquarters, so there'll be enough to satisfy our requirements when we reach our destination. It's being left to you to solve your own difficulties on the hundred-odd *li* of the journey; the Rear Supply Service has organized a temporary B Echelon, and anything that you can't take with you that is absolutely indispensable you can hand over to B Echelon. Anything that you can't take with you that may be needed or may not, you must resolutely leave behind! Sling it! Bury it! We don't want to be loaded down with parcels of all shapes and sizes until we're like a camel that's too loaded to move! If we can send our wives and sweethearts to the rear surely we can abandon a few pots and jars!"

A gale of laughter from the officers swept through the room.

"I'm not joking! From you yourselves down to every fighter, cook and forage-man, everybody must make another check and anything useless or that you don't need you must sacrifice even if it hurts you to do so. The second-in-command set out for the front last night and details of actual battle deployment will be decided when we reach our destination." These additional instructions from Ting Yuan-shan brought the conference to an end.

When the officers stepped outside the temple they found that it was bitterly cold now that it had stopped snowing, as if to test to the utmost the toughness of the People's Liberation Army in its struggle with the difficulties that faced it. White icicles hung from the eaves and from the branches of the trees, and a sword-edged wind sweeping down from the precipitous mountains struck them full in the face.

Yet in the officers' hearts there was a fiery warmth; flinging themselves on their horses, they galloped back to where their units were stationed in even greater haste than when they had come, swinging their riding-crops and lashing their horses on across the hard, slippery ice and snow, as if racing towards a battle-field where the fighting had already begun.

Yao Yueh-chin was a lively, artless girl of twenty-one to whom depression was something unknown. For the past month or more she had been unusually happy and had been really throwing herself into her work. Her inmost heart had been harbouring a spirit of self-confidence and sense of pride. For her it was an honour to be allowed to stay and work at the front. The number of women who had been allowed to do so was becoming smaller and smaller and besides herself the only two left in the cipher and radio transmission departments where she worked were an announcer and cipher clerk on the political department news transmitter. She was the only woman on the staff of over four hundred in the various departments at headquarters. Being the first person to learn of enemy and friendly intelligence, the war situation and the intentions of the higher command, she realized that war on a gigantic scale was imminent and she longed to be on the spot, breathing the atmosphere of war at every breath. In the East China theatre alone there would be several hundred thousand men on each side engaged in a fierce struggle: what an earth-shaking clash there would be! She was well satisfied with her state of physical fitness at this time; she was fitter than ever before, and a long march did not tire her excessively. "I'm better even than some of the men!" she often said to herself and had even boasted of it openly to her sweetheart Hu Ko and to others of the men. She remembered what Li Ching, the army commander's wife and her close friend, had said to her when she had seen Li Ching off a few weeks ago: "You're very fortunate to be allowed to remain at the front working. You must be able to stand the pace!" Yes, this good fortune had been hers and she had been confident that she would be enjoying it for a long time yet. This morning, as she had crossed the conference room, she had been particularly conscious of her own good fortune and of a feeling of pride. A room full of officers with no other woman there but herself. The troops were about to go forward and heavy fighting was imminent. She had felt rather nervous but even greater were her excitement and happiness. From time to time she had fingered her green scarf as if it were the symbol of her good fortune and happiness.

Yet here she was in a mood of depression, with tears oozing from the corners of her eyes.

Half an hour ago she had been informed by Wan Chang-lin, the head of the cipher section, that it had been decided to send her to the rear to work.

When Wan Chang-lin had told her of this decision she had been unable to believe her own ears and had asked him:

"Why can't they let me stay at the front?"

"It's been decided to send you to the rear to work because a transmitter is being sent to the rear and you are to go with it."

"Is that straight?" Yao Yueh-chin had asked, wide-eyed and still feeling doubtful.

"It's already been decided!" Wan Chang-lin had said in a way that left no room for doubt.

Yao Yueh-chin realized that no form of haggling or bargaining was permitted in war-time, especially when the situation was tense, and that everyone without exception had to give unconditional obedience to the decisions of the organization. Yet her own wishes and her pride drove her to want to save the situation that had already been decided on. She had asked Wan Chang-lin:

"Couldn't they transfer someone else instead?"

"You'd better hurry up and get ready," Wan Chang-lin had said, ignoring her question. "Those going to the rear will assemble to leave immediately."

After Wan Chang-lin had gone, Yao Yueh-chin had sat brooding in the room. She had been sitting there motionless for more than ten minutes as if paralysed from head to foot.

She could not think of any reason why she should be posted to the rear. She could work, she could march, she could endure suffering. "Is it because I'm a woman? Am I fated to stay in the rear just because I'm a woman?" All at once she experienced the sorrow of being a woman, something that she had never been conscious of before. She brushed away her tears and strode towards Wan Chang-lin's room with the intention of arguing it out with him and of fighting her hardest for permission to stay at the front. As she stepped through the doorway into his room she found him busy getting the code-books ready for her, and even before she came to a halt Wan Chang-lin said to her:

"You'll have to come back in a quarter of an hour's time for the code-books."

What could she say? Without a word she swung round and went out again.

When she got back to her own room, her neatly yet securely made up knapsack standing on the floor against the wall seemed to smile mockingly at her. She had abandoned many of her most treasured possessions from her knapsack in expectation of living at the front. There was a copy of Gorky's *My University* which she had given to Hu Ko; when she had cleared this book out she had felt that she was living in the university of war and she had decided to let this university of life educate her. Then there was a photograph album that she had kept for five years; she had sent this to a girl comrade engaged on local work south of the railway to look after and she had little expectation of ever seeing it again. It was full of photographs ranging over the ten years or more from her childhood until she had finished at the senior-middle school: photographs of her friends and the girls she had been at school with, one of herself and her two sisters paddling in a brook, another of herself and Li Ching standing together smiling up into the sky. . . . She had gritted her teeth and sacrificed all these things but now she was going to the rear. There she would be unable to hear the gunfire or see the fighting, never seeing a newspaper or hearing any news; it was going to be horribly frustrating! Such were the annoyed and disappointed thoughts that went through her head.

Out in the yard someone was shouting:

"Those who are going to the rear get ready to assemble at the east end of the village!"

Yao Yueh-chin's face flushed a deep red and there was a slight prickling sensation in her cheeks, which were faintly purpled by the cold. Angrily she snatched up her pack by the straps from where it was lying against the wall and held it in her hand, letting it bang against her leg. Just as she was about to go out two girls of sixteen or seventeen that she was very friendly with came running into the room in high spirits. The name of one of them was Lin Su-yun and of the other Wu Hsiu-lien.

"Miss Yao, here's a present for you — a pair of shoes!" said Wu Hsiu-lien, coming up to her. She pushed the blue cloth shoes that they had just finished making into her hand.

"I don't want them, I don't need them!" said Yao Yueh-chin with a wry smile. She gave the shoes back to Wu Hsiu-lien.

"Don't you like them? Aren't they made well enough for you? We've fixed on some straps so that they won't be loose when you're wearing them." As Lin Su-yun said this she took the shoes from Wu Hsiu-lien and pressed them firmly into Yao Yueh-chin's hand.

Yao Yueh-chin would not take them and they fell on to the floor; Lin Su-yun picked them up again and tucked them into Yao Yueh-chin's pack.

"But you'll need shoes if you're going to the front! You'll be going over the mountains all the way! We stayed up all night to get these ready in time for you. We insist that you have them."

"It's just a token of what we feel for you. Be a pal, and take them with you!"

Lin Su-yun and Wu Hsiu-lien spluttered as they both tried to get a word in first, not giving Yao Yueh-chin a chance to open her mouth.

Yao Yueh-chin felt ever-increasing pain as the words of the two girls stabbed like a needle into her heart. But she had to control this feeling; she could not reveal the pain hidden in her heart to these two girls.

She finally forced herself to smile and patted their frozen cheeks affectionately.

"Thank you, sisters."

Yao Yueh-chin and the two girls went out together.

Out in the yard Yao Yueh-chin collected the case which the head of the cipher section had packed with code-books for her, and walked dejectedly towards the assembly ground.

As she was going past Shen Chen-hsin's doorway she stopped as a matter of habit and then stepped inside the door.

"Hello, Yao! Another signal?" asked Shen Chen-hsin.

Yao Yueh-chin looked at Shen Chen-hsin for a moment without a word, then dropped her head.

This surprised Shen Chen-hsin very much. Li Yao and Tang Cheng, who were squatting on the floor packing, glanced surreptitiously at her face.

Her face flushed and paled alternately, the muscles of her cheeks were twitching and tears were welling up in the corners of her eyes.

"Any letters to take?" she said with an effort, in a low voice. It seemed as if there was something stuck in her throat.

"Letters? What letters?" asked Shen Chen-hsin, puzzled.

"They're sending me to the rear!" said Yao Yueh-chin pouting. The pack in her hand slipped heavily to the floor.

"Are you going to the rear with the transmitter?"

"Yes."

"Why, can't you march? Aren't you fit?"

"I've never dropped out once!" said Yao Yueh-chin, her voice loud with indignation and pride as she wiped her tear-blinded eyes. "I've never had anyone hold my hand or help me along!"

"I don't see what you are so put out about. There's work to be done at the rear just the same, and it's just as important for winning the war. There are arsenals there, clothing factories and hospitals, all doing very important work. What is there to cry about? You're over twenty, aren't you? You are not still a child, are you, now that you're a Party member?" Shen Chen-hsin's tone was blunt and earnest.

Yao Yueh-chin now felt a little calmer in her mind.

"Li Ching said she'd written you two letters. Aren't you going to send her a reply?"

"Tell her I've got the letters. I've no time to write her a reply."

The chief-of-staff, Chu Pin, came bustling in; Yao Yueh-chin picked up her pack and walked slowly out.

Chu Pin reported to Shen Chen-hsin that the local Support Headquarters was drafting over two thousand civilian porters and three hundred front-line stretchers to them.

"Have the porters and stretchers arrived yet?" asked Shen Chen-hsin.

"They've been given their route and been told to make for our destination tonight," replied Chu Pin.

When Chu Pin went to leave the room Shen Chen-hsin said to him:

"Don't send any able-bodied youngsters to the rear. Those who can work and could stay at the front, keep them at the front. Let them toughen themselves by experiencing hardship. It's only by going through hardships that they can get to know what war is, get to know the world and get to know themselves."

"Doesn't Yao want to go to the rear?"

"Young people want to get on; they're ambitious and anxious to prove themselves better than anyone else. This attitude, if led in the right direction, is towards a positive approach to the struggle, and we mustn't unthinkingly damage this positive approach of theirs. They are young and inexperienced and soft and they won't become experienced and tough except by going through the process of tempering. What sort of unit are we going to have if we wear down our unit's youthful enthusiasm? What use would such a unit be in battle? And I'm not only referring to Yao. It's a point we must pay attention to in building up our unit. It's an absolutely vital point! All heavy impediments must be moved to the rear; administrative staff must be kept to a minimum, fighting units must be right up to strength, and manpower must be concentrated at the front."

"They say that she and Hu Ko are courting," said Chu Pin, smiling. "She's very good at her work, though, and she's coming along fast."

"And why shouldn't they be courting? They're a funny lot, some of our comrades. Can't mind their own business. They expect young people to behave like saints. Why worry so long as their courting doesn't interfere with their work or undermine discipline?"

"I'll look into it and see." Chu Pin went out.

Yao Yueh-chin was sitting disconsolately beside the haystack at the edge of the assembly ground. Despite the cold wind, her green scarf was hanging loose instead of being wound tightly round her neck. She had a dead twig in her hand and was unconsciously making random lines with it on a small snow-drift. Hearing Lin Su-yun and Wu Hsiu-lien laughing not far away, she hastily moved round to the other side of the haystack so that they would not see her. The two girls came running over to the haystack but when they could not see Yao Yueh-chin there they hurried off again.

Yao Yueh-chin's elder sister was a friend of Li Ching's, and it was through spending much of her time in the company of Yao Yueh-chin's sister that Li Ching had become friendly with Yao Yueh-chin. When Li Ching had been with the unit two years Yao Yueh-chin finished at senior-middle school and it was through Li Ching that she came to join the ranks of the revolution. When Yao Yueh-chin thought back over her life during the past three years, it was something she had never dreamed of at school and at home. She had spent a year on active service in the Tienmushan area south of the Yangtse; that was in the last year of the Anti-Japanese War. She had lived a peace-time existence for less than a year. Now she was back again in a new war-time life. It seemed to her that her present life in war-time was very much different from what it had been before. Last time it had seemed novel and interesting and many of her impressions had had a dreamlike quality. But this time she was not dreaming: this time she was really being led along the road to life, into the red flames of battle. She felt she had grown to full stature now and that a budding desire to follow the quest for truth and an ideal world was gradually being conceived in the inmost recesses of her mind. "It's true! I'm not a child any longer!" was the thought with which she constantly lashed herself forwards. But what had happened today had been an unexpected and heavy blow to her. Her reason was doing its best to suppress her gloom and resentment, but when it came to the point her reason could exert only a very feeble control and despite all its efforts her face became clouded with an expression of misery once more and the tears began to fall of their own accord. When she looked up and saw the white, snow-covered mountains, the gloomy overcast sky and the crows winging their way through the cold bleakness, her thoughts took on an even greyer and heavier tone.

Her mood of dejection was slightly altered by the arrival of the cipher clerk Hsieh Chia-sheng. He put his pack down on the ground and sat down beside her. Hsieh Chia-sheng's expression was as moody and depressed as hers but she did not notice it. In her present mood it came as a consolation to Yao Yueh-chin to think that she had a companion whom she knew very well and that she would not be the only person in her line of work to be going to the rear.

Yet these two people who worked and lived together every day just sat there without either of them saying a word just as if they had nothing to do with one another.

As Yao Yueh-chin was aware, Hsieh Chia-sheng was nearing thirty, a man not greatly given to physical activity and suffering from a stomach complaint, though when he was ill he carried on working just as hard and conscientiously as ever. Time and again his comrades had suggested that he go to the rear to recuperate but he insisted on staying at the front to work.

"You going to the rear, too, Hsieh?" Yao Yueh-chin finally asked in a low voice.

"Let's have the case and the code-books," said Hsieh Chia-sheng, his face impassive.

"Let you have it?" asked Yao Yueh-chin in surprise.

"Yes," said Hsieh Chia-sheng, his face still expressionless.

When she realized that Hsieh Chia-sheng was to go to the rear instead of her to work, there was a sudden blaze of light in her heart and the despondency abruptly vanished from her face. But when she saw Hsieh Chia-sheng's despondent expression she stopped taking off the case that was slung round her. She felt that this would undermine their spirit of comradeship; not even an ordinary person, let alone a revolutionary, should let another's unhappiness replace one's own. Her awareness of the difficulties involved in handling this affair put her in an uneasy quandary. She thought for a moment, then said decisively:

"It would be better if I went."

"No, I'll go," Hsieh Chia-sheng insisted.

"I don't want you to, and you'll regret it yourself."

"I shan't hold it against you. I've had longer at the front than you have."

Yao Yueh-chin grasped Hsieh Chia-sheng's arm and exclaimed gratefully:

"Hsieh!"

"My health's not very good. Anyway, it's been decided by the leadership. Work in the rear is work just the same, you know, and somebody's got to do it." He unhitched the case from round her himself.

The bugle sounded for assembly; Yao Yueh-chin wound her green scarf round her neck, tied her shoe-laces securely, put her

pack on her back and said "Goodbye, Hsieh!" to Hsieh Chia-sheng. Excited and overjoyed, but also with a feeling of uneasiness, she went to where those bound for the front were assembling.

8

Pressing on in the teeth of the raging northwest wind, their steps turned towards the rumbling of distant gunfire along the slippery, icebound mountain roads, the column of troops rolled swiftly on towards where the enemy were, their spirits high. Each wave was quickly followed by another in undulating rhythm.

Each man was fully aware that they were running a double race: with the neighbouring units that were to fight by their side, to see who would be the first to join battle with the enemy, and also with the enemy themselves, to see who could get a minute's advantage in striking the first blow. Only in battle can one really appreciate how precious time can be. And with what a light and vigorous step the troops were marching! Their urgent desire to begin fighting made them oblivious of fatigue and made them regard the marching as nothing short of actual fighting.

"Why can't we hear any guns?" wondered Chang Hua-feng, walking with the aid of a stick made from a small branch. "They haven't given us the slip, have they?"

"There's something wrong with your ears!" said Chin Li-chung.

Chang Hua-feng raised his ear-flaps, which had been hanging down over his ears, listened attentively and said:

"Ah, yes. But they're very faint. How is it that the sound of the guns gets farther away the more we go on?"

"Don't worry about that," came Chin Shou-pen's voice from behind them. "Haven't you got enough to worry about with Hutou Ko on your foot?"

The soldiers became more cheerful at this mention of Hutou Ko, as if it had been their homes and families that had been mentioned.

"Hutou Ko's well out of sight now!"

"Haven't you seen enough of it? A great bare priest's hat like that!"

"Don't worry! You'll have plenty more to climb!"

"Look! There's one just over there!"

Many eyes began searching the mountains all around them.

"Where? You're pulling our legs!"

"I can't help it if your eyes are no good!"

Although some of them were wearing masks over their mouths or had pulled down the ear-flaps on their caps against the howling wind so that they could not speak or hear clearly what was being said, they nevertheless talked and joked throughout the march. Experience teaches soldiers this lesson: that if one keeps talking and laughing on the march one can not only forget the distance, but overcome fatigue and hunger.

At about ten o'clock in the evening, after marching all day in light battle order, the troops came into an area of broken ground and halted there.

The village was in pitch darkness and there was not a glimmer of light from any of the houses, yet every door was wide open. On the ground outside the doors lay pigs and sheep with their feet tied and crates crammed with hens and ducks. Odds and ends had been lashed on to barrows. Bullocks and donkeys stood at their mangers eating hay; they were laden with baskets filled with grain and sweet potatoes and so on. Coverlets, quilts and clothing had been tied into large bundles and placed on the *kang* and even the cooking-pots had been removed from the stoves, tied together and hung on the ends of carrying-poles. The villagers were sitting silently in their houses, the babies strapped to their grown-ups' backs like soldiers' packs. They made not a sound as they stared fearfully at each other in the darkness, ready to evacuate the village at any moment. It looked as if within a mere three or four minutes from the word "go" they could move off with all their possessions except their houses and their land.

The sudden arrival of the troops in the village came as a great surprise to the inhabitants. They were taken completely off their guard, and were filled with terror and consternation, but there was no time for them to escape or hide. When they saw the grown-ups panicking the children started to howl.

When Chin Shou-pen and the others stepped in through the doorway of one of the houses and flashed a torch round inside the terrified villagers hid behind the door and shrank into the corners.

"What's the matter, friends?"

"It's us! Not the reactionaries!"

"Let's have a lamp alight in here!"

It began to dawn on the villagers at last that they were not on the verge of disaster after all.

"Are you the Communist Eighth Route Army?" asked an elderly man.

"No, we're the Eighth Route's little brother, the New Fourth Army!" said Chin Shou-pen in a loud voice.

"You want the lamp lit?" said the old man reluctantly. "They're not far away, you know!"

"How far?"

"Twenty or thirty *li*, close enough for the guns to reach us."

"Even if the guns had eyes they couldn't see as far as this!"

"Just before dark we had one over. It landed out at the back of the village and killed a bullock."

The old man at last fished a lamp out of a basket and lit it.

The inhabitants' fears were allayed for the time being, but at the same time they also felt that the war was coming closer to them. When the soldiers saw the state of alarm in which the inhabitants were preparing to become refugees, it seemed to them that they had already reached the battle-fields, and were already in the middle of the fighting.

It just so happened that at this moment several shells came sailing over and burst in the vicinity. The old man hurriedly went to blow out the lamp but the fighters restrained him.

"Don't be afraid! They're just firing at random."

"Are you going to fight them?" asked the old man.

"What else do you think we've come for?" said Wang Mao-sheng.

The old man did not understand Wang Mao-sheng's Haimen accent and looked puzzled. An Chao-feng slapped the rifle he was holding and said loudly, putting on a Shantung accent:

"We've come to deal with them! You needn't run away."

From outside came a confused hubbub and the sound of weeping; the fighters ran out.

It was a party of refugees from the north driving bullocks and sheep and carrying children on their backs; the women and chil-

dren were crying and one old woman walking with the aid of a stick was giving out a volley of abuse:

"May they be hit by a shell! May they be struck down by lightning! . . . They're robbers, they're lower than the beasts, the lot of them!"

A man in his fifties lay on a door-board, his head thickly swathed in bandages through which blood had soaked to the outside. An old woman and two girls sat beside him weeping, their eyes and their noses running.

The troops moved out of one of the rooms to make room for the injured man and the refugees.

From the refugees they learned that the enemy were cutting down trees and pulling down houses to build defence works and that they were also leading away cattle and slaughtering pigs, ransacking the houses for what they could steal. The injured man had been beaten up by the Kuomintang bandit troops.

"Ah," sighed Chang Teh-lai.

"Why the sigh? We'll be fighting them any minute now! And Chiang Kai-shek will have to pay for what happened to Yeh Yu-ming as well!" said Chin Shou-pen angrily.

Chang Teh-lai did not quite agree with what Chin Shou-pen had said; he looked at him and said coldly:

"Yeh Yu-ming was killed on an exercise."

"I agree with the section-leader," said Wang Mao-sheng with some excitement. "If Chiang Kai-shek hadn't attacked the Liberated Areas, we shouldn't be in the army now! And if we hadn't been in the army we shouldn't have been on exercise on Hutou Ko. The purpose of the exercises was to fight the reactionaries. To follow the argument right the way through, if Chiang Kai-shek hadn't attacked we shouldn't have been forced to come to Shantung and Yeh Yu-ming wouldn't have been killed."

"I agree, too!" said Hsia Chun-sheng, An Chao-feng and Chou Feng-shan together.

Chin Shou-pen was very pleased but also rather surprised at the way Wang Mao-sheng had supported him and forcefully developed his argument. He glanced all round at Wang Mao-sheng and the others, then took half a cigarette from Yu Chung-ho and smoked with half-closed eyes.

Ever since the night of his heart-to-heart talk with Chin Shou-pen on Goose Wing Peak, Wang Mao-sheng's depressed state of mind had undergone a change. Just before they had set out today the political instructor Lo Kuang had had a talk with him, in the course of which he had told him that his Party membership had been transferred to the unit branch; this had made him so excited that he had felt on top of the world all the way here. He had carried Chang Teh-lai's rifle for him for more than twenty li and had broken off a stout sapling on a hillside for Chang Hua-feng, who had a swollen foot, to use as a walking-stick.

Arise, ye starvelings, from your slumbers!

Arise, ye prisoners of want!

For reason in revolt now thunders

And at last ends the age of cant!

It was late at night.

When Chin Shou-pen went past the door of the house where Company H.Q. was quartered he heard the low sound of the *Internationale* coming from inside. The door was closed so he peeped through the crack and saw that the room was packed; he recognized Chang Hua-feng, Yu Chung-ho, Hung Tung-tsai and several others. He realized from experience that this was a full meeting of Party members and quickly drew back. On the way to his section he suddenly had spots before his eyes and his head began to spin; his foot struck sharply against a tethering-post and an agonizing pain shot through it.

"I thought you'd gone to the Party meeting as well," said Chou Feng-shan, coming towards Chin Shou-pen.

"Me? I'm the same as you, not up to scratch yet," said Chin Shou-pen regretfully, after a moment's silence.

"The fellow from Haimen's gone too," said Chou Feng-shan gloomily. "Asked me to tell you where he'd gone."

Chin Shou-pen uttered an exclamation of surprise.

When he got back Chin Shou-pen and the rest of his section inspected their weapons, ammunition and other equipment in silence.

Chang Teh-lai was tired out and took off his pack to lie down and get some sleep but Chin Shou-pen stopped him and told him that one never slept without one's pack on in battle.

"Are we going to be fighting straight away, then?" asked Chang Teh-lai.

"Somebody else has already made contact," said Chou Feng-shan. "You can hear the sound of the heavy machine-gun quite clearly."

"When do we start, then?" Chang Teh-lai wanted to know.

"We may have to start out pretty soon," said Hsia Chun-sheng in a clear voice. "I tell you, Chang: fighting is like meal-times. At meal-times, as soon as the whistle goes you pick up your chopsticks and start eating. When you're fighting, as soon as the whistle goes you pick up your rifle and go. You'd better get some sleep in, because when the whistle goes, that's it!"

"That's what I think, Chang," put in An Chao-feng. "We'll just have to wait until the whistle goes."

"Have you been in action?" said Chang Teh-lai, glaring at An Chao-feng. "You came here on the same day as me, didn't you?"

"I ought to know a bit about it, all the time we've spent on exercises!" said An Chao-feng with a confident air. "If you don't believe me you can ask the section-leader."

"He's right," said Chin Shou-pen, leaning back against the wall. "If you want to get some sleep you'd better hurry up and get it while you can."

After the meeting of the Party branch for the purpose of getting mobilized for battle, Yu Chung-ho and Wang Mao-sheng went back to the section to find the other men in the section already asleep; only Chin Shou-pen was awake, sewing on shoe-straps with double thread by the light of a small oil lamp to prevent them from coming off in battle and causing him to lose his shoes.

When Yu Chung-ho had also gone to bed, Chin Shou-pen lay down beside Wang Mao-sheng and asked in a voice that was so low that Wang Mao-sheng could hardly hear it:

"Are you a member too?"

"Yes," assented Wang Mao-sheng, looking at him.

"I've been in three years and still I'm not. I must learn from you and make up my mind to practise until I'm a good shot," mumbled Chin Shou-pen in the back of his throat, supposing that the reason why Wang Mao-sheng had been accepted into the Party was his accurate marksmanship.

"I joined when I was still at home," Wang Mao-sheng told him.

Chin Shou-pen abruptly sat up and gasped in amazement:

"You mean you've been in a long time!" He at once lay down again.

After a while Chin Shou-pen asked in an even lower voice:

"Have you written your letter home yet?"

"I'll write it when we've done some fighting," replied Wang Mao-sheng in an equally subdued voice.

The old man went out and walked up and down from one house to another and when he had carefully observed the expressions and bearing of the troops he began to feel more assured. He went to the manger where the donkey was and took off the baskets of sweet potatoes that had been loaded on to it, then went back inside on to the *kang* and said to his wife:

"Let's get some sleep too."

"They haven't even got their bedding out," the old woman whispered in his ear.

"They'll be going up to the front very soon to start fighting."

"Aren't we going, then, after all?"

"No, not now that we've got the troops here."

"What about these people that have come down from the north to get away from the fighting?"

"They say they're going back with the troops."

9

Before dawn the East China People's Liberation Army had completed the encirclement of over fifty thousand men of Chiang Kai-shek's bandit army centred round Laiwu, and Li Hsien-chou's Pacification Headquarters and two armies consisting together of seven divisions equipped with American arms fell into the iron ring formed by our troops.

The troops under the command of Shen Chen-hsin and Ting Yuan-shan occupied the various large and small villages in the hilly region surrounding Tuszukou; the attacking forces were soon threatening the walls of Tuszukou and the thirty-*li* highway connecting Tuszukou and Laiwu was effectively blocked.

A red sun showed its friendly smiling face in the east, greeting the toiling fighters with a "good morning," and the lazy clouds had fled on the west wind together with the powder smoke of the night before. The morning came up on a world of gentleness and peace. The green shoots in the fields straightened up elatedly and it seemed as if the stern winter was taking its leave on the very day that war was approaching, for on this morning the breath of spring could be smelled for the first time.

Shen Chen-hsin, Ting Yuan-shan and some other comrades of the army's Party committee, having listened with satisfaction to the second in command, Liang Po's report on his preparatory work of the preceding day and night and the results of his intelligence work, now decided on the actual assault tasks of each division and regiment and informed the whole army that each unit would begin its attack on the enemy to its immediate front at 8 p.m. sharp that day, the time laid down by the East China Field Army Command for the launching of a general offensive along the whole front.

At 12 noon exactly the Signals Headquarters gave a time check so that the staff and political departments of each unit could synchronize their watches.

The hands of every watch in the army now began moving towards the zero hour of 8 p.m.

The heart of every cadre and fighter in the army, like the watches, ticked steadily and rhythmically on towards zero hour, the hour they had been longing for for so long. They looked forward to a night of battle with tension and great excitement.

The entire army was pervaded with an atmosphere of unprecedented activity.

The combat companies were working at fever pitch on all kinds of tasks: cleaning rifles and mortars, polishing bayonets, sorting out and drying in the sun mortar-bombs and small arms ammunition, tying up bundles of explosive charges, making scaling-ladders, working out tactical movements, discussing how best the veterans and recruits could work together, setting targets for meritorious achievements, and so on and so forth.

Linesmen were busy running to and fro across the fields and valleys, joining and laying lines.

The printing staff were busy printing slogans in coloured inks on coloured paper for whipping up enthusiasm and for shouting at the enemy on the firing-line.

Runners on foot and horseback were busy hurrying to and fro between the various units — armies, divisions, regiments, battalions and companies — delivering documents.

The fingers of the wireless operators were busy tapping out Morse on the control panels of their transmitters.

The telephonists at Signals Headquarters were busy lifting and replacing their receivers.

In steam-laden cook-houses the cooks were busy preparing dry rations for use on the firing-line.

In the front-line positions commanders were lying flat behind the cover of various obstacles unobtrusively observing the lie of the land through field-glasses and selecting the routes for the attacks.

There was not a man that was not busy with some task or other, not a hand that was idle, not a minute nor a second that was wasted.

In the afternoon the troops were busy with another kind of preparation work: almost everyone in the whole army was sound asleep.

This too was a matter of urgency, a task carried out as an order, compulsorily and strictly: all cadres and fighters had to force themselves to go to sleep within a certain time and recover from their fatigue so that when they woke up they could hurl themselves into battle brimming over with energy.

It drew on towards evening. The sun had not yet set and the western sky was flecked with brilliantly coloured clouds.

The troops moved forward in a continuous stream to take up their positions for the attack. Soon everyone was at his post waiting for the order to attack.

Shen Chen-hsin and Ting Yuan-shan stood on the hill-top near Tuszukou and three signallers stood waiting beside them firmly gripping loaded Very pistols.

A field telephone squatted on the hill-top with its head tilted up like an awesome black cat, waiting attentively for news of the fighting from down the hill.

The enemy seemed to be sitting back and taking things easy, for there was not the slightest movement and even the sound of aircraft had stopped completely.

The sun dropped behind the hills and the rosy clouds faded away.

The sky full of stars, winking their glinting fiery eyes, like the eyes of the fighters all waiting with their fingers on the trigger ready to fire, gazed anxiously down on the army commanders on the hill-top.

Hsu Kun, the head of the political department, glanced at his watch.

Ting Yuan-shan, the army political commissar, glanced at his watch.

Shen Chen-hsin, the army commander, glanced at his watch.

As one man the three of them put their watches to their ears and listened for a moment to the ticking.

The supreme ruler now was the hand of a watch. The more anxious one became about its lagging steps, the more unwilling it became to change its unhurried manner and pace.

The dimly-seen hills, the dimly-seen villages and the dimly-seen outline of the town of Tuszukou lay silent and forlorn in the nebulous gloom of night.

"Ready!" Shen Chen-hsin told the signallers.

The signallers jerked into life and raised their Very pistols.

But five minutes ticked by slowly and laboriously, as if reluctant to depart.

Shen Chen-hsin, Ting Yuan-shan and Hsu Kun stood up simultaneously. The muzzles of the signallers' pistols were aimed at the crescent moon in the sky above Tuszukou and the forefingers of their right hands nestled against the triggers.

"Fire!" called Shen Chen-hsin loudly, his eyes riveted on the hands of the watch pointing to eight o'clock precisely in the light of the torch held by Li Yao.

Three bright red meteors sped across the darkness of the sky, each tracing a red arc, stabbing into the calm of the night; then another three, and three more. The nine Very lights, symbolizing the coming destruction of the nine thousand enemy, acted as a fuse, setting the battle-field beneath them on fire, setting it thundering, making it shudder and shake.

A volley of explosions was immediately followed by splash after splash of vivid light, and streams of red and green tracer, like strings of beads, appeared around and above the town of Tuszukou.

Around and above the city of Laiwu thirty *li* away there was an even more colourful and tumultuous display, and the noise was even more violent than here.

The great battle was on, and over three hundred thousand men on either side, deployed along a front more than thirty *li* long, plunged themselves into the battle.



Hail the People's Spring

KUO MO-JO

The Chain Reaction of the Anti-imperialist Struggle

The people of Asia have stood up!
The people of Africa have stood up!
The people of Latin America have stood up!
All awakened peoples are shouting with one voice:
Get out, American imperialists! Get out!

Beacon fires to oppose imperialism have spread to the horizon,
The flames of wrath have spread from Seoul to Pusan;
Syngman Rhee, America's "tremendous patriot,"
Is shaking in his shoes;
Smashed is American imperialism's "shop-window of democracy"
And — what irony! —
The British have torn the American lies into shreds!

The Turks, too, mean to drive away their "freedom fighter,"
The despot in fear of his life has cried out in despair;
Flames of wrath have spread from Istanbul to Izmir,

Thence to Ankara, to burn all over Turkey.
The American imperialists will have to receive
Another honoured guest, another Rhee.

The imperialists' third Syngman Rhee is in Tokyo,
He has even expressed "concern" over our Taiwan;
But the Japanese people are teaching him a good lesson:
Give more thought to the Bonin Islands, to Okinawa,
Throw that Security Treaty that sells out Japan
Into the Pacific Ocean!

The shameless diehards accept brigands as their "father,"
This third Syngman Rhee is double-dyed in crime.
He was a war criminal like Hideki Tojo;
Not repenting his crimes against the Asian people,
He wants once more to be the butcher of Eastern Asia
For his imperialist masters.

Who destroyed with atomic bombs Hiroshima and Nagasaki?
Who defiles with military bases the whole of Japan?
Who has clamped down upon Japan's politics, army and
economy?
Yet he asks the bandit in and becomes his wife — *
This traitor to his people is dead to shame!

* A certain American ambassador, upon his arrival in Tokyo, stated at a banquet in the Imperial Hotel that the United States and Japan were like a husband and wife. Japan was the delicate, ailing wife of the United States, which should treat her with tender care. The Japanese people were shocked by this brazen remark, but the pro-American diehards accepted it placidly.

No wonder the Japanese people can stand it no longer,
 Their protest is signed by ten million, by more and more;
 The Japanese people will never relax their struggle,
 The Japanese people will tear up the dastardly "treaty";
 Rejected by them, it is nothing but a sheet of paper,
 Paper to attract the flames.

Once liberate the people's irresistible strength,
 And the chain reaction of the anti-imperialist struggle
 Will spread swiftly on every side.
 Like the setting sun, imperialism is doomed;
 If its lackeys want to follow the corpse to its grave,
 More of them will share the fate of Syngman Rhee.

All awakened peoples are shouting:

Get out, U.S. imperialists!
 All fair-minded Americans must demand this too.
 Only when imperialism has been thrown out
 Of the United States and the whole earth
 Can the American people really enter the People's Age,
 Can the peoples of the whole world become truly brothers.

The bright light of dawn is visible to mankind;
 We hail the spring of the Sixties, the spring of the people,
 Of the people's firm opposition to imperialism,
 Of the people's complete destruction of colonialism,
 Of the people's fight for the liberation of all mankind!

May 6, 1960

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi

Drums Like Spring Thunder

A friend from Kamerun brought me one of their phonograph records. Previously I knew little about the art of Africa, but on hearing this record I discovered what fine music they have — truly beautiful! A group of people canoeing downstream sing in rhythm to the strokes of their paddles. Their bright clear voices, the intricate rhythm, remind you of a fresh turbulent stream, a lush forest, fresh air and brilliant sunlight. It's simply enchanting.

But what impressed me most was the joyous refined beat of the drums. It seemed to me that people possessed of such an art are sure to rise up one day. The beat of the African drums will be heard round the world.

Not long after, I had an opportunity to read the proofs of a Chinese translation of a Senegal story. This too mentioned the drums. It said: "Group after group walk to the palm grove. The drums are throbbing, their beat growing ever faster and more urgent, sending shivers through you. The sound crosses the plains, the rivers, in wave after wave, its echoes repeating the bitter news. Like a tide, the people, on foot and in canoes, surge towards the palm grove."

The drums beat out a tattoo of urgent alarm. Umar, the main character in the book, is murdered by white Europeans. You can imagine how much news of violence and death the rain-rapid drumbeats bring to these people who are plundered and slaughtered so cruelly by the colonialists. Everyone knows that there the blood and lives of the African people are not worth a cent. *Motherland, Dear People*, as this book is called, brings us the

drumbeats, with their vibrant uneasy throbbing. It is a true tale of Africa. This vast land, so rich, so lovely, has been converted by the colonialists into a purgatory, a slaughter-house. Just think in London, in Paris, in New York, every brick of expensive skyscrapers is stained with the blood of these people. You pleasure-loving rich, can't you hear those drumbeats, drumbeats laden with hatred!

Today, vengeful drumbeats burst from the jungles, the jails, shaking the heavens.

One night, I heard over the radio a ringing, militant song, "Long Live Algeria!" All progressive people, engaged in a just war, are sure to be blessed with an art that is strong and vital. Listen to the words of this song:

Fear not the insane enemy,
Fear not the guns,
Fear not the planes,
Fear not the insane enemy,
Fight on boldly
For our sacred motherland!

What magnificent courage! Here the drums beat in cadence with the advance of marching feet. It is a brilliant summons that stirs men's hearts, bringing to mind the matchless gallantry of these fighting people. Drums of battle against the colonial rulers, drums of struggle for freedom and liberation.

From that night on, I constantly sat by my radio, seeking again that most beautiful, noble and determined music which so stirs people's hearts, for I believe that the arts most fully reflect the greatness of this era.

My search was not in vain. I heard a splendid Cuban march, a Japanese song against war, and in all this fighting music I could hear always the drumbeat of advance. How it pulls you! It makes you wish you could be together with those brothers, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, moving forward. Ahead are fire-hoses, whips, bullets, bayonets. But what of it! This is a glorious battle that stirs us to the depths of our hearts. The drumbeats are not accidental; they augur a storm of coming struggle.

Marxism contains this absolute truth: Old phenomena appear strong on the surface, but actually they are weak. New phenomena

appear small and weak on the surface, but they are full of vitality, and one of these days this new life will push through all barriers and burst forth.

Not long ago would you have thought it possible that Cuba, in the "back yard" of the USA, under the menace of bristling rifles and bayonets, Cuba, where "all seems sweet on the surface, but inside it's bitter as gall" as Guillen put it, would overnight suddenly become the front-line of the struggle against Yankee imperialism? Cuba will bring spring to Latin America. Those sugarcane-cutting machetes were waved on high and a splendid battle spirit sprang to life.

Not long ago, would you have thought it possible that south Korea, a forward bastion of the U.S. war-mongers' attack against the socialist lands, a country full of U.S. troops, barbed wire and bayonets, that one morning south Korea would burst into flames? Empty-handed, the people attacked the headquarters of Syngman Rhee's liberal party and burned it to the ground. They seized arms and tanks, set up barricades in the streets, they fought bloody pitched battles. In an instant Syngman Rhee, faithful lackey of the American imperialists, was swept away like garbage.

In Turkey, demonstrators surrounded Menderes on the street. The dictator's face turned ashen. His hair was awry, his shirt tails had been pulled out of his trousers.

In Japan millions of people rolled across the country like an angry tide, sweeping straight into Tokyo. They broke through cordons of police, dozens of lines deep, and surged into the Diet. Algeria resounds with shots; in the copper mine region of Northern Rhodesia, the people are fearlessly repulsing the colonialists who attack them with tear-gas.

Yes, everything points to the fact that the people cannot be suppressed. They have the utmost strength, they are the determining factor in history. All puppets, all "holy" palaces, inevitably crumble before the tempestuous heroic people.

Today, in every part of the world, from east to west, from north to south, struggles are being waged. Innumerable tongues of flame bedeck and beautify the earth like spring. The people's struggle will never stop, not until imperialism is thoroughly smashed. The forward-marching steps are drumbeats. The drumbeats are the thunder of the coming storm.

We say this not out of wishful thinking but based on this objective fact: Oppression must result in struggle. The cruel exploitation of monopoly capital is bound to arouse a struggle against exploitation. Imperialist invasion brings anti-imperialist resistance. Colonialism necessarily produces an anti-colonial fight. These are unassailable truths.

And the brilliant principles of Marxism teach us that all these struggles must be welded into a broad united front, ready to take united action. As Marx said—revolution is the locomotive of history. It is these tremendous struggles that send history flying forward.

Remember: It was amid the fusillades on the streets of Paris that “Arise, Ye Prisoners of Starvation!” was first sung.

Remember: It was the salvos of the “Aurora” on the Neva River which made the old world tremble that morning in October.

Remember: The song “Arise, Ye Who Refuse to Be Slaves” was born in the thick of smoke and the boom of cannon shaking Chinese soil. . . . These events put cracks in the old world, and in their wake the people awakened more and more, they grew increasingly brave, until finally they changed the old world and created a new.

The tumultuous realities of today testify to the birth of a new revolutionary tide. A new revolutionary movement has begun. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung, thirty years ago speaking of the high tide of the Chinese revolution, said, “It is like a ship on the sea whose mast-head is already seen at a distance by people standing on the shore; it is like the morning sun which, rising with radiant beams in the east, is already seen from afar by people standing on the top of a mountain; it is like an almost fully formed child stirring in its mother’s womb.” This revolutionary struggle in China has achieved victory. And now, Comrade Mao Tse-tung tells us that these struggles of the south Korean and the Turkish people indicate that the storm of struggle of the oppressed people of the various countries in Asia against imperialism and its running dogs will rise still stronger.

But let us get back to music. Do you know how potent it is? Don’t you feel that every epochal change starts amid proud and lofty music? Music of marching feet, drumbeats, thunder. In this era when people of the whole world are marching against

imperialism how we need them—these rolling drums like spring thunder! They are weapons, they are faith, they are songs. The drums will not cease. They are beating louder and louder. From the African jungles, from the swift rivers of the American continent, from the Asian plains, from the streets of Europe—everywhere, shaking the world, until the evil demon of imperialism is completely demolished. The drumbeats are a signal to assemble, they are the call to advance, the command to charge.

Thunder heralds a storm, but it also ushers in spring. Drumbeats mean battle, but they also announce victory. Today, the drums are already rolling like thunder. They are proclaiming that the winter snows are receding and that spring is near at hand.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

Poetry for Cuba

From the shores of the Caribbean, seething with revolt, came the call of the well-known Spanish and Cuban poets Rafael Alberti and Nicolas Guillen. They called upon poets the world over to hold meetings and contribute funds for the purchase of planes, *Avion de Poesia*, to defend the Cuban revolution. The two poets pointed out in their appeal that when a people had chosen a system of national liberty at the cost of their blood, and had thus linked the will of the majority with their historical fate, the poets should support this free determination of the people . . . because poetry, since ancient times, had been invariably on the side of the noblest cause of the people. In response to the call of Alberti and Guillen and to support Cuba, more than three hundred Chinese poets and lovers of poetry held a poetry-reading session in Peking on April 20, 1960. At this meeting, poets donated royalties towards the purchase of the *Avion de Poesia* and recited a number of poems in praise of the courageous fight of the Cuban people to defend their national freedom and independence. These poets have voiced the feelings of six hundred and fifty million in China towards the Cuban people. Below are three of the poems written for that occasion.

EMI HSIAO

Cuba, I Salute You

CUBA, distant Cuba,
To you I send my greetings,
To you far off on the other side of the globe;
A land of so much sweetness,
You have yet shed bitter tears;

You could not enjoy
Your tons upon tons of cane-sugar,
All went to the Yankees, to bloated capitalists.

Not long since I climbed Mount Yuehlu, crossed the
Hsiang River,
And passing Friendship Bridge came to the mighty
Yangtse;

There the workers and peasants of the people's com-
munes
Asked me: How goes the revolution in Cuba?
Their concern for Cuba is like their concern for their
home.

They asked: Are those despicable U.S. planes
Still wantonly bombing the sugar plantations of Cuba?
We know the splendid courage
Of our Cuban brothers and sisters.
They swore angrily at the U.S. imperialists,
All eager to do their bit for the Cuban revolution.

Ah, Cuba, Cuba beyond the seven seas,
To you I send my greetings;
Now you will surely become a land of sweetness,
Having ended so many years of bitterness;
Head high, your chest thrust out, you have risen
proudly;
We respect you, we are solidly behind you —
We shall let no enemy touch one inch of your soil!

Emi Hsiao is a well-known poet. His most representative anthologies of poems are *The Road to Peace* and *Selected Poems of Emi Hsiao*. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Chinese Writers' Union and a member of the Chinese People's Committee for the Defence of World Peace.

Flower of the Caribbean

A storm has blown up over the Caribbean,
An island of heroes rises from tumbling waves.
Heads high, the proud people of Cuba
Stare at the paper tiger with contempt.

With bare fists they have knocked down traitors,
They have kicked the Yankees aside,
Avenging the wrongs of the Latin Americans,
Blazing a trail for all colonial peoples.

Cuba! Cuba!
Flower of the Caribbean,
The flower of revolution spreads fragrance afar,
Your enemies grind their teeth, your friends rejoice.

The flames that burn your sugar-cane plantations
Seem to be burning our homes!
Though far apart, our hearts are one
In Peking and Havana.

May our poets' words become swords
To help you to strike down black birds of prey.
¡Viva la revolucion gloriosa!
¡Viva la heroica Cuba!

Yuan Shui-po has written many volumes of poetry, including *Winter, Winter*; *Songs of Ma Fan-to*; *North China, Peking, Vienna* and *Spring Oriole*. He has been until recently editor of the literary page of the *Renmin Ribao*.

We Send off Our *Avion de Poesia*

NOT labour alone
But heartfelt passion too
Has built this soaring bridge of gold;
Not blood and sweat alone
But brotherly love as well
Have formed this great winged stream.

Here is our *Avion de Poesia*,
Its landmark the sun,
Its passport our peoples' friendship;
Here is our *Avion de Poesia*,
Its flag the bright dawn,
Its support the triumphant East wind.

To you our greetings, friend Guillen!
Solemnly we respond to your call
In the defence of your dear motherland.
To you our greetings, friend Alberti!
Once more we embrace you
In our common struggle against imperialism.

Kuo Hsiao-chuan is one of China's younger poets. His works include two anthologies of poetry, *To Young Citizens* and *Plunge into the Fiery Struggle*, and a collection of essays *Blade to Blade*. He is an editor of *Poetry* monthly, Peking.

Take off, gold bridge!
For Cuba and for peace
Our people begrudge no effort or sacrifice;
Take off, great stream!
For our true friends and brothers,
Our poets, our fighters, bare their loyal hearts.

Farewell, *Avion de Poesia!*
Gazing towards the southwest horizon,
We await your glorious news of victory;
Farewell, *Avion de Poesia!*
Listening to the roaring waves,
We exult to see the mountains erupt in flames
In Latin America!

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi



CHUAN KUAN-FU

Snow Lotus of the Pasture-land

One fine summer day, the farm leadership gave me a job: I was to go to our mountain pastures to fetch sheep-bones to be ground into fertilizer for our 80,000 *mou* of high-yield cotton. I must confess that though I'd been agronomist at this farm for nearly three years, I'd never been up the Tianshan Mountains and didn't even know what the pasture-land was like. Luckily, Old Liang, leader of the carters' team, was going with me. He had worked in the mountains for three years and had headed a shepherd's team. He knew the mountains like the palm of his hand. With such a man as my guide, I had nothing to fear.

We started out in a horse cart. A flourish of the whip, and away we bowled down the highway. Old Liang was a good driver. Trees, cotton fields and ditches receded quickly on both sides as the horses cantered along and the cool breeze fanned my face and ballooned my shirt. Comfortable and relaxed, I was about to ask the old man about our destination when I noticed a package beside him which had come undone through the jolting

of the cart. It was a pair of pillow-cases embroidered with lotus flowers. Wrapping it up again for him, I asked, "Who did you buy these pillow-cases for, Old Liang?"

He turned to me with a grin. "My grand-daughter."

That was queer. I had heard that he was a lonely old bachelor.

"What?" I stared. "Have you a grand-daughter?"

He slowed the horses down to a trot. "Why not?" He eyed me askance. "Ask anyone you please in the mountains. They all know what a fine grand-daughter I have, not only pretty, but with the kindest, warmest heart. She's one of our best hands at the cattle farm."

This sounded so circumstantial that I could not but be convinced. "What's her name?" I asked.

"Hsueh Lien-hua."

A pretty enough name. Since Lien-hua means lotus, no wonder he had bought those pillow-cases with the lotus pattern. But on second thought I grew sceptical again. "I never heard that you were married, Old Liang. How did you come by a grand-daughter?"

After hedging for a while, he told me the whole story.

This happened two summers ago, Old Liang began.

Our cattle farm wasn't yet a year old then and conditions were not so good. There was little equipment to speak of and very few men. Although in name I was head of the shepherds' team, I was the one and only shepherd on our farm. That's why I was set on doing a good job with my flock. But you can imagine how difficult it is for one man to care for nearly three hundred sheep, particularly when it's time for the summer shearing which has to be finished quickly — in less than a fortnight. For if you don't get down to shearing promptly, once the wool becomes limp the best shearer can't do a thing. That was why I kept asking the farm director for men. One day, when he rode up to see about the shearing, I repeated my request. "You can't expect a leader to go without a team for ever, chief," I complained. "It's high time you gave me some reinforcements."

He knitted his brows and said, "What can I do? You know how it is on our farm." This led me to expect a flat refusal, but

instead he said: "I tell you what. We'll lend you our new vet for a couple of days — how about that?"

I was overjoyed. "What's this vet like? A good worker?"

"Of course. I guarantee you'll be satisfied."

As soon as he left, I repaired my half dozen shears and set to work. To my surprise, three days went by but nothing happened. There was not a sign of the vet. I sighed. The director was a busy man: he must have forgotten. I would have to finish the job myself. By going all out, I might get it done in ten days.

On the fourth day, I got up at dawn and started shearing. I hadn't been at it long when a girlish voice broke the silence:

"I'm so glad I've found you at last, granddad!"

I looked up. There stood a slip of a girl in her teens, wearing a khaki-coloured dress, with a large leather satchel over one shoulder. She had big, limpid eyes, and hair braided in plaits.

"Whose daughter are you?" I asked. "And what do you want with me?"

"I'm the farm's new vet. The director told me to come and help you with the shearing."

I felt as if I'd fallen through the ice. This was carrying a joke too far. The director had sent me a child, and a girl at that! Instead of helping, she'd have me worrying about her all day long. "Go on home!" I waved her away.

"Why? What's wrong?" Her eyes were round.



"I don't need any help," I told her crossly. She breathed fast for a second or two. I could almost see her hair bristle. "Now she'll fly into a tantrum," I told myself.

But no, she smiled and said coaxingly: "But, grandad, the director sent me here. You don't want me to disobey orders, do you?" She certainly had me there.

I racked my brains and countered: "Have you done any shearing before?" This time I had her. She stuttered and flushed, but couldn't find a good answer. I was pleased. "Now you've nothing to say for yourself," I told her silently, "and I'm going to send you right back."

But with another engaging smile, she tried again. "The director told me you're a very experienced shepherd and know all about shearing. 'Just go to Grandad Liang,' he said, 'and in less than half a day you'll get the hang of it. The old man's so kind, he'll probably treat you like his own daughter.'"

What a tongue the little lass had! No one could help but be softened by her honeyed words. I gave up. I should simply have to put up with her. "All right." I handed her some shears. "You can stay and be my helper. If you keep the shears sharpened every day and don't get in my way, you'll have fulfilled your quota a hundred per cent."

She gave me a sharp look at that, then pouted. I pretended not to notice and bent to get on with my work. "Don't you blame me, little girl," I was saying silently. "It's not a simple job, shearing sheep. It's bad enough if you cut your finger, but it's worse if you nip the sheep. That may lead to tetanus or some other contagious disease which would be the end of the whole flock."

After clipping two sheep, I wanted a sharper pair of shears. As I put down the ones I was using, before I could open my mouth she had passed me another pair. All this time she had been standing there watching me work with round eyes which missed nothing.

The shears she gave me were good and sharp. I finished another sheep in less than an hour. Before these shears were dull, she handed me another pair. "You make a good helper," I admitted. "You're doing a good job." She said nothing. Maybe she was still annoyed.

I went on working until the sun was overhead and I had lost track of the number of sheep I'd shorn. When I wanted another change of shears, nothing happened. "Shears!" I said, but there was no answer. I repeated "Shears!" Still no response. I looked up. There, close beside me, was a row of sharpened shears, but the girl had disappeared. "Must have gone off somewhere to play," I thought. "She's still a child, after all."

I clipped four more sheep till my back and legs were sore and my fingers were stiff. "Got to pack up," I told myself. "I must have something to eat and drink before going on."

To my surprise, when I got back to the tent the little girl was waiting for me with a meal all cooked and ready. My dirty clothes had been washed clean, and even my dingy sheet which had looked more like a mop cloth than a sheet was washed and smoothed flat. I stood gaping, not knowing what to say. Quietly, she brought in a basin of warm water and placed it in front of me. I was so touched, I didn't know what to do. "Come and have a wash, grandad!" She drew a brand-new white facecloth out of her satchel and dropped it into the basin. "We'll eat when you've finished."

As soon as I had cleaned up, a bowl of fine noodles, piping hot, was put in my hands. I'd passed sixty years in wind and storm; my hair was white, my back bent, never had anyone treated me with such kindness before. My eyes were moist. "What a good heart you have, little one," I muttered.

"You tend the sheep out here in the mountains all the year round, grandad," she said shyly, put out by my praise. "You're creating wealth for our farm. You work so hard that you've no time to look after yourself. It's only right for me to wash your things for you. Compared with the work you're doing, this is nothing at all."

I was so touched that I became completely tongue-tied. It dawned on me then that the young people brought up by our Party are absolute jewels: they are so considerate of us old folk and take such good care of us.

After supper she shut up the sheep and inspected them one by one, commenting with approval on their fine condition. Then she slung her satchel over her shoulder and announced that she was off to Kazakh Aul, a village near by. I told her to come

back early. She agreed and tripped happily away. I sat smoking on a rock, wondering how to fix up a place for her to sleep. My tent was no bigger than a mosquito net, barely large enough for one person. I might as well let her use it, since I didn't want her to catch cold. Young people, after all, were rather soft. I brushed my blanket and quilt thoroughly and stuffed up the cracks in the tent which might let in the wind. This done, I sat down again to wait. I waited until the sky was dotted with stars but there was no sign of her. Afraid that something might have happened, I went over to Kazakh Aul. I found her by a camp-fire giving injections to the herdsmen's sheep. In just one evening she had become like one of the family. She called the old men *ata* and the women *ana*.^{*} They kept telling me what a good girl she was. While she was working she chatted with those around her, making them laugh heartily. She was such a friendly, cheerful little thing that nobody could help taking to her. She worked hard till late at night. Before we left, she promised the villagers to come again the next day.

Back at our place, she refused to use the tent, insisting that she was young and used to sleeping in the open. It wouldn't do, she said, for grandad to catch a cold. I pulled a long face and threatened: "If you don't do as I say, I'll really be angry and send you away!"

She wasn't worried at all. "You're just trying to frighten me," she said with a smile. "You wouldn't have the heart."

This made me laugh outright. There was nothing I could do but humour her. With my fur coat and a quilt, I made up a bed of sorts for her on the ground. She couldn't refuse that and lay down, wrapping herself in the fur. I must say the girls of today are fearless as lions.

Not wanting to sleep in the tent myself, I lay down in the open on a worn-out blanket. After a while I felt warm and comfortable. Sitting up in surprise, I discovered that she had put the fur coat and quilt over me. She had disappeared again. There was only a blanket where she ought to have been. I got up in a panic and looked around. In the bright moonlight, I saw her

^{*} Uncle and aunt in Kazakh language.

bending down in front of the sheep-pen. The night breeze carried the sound of clipping to me. I tiptoed over and found that she was practising shearing. When she looked up and saw me, she hid the shears behind her and smiled like a child caught doing something forbidden.

"Do you want to catch your death of cold?" I blurted out, rather angry because she had given me such a fright. "Why don't you get some sleep after such a busy day?"

She simply smiled.

"It's too bad of you," I went on. "What are you going to do if you fall ill?"

She began hopping and skipping, and pummelled herself here and there. "Stop thinking I'm so delicate, grandad, please!" she replied. "I'm not a glass doll. I won't break so easily. Besides, I can't sleep."

"Most young people eat big meals and sleep like a log. Why are you so different?"

"The director sent me here to give you a hand with the shearing. How am I going back to report that I couldn't even learn to handle the shears? Do you want me to be criticized, grandad? You must help me."

"You go to sleep now," I said, no longer angry. "I promise to teach you tomorrow."

"But I can't sleep until I've learned how!"

What could I do but teach her then and there in the moonlight? The girl was as clever as she was stubborn. In no time she was doing quite a good job, cutting smoothly and evenly. At last I snatched her shears away and said: "Well done! Go to sleep now."

"Let me finish this one sheep, please!"

"No. Save your energy for tomorrow."

"All right." At last she consented unwillingly. She must have been worn out, for she gave a huge yawn.

I took her into the tent. Bringing in the quilt and fur coat, I ordered her sternly: "You're to sleep here, if you don't want me to be angry!" She obeyed me this time. I went back to my blanket outside. But I couldn't sleep for thinking over the happenings of the day.

At dawn, I warmed some water and woke her.

"How could I oversleep?" She looked quite ashamed.

"Why did you insist on staying up so late last night?" I teased her.

"Ah, you're a great one for finding fault," she retorted with a laugh.

When she had finished washing and we were about to start shearing, some people came hurrying our way. "Doctor!" they called.

I wondered what had happened. The herdsmen spoke very little Han language and couldn't make themselves understood in their excitement. Finally they switched to their own language, and then I made out that Old Shunus' little girl was very ill and they wanted our vet to have a look at her. I translated their request. She shouldered her satchel at once and was ready to start.

I pulled her back and said: "You can doctor sheep, but can you treat a child?"

"It's all right! I used to be a nurse. If the child is seriously ill, I can't stand by and do nothing." She patted her satchel. "I brought some medicine with me, just in case."

After she had left with the herdsmen, I began shearing on my own. But I couldn't finish even one sheep, I was so worried. If she should slip up in treating the child, it would make a very bad impression on the herdsmen. I decided to go and have a look.

When I reached Old Shunus' tent, a crowd had already gathered there. They stared, wide-eyed, as my girl gave the sick child an injection. The child's life, the herdsmen's hopes and the old man's happiness hung on her nimble hands. My head felt heavy and my heart beat fast. A burden as great as the Tianshan Mountains was on her young shoulders. Would she measure up to it? Wasn't she afraid?

The child remained in a coma after the injection, her breath came in gasps, her face was fiery red. Our vet, like an experienced mother, took the child in her arms, patted her back and rubbed her chest till she coughed, spat out some phlegm and uttered a cry. Everyone in the tent heaved a sigh of relief. My girl's face was covered with sweat.

Old Shunus threw his arms round her and said tearfully: "Thank you! Thank you!" Then drying his eyes, he asked: "What is your name, my good girl?"

"Hsueh Lien-hua," she said, embarrassed to be the centre of so much attention.

"Ah, Snow Lotus!"* he cried. "Good, that's a fairy herb. I'll never forget your name—it's more precious than gold!" His beard quivered with emotion.

That's how everybody came to call her Snow Lotus. She became known to all the herdsmen, whom she treated for minor ailments every day after she had finished shearing and sorting out the wool.

A week later, we had shorn all the sheep and Shunus' little girl had recovered from pneumonia. Before going back to the farm, Snow Lotus spent a whole day giving the herdsmen medical treatment. Our tent served as a temporary clinic. As I watched the people crowding round her I was wondering what to give her as a farewell present. There was no department store in the mountains, nowhere to buy anything, though I had money. Finally I decided to give her something that grows in the hills. I walked more than thirty *li* and climbed a snow-capped mountain to pick a dozen snow lotus. I also gathered some wild garlic and leeks which I chopped up with mutton to make dumplings. When all the herdsmen were gone I brought out the boiled dumplings. She ate heartily, without standing on ceremony, praising my cooking all the time. And while eating she laughed to herself.

"What do you find so funny?" I asked.

Her only answer was another laugh. After repeated questions, she replied: "You're just like my grandfather."

"It's a pity I'm not." I sighed. "He's a lucky man to have a grand-daughter like you."

"You can count me your grand-daughter if you like," she answered, trying to hold back her laughter.

* Hsueh Lien-hua means Snow Lotus (*Involucrate Saussurea*), a yellow flower shaped like a lotus which grows in the snowy mountains. It is a rare medicinal herb, and the Kazakhs believed that it had magic properties.

I couldn't believe my ears. "What did you say?" I demanded. "What did you say?"

"I'd like to be your grand-daughter," she said seriously.

I couldn't go on eating as if nothing had happened. With a lump in my throat, I jumped up to fetch the bunch of snow lotus.

At this point the cart started rocking. We had already covered thirty *li* on the Gobi and reached the Tianshan pass. We were climbing slowly upward on a narrow track. Old Liang shouted at the horses and then turned to me. "I don't know what good deeds I did in some past life to get such a fine grand-daughter now that I've one foot in the grave. I couldn't tell you half the good she's done here at the farm even if I went on for three days and three nights. Once, when she was driving sheep to their winter shelter, the path was blocked by snow. To make a passage for the sheep, she rolled on the snow ahead of them. In crossing an icy stream she carried the lambs over one by one and nearly got drowned herself. One night three rams were missing. She went out to look for them in snow that came to her waist, and had to fight off wolves on the way too. I learned later that she grew up in the old liberated area in Shantung and served as a nurse on the Korean front. She came to our farm after the war. It's true, you know, that someone brought up in the revolution, who has been steeled in battles, is quite different from ordinary people." The old man was in high spirits, proud and happy. And I, too, was eager to get to the cattle farm and see the girl for myself.

Our cart stopped in front of the farm office. Old Liang took the pillow-cases and smiled at me. "I want you to meet my grand-daughter first." I followed him to a door marked "Laboratory." We went in. Glancing around the room, he asked: "Where is my grand-daughter?"

"She's been transferred," a woman answered.

"Where to?"

"To the farm in the Kunlun Mountains to help to develop animal husbandry there."

"Why didn't she tell me?" Old Liang looked taken aback.



Hankow at Night

Water-colour by Cheng Hsun

Cheng Hsun, a young artist of twenty-seven, was born in Tsingtao, Shantung Province. He did cultural work in the People's Liberation Army for some time but is now a research student in the art section of the Central Institute of Drama.

"She didn't have time. It was decided yesterday morning and she set off that same afternoon. Oh, yes, she left a package with me for you. Come to my hostel and we'll get it."

I followed them out. Looking at the glittering snow-capped peaks and the flocks of sheep round us, I felt a deep respect for this girl about whom I had heard so much. It was disappointing not to be able to meet her. But I was sure Old Liang's brave and lovely Snow Lotus would grow even more splendid and more beautiful among the far-away herdsmen of the Kunlun Mountains.

*Translated by Chin Sheng
Illustrations by Shu Lan*





FU CHIH-HUA

Turgen the Guide

It was five days since we had left Urumchi, capital of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Climbing steadily, we reached the depths of the Tienshan Range. At last, we halted to rest in a small log cabin. I gazed out through the cracked window at the haze of swirling snow. Hardly ideal weather for travel! As I turned to ask directions of the group of local people who had gathered in the cabin, my interpreter, standing beside me, muttered, "What a snow-storm. Looks as if we're stuck!"

"Don't try to go on, comrade. Even if it weren't snowing, it wouldn't be safe. Ever since those mountain torrents in 1953 washed away the road built the year before, none of us have dared to travel in that direction. And you're heading for the Slope of Ice—the most dangerous part of all! Don't attempt it, whatever you do!" This was the urging of Hamiti, Principal of Number Two Kazakh Primary School, and the cabin's host.

We had come to explore a new route for the disrupted highway between Urumchi in north Sinkiang and Korla in the south.

We wanted to see how much of the old highway was usable, and we were also seeking another possible route that could be opened up quickly and economically. To complete our survey, we would have to traverse both the front and rear gorges all the way to the Tiengar Ice Ridge.

It was a risky venture. Before us was the ominous Rear Gorge. Beyond that rose the huge, bare Balatigou Mountain, after which came the Tiengar Ice Ridge, 4,300 metres above sea level.

I squatted down and sketched a picture of the terrain on the floor with chalk. "What is this place ahead called?" I asked the local people.

"Rear Gorge," replied one.

"How long is it?"

The man couldn't answer. The interpreter stated my question again, but still no one was able to reply.

"How is the trail?" I queried.

"Stony. It's full of rocks!" the local folk chorused. They shook their heads discouragingly.

The door swung open and a big hunter strode in. A white cloth was wrapped around his head and he wore a voluminous sheepskin coat. Shaking the snow from his garments, he shrugged off the rifle that was slung across his back and thumped it down in a corner, then squatted beside it, supporting his face with his big thick hands. His fingers concealed half his visage, but I could see that he had a sun-blackened complexion, a high straight nose, and deep-set sparkling blue eyes. A moustache adorned his upper lip. It seemed to me I had met this hunter before, but for the moment I couldn't remember where.

"Production committeeman, will you be their guide?" Hamiti asked a huge ruddy-faced young farmer.

"I can take them through the Rear Gorge, principal," the young fellow replied with a smile, "but I don't know the paths beyond that." He shook his drover's whip awkwardly and again squatted down.

Principal Hamiti's long stiff eyebrows knitted into a frown of concentration, as he kneaded the palms of his hands together. The hunter thudded the butt of his rifle against the floor and rose to his feet.

"I'll lead them. I can manage it. My Grandma Alideng lives out that way." He swallowed. "I've been a guide for PLA comrades many times!"

He kept his eyes on me as he spoke. Who was he? A guide for the PLA? Where had I seen him? When our eyes met, the hunter rushed up and threw his arms around me, then shook me by the shoulders and cried excitedly:

"Comrade, don't you remember me?"

Looking at him closely, I finally recollected. "Turgen, it's you! Of course I remember!" I shouted happily.

Turgen was delighted. "Aiya, it's been years! How wonderful to see you again, comrade commander. Do you still remember the big mountain goat?"

"How could I forget?"

It happened four years ago, in May 1952.

We were building the Urumchi-Korla Highway. I was in charge of the People's Liberation Army construction brigade on the southern end. My outfit had reached the Ulastaichahan Plateau and we were pushing on to finish the most difficult stretch — between there and the Slope of Ice — by July first, anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. I decided to take the Seventh Company ahead as a working vanguard.

That day, we had a heavy rain-storm mixed with hail. Company Seven assembled on the plateau. Raindrops struck their faces and dripped off, as big as beans. The cook squad, standing in the company's rear, covered their heads with the big cauldrons.

At the start, the trail wasn't so bad. But gradually it grew stony, and was very hard on the feet. When we reached the bottom of the Slope of Ice, travelling became even more difficult. Assistant Company Leader Wang and I were in front. The political instructor brought up the rear. The path kept getting steeper and the air thinner. We were all breathing with difficulty. The rain had turned to hail which struck crackling against our frozen capes. Comrade Wang's hands were covered with snow from the steep climb. Once in a while he would slip and slide ten feet backwards, but he continued to creep upwards. Nobody spoke. Everyone was conserving his breath.

One of the platoon leaders came trotting up, panting for breath. "Reporting to Company Leader Wang," he said, "there's a big mountain goat ahead to the right."

Everyone was very happy to hear this. It was big news. Ordinarily, we ate only corn muffins every day, from grain which we raised ourselves, in order not to put any burden on the local people.

Wang and I halted and peered in the direction in which the platoon leader was pointing. Deep in a mountain hollow, we could see something moving. It looked like a wild animal with long hair. Probably a giant mountain goat, we thought. Wang gave the platoon leader an order:

"Take the leader of Squad Five with you and bring it down."

We waited for the shots and prepared to pick up the dead game.

"Hold your fire!" cried an urgent voice. "It's not a mountain goat! Hold your fire!" The political instructor, holding his field-glasses to his eyes, was shouting to us from the rear of the column.

"Don't shoot!" Wang relayed the order. He turned and asked the political instructor, "What is it?"

Walking towards us along the stony path, the political instructor called back, "A man, most likely!"

As we gazed at the distant object more carefully, we could see that it was indeed a man, not a mountain goat. And he was coming towards us.

A big goatskin coat over his shoulders and a foxfur hat on his head, the man was wearing padded breeches and cowhide boots. He had deep-set blue eyes, a high-bridged nose, a darkly tanned face, and wore a moustache. I clapped him on the shoulder and asked:

"Where are you going, neighbour?"

"Home," he said.

"And where is that, neighbour?" Wang interposed.

"Over there. . . ." He pointed in the direction of the snow-capped peaks.

Not only could he speak the Han language, but he was quite natural and unrestrained. I thought we ought to get to know him better, and perhaps ask his help.

"What are you called?" I asked.

He smiled. "Turgen." Then he put a question. "Where are you fellows heading?"

"The Ice Ridge. Is it far?"

"About eight *li*."

We explained that we had come to build a new road that would link north and south Sinkiang; we wanted to open a big door in the Tienshan Mountain to provide a free passage between the grassy plains and the cities. The more he listened, the more interested and excited he grew. Finally, he insisted on becoming our guide.

That was how we met Turgen. He guided us and we climbed the Ice Ridge together.

Five years had elapsed. Who would have thought that we'd meet again today in this Kazakh cabin.

Slowly the sky darkened and people gradually left the cabin. The question of the guide have been settled, we decided to set out the next day.

Turgen rose, slung his gun across his back, and said with a smile, "I'll go home and get ready. See you first thing in the morning." He went out of the door.

The following day, when there was just enough light to see the outlines of the furnishings in the cabin, our cook carried our box of dry rations to the doorway, opened the door and counted our muffins. In response to my question he said we had only enough for three days.

"We must complete our mission on time," he said, "or our rations will run out."

I paced the courtyard, waiting for Turgen. He soon arrived, riding a horse. He wore a red Kazakh hood over his head and was dressed in his long goatskin coat, his rifle slung across his back.

He dismounted and we discussed our plans. "I'll go on ahead and scout out a path. I'll wait for you in the Balatigou Mountain. Then we'll go on together," said Turgen. Vaulting into the saddle, he looked first at me and then at Hamiti with his large blue eyes and said, "I'm off."

My men and I followed his tracks.

The magnificent Tienshan Mountains are an enchanting sight. But we were in no mood to enjoy the scenery. All our thoughts

were on Turgen. By dusk, there was still no sign of him. Could anything have gone wrong? We were beginning to get worried.

Just at that time, as we rounded a bend, we saw him. Blocking our path, he shouted, "Dismount, dismount. I've borrowed a tent for you. It's here, waiting."

He led us first to the tent of his grandmother, Alideng. Inside, it was spotlessly clean, plainly having been readied to receive guests. Felt mats had been spread all around, and in the centre a kettle hanging from a tripod was heating over a fire of cow chips.

We circled around to the left and removed our shoes before entering, in keeping with Kazakh custom. We seated ourselves, cross-legged, on the mats. Turgen sat with his back to the door. The tent flap hung quite low. After a while, an elderly Kazakh lady entered. Turgen stood up and introduced her.

"This is Grandma Alideng."

We all rose and shook hands with her. Her long fine hair was already grey, and her thin face was wrinkled. After greeting her, I said, "You have a hard life here in the mountains, old grandma, and we're putting you to more trouble."

"You're welcome guests," she replied. Taking a hollow bamboo stick, she puffed up the fire until the kettle was bubbling merrily. When the water was boiled, she poured us each a bowl of tea and added milk.

Again the tent flap moved, and a young Kazakh woman came in. Her rosy complexion, her glistening bright eyes and long fine lashes were completely charming. The gold-edged bracelets on her wrists clinked against the handle of the bucket of water she was carrying.

Turgen rose and introduced her. "She's called Hadayi. She herds horses in the co-operative just like a man."

Hadayi placed one hand on her breast and made me a courteous bow.

By now it was dark. How lucky we were to be able to spend the night in a place like this. Our cook passed around the flat-cakes, only one to a person because of our limited supply.

That night we slept on felt mats in another tent. We were still hungry and it was very cold. We lay huddled close together, but we couldn't get warm. I looked at my watch. Three o'clock. I could hear people talking in Grandma Alideng's tent and Turgen

still hadn't returned to sleep. I got up, put on my clothes and went outside, intending to call him back to get some rest. We had to climb the Ice Ridge later that day. As I was about to enter the old lady's tent, she came out with half a sack of flour, which she handed to me. There was a sincere expression in her kindly eyes.

Warmth flowed through me like a stream. It seemed to me that what I was holding in my hands was not half a sack of white flour, but an ardent beating heart. I tried to push the gift back to her.

"You're building a road to prosperity across the grasslands," she said agitatedly. "This is only a small token from us herders. You must accept it."

I took the sack to the tent where my men were sleeping and cried in a moved voice, "Get up, comrades! Our neighbours have sent us a sack of white flour."

Everyone jumped up, all talking at once. "This solves a big problem. Now the question is how to cook it. Which way is the quickest?"

No one was interested in sleep any more. We gathered around the cauldron and made noodles. We were all very grateful to Grandma Alideng.

At dawn, we set out. Today, we were going to climb the Tiengar Ice Ridge, the last and most difficult section of the road we were surveying.

At the foot of the Ice Ridge, Turgen broke trail for us. There was a large stretch of loose shale on the mountainside covered by deep snow. We went up along an old winding path, proceeding carefully, for a misstep was likely to mean a tumble into a deep snow-drift. We followed in Turgen's footsteps. Although the snow was only knee high, it was painfully cold. Turgen would climb a stage, then wait for us to catch up. Whenever we came to a dangerous stretch, he would grope for stones beneath the snow and use them to pave the slippery uneven places.

"It's all ice here!" he would shout. "Watch your step!"

At times he would pull us, at times he would carry us on his back.

Later, we were climbing along a steep cliffside that looked as if it had been cut with a knife. Above, it towered into the white

clouds. Below, it dropped into a bottomless gorge. It was enough to make you shiver. Turgen lay down in the snow with his rifle beneath him, anchoring his arms around a big rock. Then he told us to grasp his head and rifle for support. It was thus that we got over the most dangerous part.

Once again we were atop the Ice Ridge. I saw a stone hut we had erected in 1952 and the remains of a stove Turgen had built for us. A slogan the men had written in red paint was still visible on one of the walls.

All this stirred memories. "Tienshan, Tienshan," I cried. "We were fated to meet again." My second in command, who stood beside me, said, "When we opened the first road over the Ice Ridge on July 1, 1952, General Wang set up a red victory flag here. Today, we've come back again to restore the Urumchi-Korla Highway. That calls for another red flag."

That sounded like a good idea to me. We borrowed the red cloth with which our messenger wrapped his rifle, and Turgen cut us a good straight branch and we erected our flag pole. I took my pen and wrote on the flag in big letters: "The Production and Construction Regiment of the People's Liberation Army surveyed a road here on October 22, 1956." We all signed our names.

I read them aloud, then turned to Turgen and clapped him on the shoulder. "Please put your name on, too," I said.

His hands gripping the barrel of his rifle, he said in a moved voice, "What have I done to deserve such an honour?" In spite of his modesty, I insisted. When our little flag was fluttering on high, I glanced at him and saw that his eyes were moist.

On the way back, we picked up Grandma Alideng and Hadayi and returned together to the Number Two Kazakh Primary School. When we arrived at the settlement, Turgen and the girl were immediately surrounded by the local folk, who plied them with questions. When Turgen told them that we had already surveyed the Ice Ridge and the PLA was going to restore the highway, the people were overjoyed. Smiling, they gazed at us with infinite hope in their eyes.

The next day, we started back for Urumchi. We had just set out when we heard the clatter of rapid hoofbeats behind us. Who could it be? I looked back. But because the horse was galloping

rapidly and the rider was crouching low, I couldn't see his face clearly. I pulled my own mount to a halt and waited.

When he caught up, he leaped from the horse's back. It was then I saw that it wasn't a man but a woman. Her long grey hair hung over her face, and she was panting for breath. It was Grandma Alideng. Walking up, she stared at me and asked:

"Why are you leaving, comrade? What about the road?"

I could tell from her eyes that she was afraid we had abandoned our plan to rebuild the highway. To the herdsmen in the mountains, the road meant prosperity!

"Don't worry, Grandma Alideng," I told her firmly. "We're going to build that road. We're returning to get our men. We'll start construction immediately."

The old lady looked at me thoughtfully and she said, "We'll be waiting for your early return!" Mounting her horse, she rode away.

Dynamite explosions thundered mightily. The mountains trembled, the earth shook. An engineering feat that would conquer nature and bring happiness to the people—the Urumchi-Korla Highway—was in the process of construction.

The Tianshan Range was bathed in glorious sunlight and red flags fluttered in the wind as our army of builders went into action. In the front and rear gorges, on the heights and below, everywhere our fighters were at work—on the peaks, on the slopes, scaling the rearing cliffs with rope ladders. For safety, the men drove iron spikes into crevices, and tied themselves to the spikes with thick ropes. Suspended on the dizzy heights, they pounded holes into the rock with clanging hammers. Pneumatic drill hoses spread over the range like the filaments of a spider's web, while heavy machines roared in the valleys and bursting explosives shook the mountains near and far. Day and night men and vehicles flowed in endless streams. The explosions never ceased, the lamps were never extinguished.

I walked up to a compressor engine at the foot of a bluff in the entrance of the rear gorge. Men, wearing safety helmets, were attaching a pneumatic hose. This hose had to cross the river to an opening in the rock face on the opposite side. But the force of the tumbling waves was so strong that each time a support for the hose was erected in the middle of the river, it was knocked

down. The men waded in to weight the support's foundation with rocks. One of the men, I noticed, looked rather different from the others. He would take the rocks that were handed along, then squat down in the raging stream and lay them firmly and evenly in place, although the broiling water was savagely buffeting his face and chest, making him stagger. As he paused for a moment to wipe the spray from his face with a big thick hand, I saw the moustache on his lip.

"Turgen!" I cried.

"Ho! How are you?" He raised a powerful arm from the water and waved a greeting.

"Why have you let a civilian go into that dangerous river?" I reproachfully asked the platoon leader in charge of the compressor engine.

"Who let him? He jumped in himself before we could stop him. Turgen has a lot of experience at laying stones under water. We've all become great friends these past few days."

With the advent of spring, the ice and snow melted, and on the grazing flats in the front and rear gorges, it rained heavily. The waters all drained down into the Paiyang River, bringing with them huge chunks of ice. The annual mountain torrent was rapidly building up, seriously menacing the whole project.

That night, the torrent burst. Water roared through the ravines. The bridge in front of our headquarters was completely submerged. Mounting its banks, the river spread to within a metre of our front door. We rushed emergency dyke work, labouring all night, cutting away half the mountain behind us and shifting it to the river bank. Only then were we able to keep the river from entering our building. At daybreak, we stuck a pole into the water from the dyke and checked it again after breakfast. The flood was receding. Finally, the bridge re-emerged from the muddy waters. Our engineer and I trudged through the mire to take a close look at it. The timbers had all been swept away, but the frame was still in good shape. We ordered immediate repairs.

A more serious problem was that of supplies. The flood had washed out our road to Urumchi. We had to build another quickly.

The situation was urgent. I sent for Turgen.

Early the following dawn, while the grassy plains still slumbered in morning dew, a group set out to explore a new route. Turgen was in the van.

Thanks to him, we found a way to the forest region, where there was a road leading to Urumchi. Truck after truck was soon rolling to us from the city, laden with grain, flour, machines and equipment. . . .

As a rainbow arched over the Tienshan Mountains and joyous multitudes celebrated at the foot, the last stretch of a splendid highway was completed across the Tiengar Ice Ridge, linking north and south Sinkiang, and throwing wide the door to the region's great riches. We joined the official opening ceremony at the entrance to the front gorge.

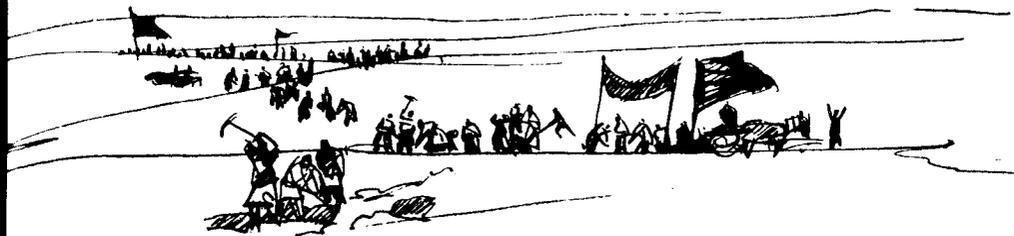
The artillery thundered a twelve-salvo salute. Innumerable gay flags and banners heightened the beauty of the imposing Tien-shan Range. A colourfully decorated speakers platform of pine boughs added to the atmosphere of eternal youth and endless prosperity.

Dressed in new uniforms, with medals on their chests, the PLA fighter-builders were all smiles, their faces flushed with happiness. Days of wind and frost, snow and rain, in this instant ended in glorious triumph. Their arms laden with bouquets of fresh flowers, the fighters stood by the side of the broad highway they had constructed, waiting, waiting for the leaders of the autonomous region, for their military high commanders, to arrive. . . . People said it was their happiest, most joyous, most unforgettable day!

As I thought back on all we had gone through in the year and five months of building this highway, I remembered Turgen first of all. I felt I ought to spend this day with him together, and I searched for him among the local people who had come to attend the celebration. But I couldn't find him anywhere. Someone tapped me on the back and I turned around. It was Grandma Alideng. I asked her where Turgen was.

"He's gone up to Ili," she said, "to be a guide for a team of geologists."

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustration by Huang Chou*



ULANBAGAN

The First Spring

In December a northwester blew down from the mountains across the Kolchin grasslands, driving before it heavy swirling snow which built up, first in streaks then in layers, until the plains on both sides of the river were billowing oceans of white.

Hashiget, a vigorous man in his early fifties, was returning from a Party meeting in the county and I was on my way to visit the factories his commune had set up. Riding sturdy Mongolian ponies, we followed along the river into the teeth of the gale. Icicles clung to Hashiget's foxfur hat, frost rimed his dark eyebrows and beard. His broad face was shining and ruddy with cold. Although he had never been a soldier, he wore a fleecelined army greatcoat which flapped in the wind. Our mounts' tails and manes were also buffeted about by the gale, and the animals whinnied irritably as they trotted with crunching hoofbeats through the snow.

When we reached a bend in the river, Hashiget reined in his horse, jumped down and began kicking the snow off a bit of ground. Then he dug with both hands, stirring up such a flurry of snow that I couldn't see. I quickly dismounted, but before I could speak he had grabbed up a fistful of the icy black earth and punched me on the shoulder with it.



"We can bring this frozen dead soil to life!" he shouted. "If you're truly our friend, you'll say so too!"

"I'm sure you will," I said, moved by his fervour.

Pleased, he laughed heartily. Pulling out a bottle of white spirits, he gurgled down half the flask, wiped his mouth with his sleeve and handed me the remainder.

"Finish it off, comrade!"

I'm not much of a drinker, but to oblige him I took a couple of swigs. He pushed his fur hat to the back of his head, leaped on his horse and tore off along the river bank towards the southwest.

After a day of hard riding, at dusk we reached the town headquarters of the commune. This place had been a wilderness half a year before, Hashiget told me, populated only by wolves, antelopes and rabbits. Even the field mice weren't afraid of men. Then the trumpets of the Big Leap had roused this starving, desolate wasteland. The commune herders had set up permanent dwellings here, aided by their worker and peasant brothers. Plants and factories large and small were established, fields were planted with fodder crops. . . .

I gazed at the new town, the lights gleaming in the homes. The wind strummed a tune on the telephone wires, motors hummed a battle song in the factories, and interwoven with these was the bustle of thousands, so that even at night you had the feeling of broad gleaming daylight!

As we neared the centre of the town, two people came rushing towards us. One of them seized Hashiget's rein.

"So you're back at last. We've been waiting and waiting. Tell us — can our women's brigade take part in the operation or not?"

"Which operation?"

"Digging the irrigation canal!"

The speaker was a young woman, and her words popped like roasting soya-beans. Hashiget, dismounting, playfully tugged one of her braids.

"Of course you can!" he said in a hoarse stage whisper.

"Ha! Wonderful! I must tell the girls!" She yanked her braid out of his hand and flew down the street.

Her companion, a young fellow, opened his mouth to say something, but Hashiget cut him short. "Wait a minute. Let me get this guest settled. I'll be right with you."

A crowd of people rushed up and surrounded us, all trying to speak to Hashiget at once.

"Was the canal plan approved?" shouted someone.

Hashiget waved his hands. "Yes! Yes!"

"When do we start?" several people demanded.

"Tomorrow. No, today!" was Hashiget's ringing reply.

"Then we'd better get ready!" several voices cried.

"Right. Get ready and wait for orders!"

The crowd hurried off and Hashiget led me into his house. During the meeting in the county seat I had learned that he was the chairman of his commune and the vice-secretary of its Communist Party committee. He lived modestly and his small brick house was simply furnished. Although there was no fire in the room it seemed pleasantly warm after the biting cold outside.

"Comrade, this room is for you. You can light the stove, cook here or do anything you like. We'll talk later. That milk powder factory you want to visit is very near here. This is a convenient place for you to work."

I had no opportunity to get better acquainted with him. He left within five minutes, not even changing his clothes. But first he fished two bottles out from under the bed, stuffed them into his tunic, grinned at me and walked out.

Where was his wife, his children, I wondered. Surely he didn't live here all alone?

The next morning, I visited the powdered milk factory. A woman about thirty was in charge. When I entered, she was helping other women wrap the factory's products. She smiled at me cordially and, removing her white work gown, led me into her office. As I sat down, she poured me a glass of tea, I noticed on the wall a large photo in a red frame. It looked like a family group picture. And wasn't that Hashiget in the middle? What was his family photo doing in this woman's office? She saw me gazing at the picture and she also stared at it for some time.

"Drink your tea, comrade," she said finally.

I looked at her more closely. Of course—she was the one standing behind Hashiget in the photo, next to a man in army uniform. I accepted the glass she handed me and set it on the table.

"You're . . . are you Hashiget's daughter?"

"No. His daughter-in-law." Her manner grew more friendly. "Do you know him, comrade?"

"I came out here with him. We became good friends almost immediately. I'm staying at his house."

I pointed to the picture on the wall. "Then the man standing next to you is Hashiget's son?"

Her face clouded suddenly, like a storm rising in July. After a long pause, she replied in a low voice, "Yes. He was killed a few years ago fighting the American invaders in Korea. When he was dying, he asked that his army greatcoat be given to his father. . . ."

She said that when her father-in-law received his son's bequest, he didn't shed a tear. Silently he donned the coat, gulped down some white spirits, took his gun, mounted his horse and galloped off into the night. At the time, they were living in a different village, and Hashiget rode 150 *li* till he came to this place, which was then a wilderness. People searched for him for days, but in vain. Everyone thought he had gone mad. The government also sent out search parties, also without success. His daughter-

in-law's eyes were swollen with weeping; she was very worried about him. But ten days later he returned driving a borrowed cart laden with three hundred small antelopes he had shot. He asked the authorities to deliver the game to the forces fighting in Korea.

Later, he joined the grazing co-operative and shortly thereafter became a member of the Communist Party. About the time he was elected leader of his production brigade he urged his daughter-in-law to break away from household drudgery and come out and work. Under his tutelage she too soon became qualified to join the Party. Hashiget was commended four times for his excellent work and was chosen to attend a national conference of labour heroes.

The site of the present commune was the place where he had killed the three hundred antelopes. When the Big Leap began in 1958, he was the first man the Party sent to convert this virgin land into additional pastures. To him it was no wilderness but a treasury, a source of enormous power. A year later, a thriving new town stood here. . . .

The woman in charge of the factory grew more animated as she spoke. The shadows that had clouded her expression when she told of the death of her husband gradually disappeared to be replaced by a warm vivacity as she related her father-in-law's exploits. Finally she laughed and said apologetically:

"Forgive me for rambling on so, comrade. This isn't what you've come to hear at all."

I rose and looked at the picture on the wall—father, son and daughter-in-law. What a pity. I had been on the road with Hashiget for hours, but I had chatted with him very little.

Pouring me a fresh glass the woman urged, "Do sit down, comrade, and drink your tea."

I resumed my seat, but I had no mind for tea drinking. "How far is the place where your father-in-law is digging the canal?" I asked hurriedly.

"Why do you ask?"

"I want to go and see him."

"It's a long way off and very hard to find. But I'm going out three days from now to deliver our very best milk products to our commune members working there. I can take you with me."

In the three days that followed I completed my tour of the commune's factories and on the morning of the fourth day I set out with Hashiget's daughter-in-law in a horse-drawn sleigh laden with gifts. We reached the work site of the canal the same afternoon. But although I looked all over I couldn't find Hashiget. At last with the aid of his daughter-in-law I discovered him in a five-foot pit. I hardly recognized him. His greatcoat was frozen stiff and quite battered looking. He was driving a pickaxe into the frozen ground with earth-shaking blows.

Hashiget was in charge of the project, but he took part in the physical labour along with everybody else. Deeply moved, I decided then and there to join him.

For two months I worked alongside of Hashiget and the members of his commune. By then we had extended the canal across 250 *li* of open plain and reached a rocky mountain through which it was necessary to dig a tunnel five metres in diameter to connect with the river on the other side. This was the most difficult part of the job.

The day we were to begin the tunnel Hashiget called us all together at the foot of the mountain. He stood on a ledge half-way up the slope, one hand on his hip, the other raising his pick. As he shouted the order to start, he swung the pick down sharply, and its steel end sparked against a stone. Thousands of voices responded with a mighty cry. The men charged at the mountain like soldiers going into battle.

Bit by bit we drove through the icy rock of the snow-covered crag. With Hashiget leading the shock brigade, in a few days we had bored several hundred metres. The tunnel had to be completed before the spring thaw. I too was a member of the shock brigade and I never left Hashiget's side. We worked day and night, pausing only for catnaps, then resuming our onslaught against the iron-hard rock. Illumination in the pitch black tunnel was provided by pressure lamps which danced to the rhythmic blows of our ringing pickaxes.

We spent three months in that tunnel. Although we laboured feverishly, we were happy. No one ever knew what it was to be tired. Then one morning we pierced the last wall of rock. The first to see the sun was Hashiget. He plunged through to the other side as if eager to hug the flaming ball to his chest and

dashed up the mountain. I don't know where we got the strength but we all swarmed up behind him. When we reached the top and gathered around him, I saw that all that remained of the greatcoat his son had left him was the left sleeve, dangling from his wrist. His face was drawn and had been scratched in a dozen places by chips of flying rock. But his eyes shone brighter than ever. From the height, he gazed down at the river. Spring was coming. There was a warm fragrance of fresh blossoms in the air. Although spring began late in these northern parts, gazing at this man so brimming with energy I had the feeling that it had come already.

Two days later, water from the river flowed through the tunnel and along the canal, gathering in a large natural basin on the land of the commune. From that day on, there was never any shortage of water here again. The people celebrated the first spring since the founding of their commune by strolling along the shores of their man-made lake.

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Shu Lan*

Writings of the Last Generation

WEI CHIN-CHIH

Wet Nurse

Wei Chin-chih was born in a peasant family in Shenghsien County, Chekiang Province in 1900. After he finished school in the Chekiang No. 1 Normal School he taught at various times in a primary school, a middle school and a university. His literary activities started around 1927. He was among the early members of the revolutionary literary organization The League of Left-Wing Writers which was formed in 1930 in Shanghai.

Most of his pre-liberation stories dealt with the economic bankruptcy of the countryside and the wretched life of the peasants and the poor people in the small cities. Although many of his stories were often melancholy and hopeless in tone, in "Wet Nurse" he is much more positive and hints strongly at the need for a change.

In the ten years since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, he has been writing continuously. But his main work is to edit the monthly *Shanghai Literature*. His short stories have been published in collections entitled *The Biography of Seven Letters, Uniform, Bearer of White Banner* and *Wet Nurse*.

Nearly all the people living in the small hotel were unemployed. A few were minor office workers — petty clerks and such — earning just enough for a bare existence. Since there was often no money for their salaries on pay day, they were actually, so to speak, employed paupers. The remainder were either retired junior army

officers, suspended primary school teachers, or discharged sales personnel. They occupied the place like a pack of wild animals in a cage, some barefoot, some stripped to the waist, pacing up and down the narrow silent corridor with heads lowered, never saying a word. Every so often they would glance up at the sun with one eye, and sneeze. Or they lay on their beds, smoking, or they drank strong tea. Sometimes they bought a few coppers' worth of grain spirits and slowly shelled and munched peanuts as they sipped and sipped, to while the hours away.

This aimless dispirited kind of life, like the germs of summer illness, was very contagious. Many guests were presentable enough when they first arrived. At least each had a hat, bedding, a trunk, a long gown. But before long they would take the road of their predecessors. They would start by not wearing socks and their long outer gown — only for temporary comfort, of course. Then it would become a habit. Garments like long gown would be worn so seldom that the owner would feel justified in telling one of the attendants to take them to the pawnshop. Inevitably, the appearance of the newcomers would grow more and more disreputable, until they were qualified to join the ranks of the idlers. Although it sometimes happened that one of them would find a job, at which he might earn just enough for food, and leave the band, sooner or later society would squeeze out suitable individuals and send them to the small hotel as replacements. In a word, the hotel arrival and departure register was perpetually recording the arrivals and departures of precisely this type of person.

The longest resident, the most qualified, was Mr. Peng Fei. He had arrived a year before, holding a child on his lap while giving directions to a rickshaw puller. He had put down his luggage and his bedding and remained ever since. Not only had he seen many guests come and go; twenty or thirty attendants had been changed during the period of his residence.

But Mr. Peng Fei stayed on. At first he was very lonely. Because he couldn't leave his three-year-old son alone, of course he couldn't go out to look for a job. By a happy coincidence, some of the other lodgers, having nothing else to do, gradually formed a liking for the child. They played with him, and took him for walks and bought him candy. In this way, the little

boy learned to get along without his father and Mr. Peng Fei was able to go out alone.

Thanks to a friend, Mr. Peng Fei obtained a sinecure as a minor clerk — a position that only required his services two hours per day. Although the pay was small, it was enough to sustain him. And so, he remained at the hotel.

He had very little to do. Aside from chatting idly with the other guests, he spent most of his time sitting in his own nest — which he considered his home — like a lone bird with wet wings, washing and mending the child's clothes and his own. This gave him the appearance of being somewhat more settled and mature than his fellow lodgers. He looked older, too, with his nearly bald head and wrinkled temples — at least forty, although according to him he was only thirty-two.

"Surely you're more than that," sceptical guests would say.

"Let's not talk about it. It's because of suffering. My wife died," Mr. Peng Fei would reply tragically. He would hug his child and kiss him fervently on the mouth, as if hoping thus to soften his memories. Tears would fall from his eyes, and the guests would walk away dejectedly.

Although the child had no mother, thanks to Mr. Peng Fei's idleness, he was well cared for. The little boy had large eyes and a well-shaped nose. He wasn't bad looking at all. He was intelligent and bright, and everyone liked him. Whenever Mr. Peng Fei went out, the idle guests would take care of the child, holding him or watching him affectionately. It gave them a vague yet tangible satisfaction.

"Is Mr. Peng Fei in? Room eighteen." One day a young woman's voice was heard making this inquiry at the desk.

Not only a visitor, but a woman visitor! How unexpected! Immediately, someone informed Mr. Peng Fei, who at that moment was chewing an oil fritter sandwich and whose mouth was so full that his eyes were starting from his head. The news seemed to shock him. The other lodgers, on hearing that a woman was calling, hid behind their door curtains and squinted out from one side. A few stole into the empty room next to Mr. Peng Fei's and pressed their faces close to the holes with which the wall abounded in order not to miss a single detail.

But Mr. Peng Fei was not a bit cordial to his visitor. He absolutely seemed to dislike her. He was frowning and his head was lowered as he walked ahead of her in an aimless fashion, leading her to his room. At the door, he turned listlessly and halted. The young woman, smiling, walked past him and entered.

"Precious! Do you still remember your *nai ma*?"* The woman deftly put down the package she had been carrying, swept the child up in her arms and plumped herself down on Mr. Peng Fei's bed. Then she opened the package and gave the little boy some candy and cakes. She crooned over him, pampered him, quite ignoring his father. Her lavish display of affection only seemed to enrage Mr. Peng Fei.

"You ungrateful hussy! How dare you sit on my bed?" he said to himself. "Get out of here!"

Either she observed his manner and paid no attention, or perhaps she really hadn't noticed — in any event she tucked up her left foot and reclined sideways on the bed, easing the weight of the child against her a bit as she continued to play with him. Probably because the room was so still, she finally remembered Mr. Peng Fei and, turning her head, finally saw his confused expression.

"What are you imagining! I've only come to see the child." Once more, the woman devoted herself completely to the little boy.

At these straightforward words, Mr. Peng Fei felt somewhat relieved. But then he grew uneasy again.

"How are you earning your living now?" he demanded. The question was plainly hypocritical. Only a few days before, he had seen her walking down the street with a man, chatting and laughing. When the woman had observed the sneering Mr. Peng Fei she had given him a penetrating glance. Then she had laughed.

"You ask me that because you saw me on the street with a man?"

Mr. Peng Fei was astounded. He had never dreamed the woman sitting opposite him could sink to such naked boldness. What shall I say? he wondered.

* *Nai ma* — literally "milk mother," i.e. wet nurse.

"Don't let it worry you. Though I've had a little schooling, it hasn't been of any help. But I have to live. I've been a *nai ma*, and I've. . . . I still have to earn a living now. . . . Life has many sides. My coming here to see the child today is one of them."

The woman looked at Mr. Peng Fei seriously as she spoke. Naturally, he was angry, but he controlled his feelings and sat staring at her. He couldn't figure her out, and that rather frightened him. In the silence that followed, he was embarrassed to hear the watchers whispering on the other side of the wall. Apparently aware of them too, the woman stood up, holding the little boy.

"Forgive me for troubling you. I'm going now. But I'd like to come again, often, to see the child."

"You may," Mr. Peng Fei readily agreed, much relieved, like a man who had been saved.

Again the woman warmly kissed the child. "Take good care of him!" she admonished, and departed.

The other lodgers swarmed into Mr. Peng Fei's room. Some said the woman was his abandoned wife, others said she was his mistress. Each had reasons for his opinion. Mr. Peng Fei's face was a furious blue; his belly was bursting with ire. Banging his hand down on the table, he almost wept aloud.

"Oh, that I should meet that devil of a woman again!" he groaned.

"You ought, however, to explain precisely who she is," proposed a gentleman whose favourite word was "however."

"Of course I should. She was my little boy's *nai ma*. 'I've nursed your child.' You all heard her say so, very clearly!"

"Very clearly!" the guests echoed with comical promptness.

"It started two years ago. The child. . . ." Mr. Peng Fei blew out his breath angrily. Then, stroking the little boy's hand which was reaching for a candy on the table, he began his story.

"Ah, perhaps you think I've never known happiness. Your questions always make me feel bad. The truth is that my past is honourable. I had a wife, a family. The two of us lived together in a cheerful little home. I was a teacher in a middle school then. My wife looked after the house. We lived pleas-

antly. But later the child was born, and he influenced us, our home, our fate, until everything was changed.

"When the young rascal was born, my wife had no milk to suckle him. Without any ado, he opened his red toothless little mouth, wrinkled his brows, shut his eyes and howled himself red in the face, thrashing about in my wife's arms, as if yelling with his whole being—I want milk! I want milk!"

"My wife had always been frail. After she became pregnant, she was more colourless than ever. By the time the baby was born, she was like a fading leaf. Of course she couldn't cope with a squalling infant, so I proposed that we hire a wet nurse.

"But she wouldn't hear of it. The school where I taught was often late with my wages, and she was afraid we wouldn't be able to manage if we had to feed two additional mouths. What's more she was worried that the baby would transfer his love to the nurse. I couldn't do anything with her. She refused to yield. All day long she held the child, fondled him, or washed his diapers in the courtyard.

"One day out in the yard she fainted and struck her head against a step, cutting her forehead and losing a lot of blood. She didn't even have the strength to call for help. By the time I found her, she had been lying there a long time. She was unable to stand, and could only look at me with dim half-closed eyes.

"Let me hire a wet nurse so I won't have to worry about you,' I begged her. Actually, we had no other choice. So I went out and engaged that woman.

"When the *nai ma* took the baby to her breast, he immediately burrowed in with his little head, and as soon as he found the nipple began to suck with might and main, murmuring contentedly. It would have done your heart good to see him. I breathed a sigh of relief and my wife laughed. She gave him a tenderly reproachful glance when he was handed back to her. Good, I thought. Everything's all right now.

"What's happened to your own child?' my wife asked the *nai ma* some time later. She had just discovered that the woman was also the mother of a little son.

"Gone, madam!' the woman replied.

"What about your husband?"

“‘My husband?’ The same as this gentleman — he’s a teacher in a school.’

“‘A teacher?’ My wife was startled. The disparity between a husband who was a school teacher and a wife who was a wet nurse aroused her pity. What a bitter tragedy. A hush fell on the room.

“‘The way the world is today, a school teacher can’t prevent his wife from becoming a *nai ma*. We’re poor, we don’t get along well together. What else could I do?’

“‘Can you read and write?’

“‘I could once, a little. But I’ve forgotten now.’

“This reply increased my wife’s sadness and heightened her sympathy for the woman.

“Nevertheless, we were happy for a while. But not long after, the wails of our baby began to be heard again. Returning home from school, I would often find my wife, who still had not entirely recovered her health, walking the floor with the child in her arms, crooning to him and trying to soothe him.

“‘Where is the *nai ma*?’ I finally asked.

“‘Her brother is sick. She asked for the afternoon off, and I gave it to her,’ my wife said with quiet impatience. She was afraid I would be angry.

“‘You shouldn’t have,’ I said. ‘What did you do that for?’ I couldn’t help sounding a bit reproving — out of sympathy for her and the baby, both.

“But it didn’t make any difference. My wife not only gave the *nai ma* that afternoon off, but many other afternoons as well. Sometimes she would fool me, and say the woman had just gone out to buy something, that she’d be right back. Actually, there was often no sign of her by dark, and my wife would croon to the howling child and keep going to the back door to look out anxiously. I would be torn with pity for the crying baby and for my poor wife, who was so distressed that even her voice drooped. But the anger seemed to be only on my side, and my wife continued to let the woman out two or three times a week.

“Then her husband came to call!

“One day as I was returning from school, I saw a man ahead of me of medium height. He was dressed in a soiled uniform-type suit and carried a package under his arm. At first I didn’t

pay much attention to him, but he seemed to sense that I was following, and turned his head to glance at me alertly. I saw a thin, finely-chiselled face that was rather pale. He examined me from head to foot, then entered our back door. By the time I hurried in after him and looked around, he had already disappeared. The door of the room beyond the parlour was closed, but I could hear quiet voices. Before I could speak, the person in the room seemed to know I was there, and the door suddenly opened. The man I had seen enter was standing opposite our *nai ma*, who was holding the baby.

“‘This is my husband,’ the woman said without any hesitation.

“The man stepped forward and bowed courteously. He asked me to forgive his wife, saying that she was young and thoughtless. Then turning his head slightly in her direction, he gave her a long lecture. He said: ‘I don’t care what you do, as long as you act in good conscience. A job as a wet nurse is nothing to be ashamed of. Since you’re accepting people’s money, you should do your best. Instead, you’re always running off. Your employers haven’t scolded you, but don’t you realize you’re making the child suffer?’ He took the baby from his wife’s arms and kissed it affectionately, then gazed at me with a pleasant smile.

“I sighed. His considerate words nearly moved me to tears. I was softened by his honest appearance. Automatically, I bowed to him in return. ‘Thank you very much,’ I said. ‘Please don’t let me disturb you.’ I left and went to my own room.

“I found my wife seated alone, looking anxious. I thought: She’s afraid that I’ve found out about the man and will raise a row. As a jest, I pretended to be angry and said: ‘You’re always fooling me and letting the *nai ma* out secretly. Today, you’ve permitted her husband to come to our home. In these troubled times, we can’t allow callers we don’t know.’

“‘How did I know he was coming? And even if I did, what could I do? You surely wouldn’t be heartless enough to prevent a married couple from having a talk. Although they don’t get along — they’re always arguing — after all they are husband and wife! I thought if I gave them a chance to meet occasionally, they might be able to patch things up,’ my wife retorted rather querulously, her face stiffening.

"I don't object. To tell you the truth, I've already seen him. He's a very nice person. So we don't have to quarrel, eh?" I said with a laugh. My wife was delighted. Her face relaxed and shone triumphantly.

"But I cannot approve of that woman, running all over the place. Is that a way to behave?" I demanded, again only to tease my wife.

"And I can't entirely approve of that man either," she replied. "You don't know. He's always getting sick. His wife supports him. He comes here and she gives him money. He also takes her clothes out and pawns them, bundle after bundle. He gives her the pawn tickets, and when she redeems the bundles, one by one, he comes and pawns them again. That's why they quarrel. With a husband like that, how can you blame her?"

"She may not be altogether wrong, I thought. But it seems to me that the man acts the way he does only because he can't help himself. He was fated to bad luck. I can forgive him. But that woman — she's a bad lot, I haven't the slightest doubt. And time will prove it, very soon.

"One evening at dusk — it must have been about five — I heard the back door opening softly. I was sitting in the parlour, and hadn't turned the light on yet. I watched stealthily and saw the *nai ma* go out. The door was only half closed and I could see her standing on the steps talking to a man wearing polished leather shoes. Her husband, I supposed. But hurrying to the kitchen window and peering out, I saw that it was not her husband, but another young man. Irritated, I at once withdrew. The woman came in and closed the door, then went upstairs. What trick is she up to now? I wondered. She must be asking for time off, so that she can keep an assignation with her lover.

"My wife and the woman came down the stairs together.

"Our *nai ma* says that someone has just notified her that her old mother has died. She wants to go to the funeral. She asks for only three days' leave," said my wife, actually seeking my consent.

"I'm not so sure anything serious has happened," I said coldly.

"Whether you agree or not, that's your affair. Anyhow, I'm going," the woman informed me flatly.

"What about two days, then? The child can't live very long on dairy milk." I was furious with this lying woman. But for the sake of the baby, I virtually begged her.

"All right," she said. It was very strange. She hurriedly took the child from my wife's arms and kissed him fervently, just as she did today. I felt like yelling at her: "You wanton hussy! You're running wild! . . ." I strode over and snatched back the baby.

"After receiving her wages from my wife, the woman quickly, almost agitatedly, took a bundle, rushed out the back door and into a rickshaw. Probably she had an appointment with her lover that very night.

"The following morning, I heard someone rapping on the back door. Can it be that she's satisfied her lust and has returned home early? I wondered. Of course, she would come back with more lies. She would say that her mother hadn't died at all, that someone had fooled her. For the baby's sake she had hurried home. My wife would be all smiles.

"Thus thinking, I opened the door. To my surprise, standing there was a police sergeant — an old friend of mine — and eight policemen with drawn guns. It was lucky my friend was leading them, or they probably would have broken the door down. From their fierce manner, I could see that plainly.

"We've come for that fine maid you've hired!" my friend told me.

"But she left last night."

"She left?" Obviously very disappointed, my friend pushed his cap back on his head. He looked perplexed. I invited him into our parlour.

"What is she — a kidnapper?" China was full of them. It never occurred to me that she might be anything else.

"Her husband is a Communist. Someone informed on him, and we've nabbed him," said my friend. I remembered that courteous young face, I recalled everything he had said, how lovingly he had embraced our child. A chill ran up my spine.

"The one who turned him in must have been his wife! If not her, then her lover," I said decisively.

"My friend laughed. 'Don't be so sure. The woman's under suspicion too.'

“‘A baggage like her? She doesn’t have enough character to be a Communist!’ I said angrily. I told him about her disgraceful behaviour.

“‘Let’s have a look around her room,’ my friend suggested. I led him in and turned on the light. Except for the bedding, everything else was gone. A note was pinned to the quilt. It read: ‘Please engage another *nai ma*. Although I don’t get along with my husband, I’m still married to him. I’m sure to be involved. I have no choice but to go. Goodbye.’

“I was furious. It seemed to me I could detect signs of dissoluteness even in her delicate handwriting. As my friend was leaving I said to him hotly: ‘She was the one who informed on him. I’m positive.’

“‘You ought to be more careful in the future. They’re operating under cover everywhere,’ my friend warned. He left.

“After that things began to change. The young man was executed. My own fate wasn’t much better. First, my wife died, and I was left with a thin little child who cried all the time. I had to feed him on dairy milk. I would sit alone and dream of my dead wife, and of the pleasant-faced young man. They seemed to be all around me like fragrant old scroll paintings, in lovely harmonious colours, unrolling before my eyes then rolling up again. I dreamed often, and took to drink. . . . I was in a terrible state.

“But that woman! Not long after her husband was killed, I saw her walking down the street with an army officer. Laughing and chatting, she was decked out like a spring butterfly. She gave me a familiar smile as she walked past, without a trace of embarrassment. Of course she wasn’t wearing mourning. That officer is probably her seventeenth or eighteenth lover, I thought. I cursed her under my breath.

“Then this year I again saw her on the street, this time with some richly dressed fop. I couldn’t bear to look at her and made haste to put a good distance between us.

“Today she came to the hotel, I don’t know why. She haunts me like a ghost. Do you think I could possibly become intimate with a woman like that?”

Mr. Peng Fei gazed at his auditors. It was plain that they shared his indignation. He laughed triumphantly.

“What a snake!” they cried.

“If she comes again — we’ll insult her!” said one of them.

“If we do that, however, she’ll tell the police we’re all Communists!” said the sensitive Mr. However.

This put an immediate end to the discussion.

Life in the hotel went on as usual. The lodgers continued to express their indignation about all manner of things, while chewing on their big wheat-cakes and sipping their strong tea. Of course they also thought at times of that depraved young woman and her outrageous conduct. They looked forward to her next visit, so that they could insult her properly.

“Is Mr. Peng Fei, room eighteen, at home?” someone asked at the desk many days later.

The lodgers at once pricked up their ears, hoping to savour a fresh bit of gossip. It was not that young woman calling however, but two men dressed in the uniforms of the Special Security Bureau. As the men entered Mr. Peng Fei’s room, the lodgers quickly hid behind their door curtains. Not long after, Mr. Peng Fei, a sorrowful expression on his face, emerged carrying his child and left under the escort of his callers. A considerable time later, the stunned lodgers, very pale, cautiously poked their heads out from behind their door curtains, strongly resembling a pack of curious rabbits.

“No doubt he’s accused of the same crime as that young fellow he told us about.” This was the guess of Mr. Li, a clerk in the Civil Affairs Office. The lodgers, recalling the impression of the young man which Mr. Peng Fei had given them, and the friendly tone in which he had referred to him, nodded of one accord and felt suddenly uneasy. In their mind’s eye they could visualize the executions they had witnessed before. They could practically see Mr. Peng Fei’s grisly head rolling in the dust.

“Now it’s up to each and every one of us to think over his relation with him.” Mr. However not only could sum up, he could also make new proposals. In a word where any act whatsoever might be considered a crime, said Mr. However, this would be a wise course.

Immediately, the lodgers became worried. Those who had frequently chatted with Mr. Peng Fei in his room grew rather desperate. A number took their few belongings that were of any

value and exchanged them at the pawnshop for cash, intending to live quietly elsewhere for a couple of days. Several hastened to set matches to packets of completely innocuous letters. Some made incessant phone calls, surreptitiously seeking information from friends.

But things did not turn out as they anticipated. Two hours later, carrying his child, Mr. Peng Fei came back safe and sound. Life returned to the hotel, and colour to the faces of the guests. His fellow lodgers swarmed into Mr. Peng Fei's room and crowded round him.

"It was because of that woman again," he announced despondently.

"They caught her in bed with someone, and she wanted you to put up her bail?" someone surmised jestingly.

"Who would have believed it? She's a Communist too!"

"A Communist!" cried the other guests. They at once fell silent.

"She's been arrested. They're going to execute her tomorrow. She asked permission to see my child, and me. That's why I was taken to the jail. . . . That woman is amazing. She could still smile, she could still laugh. She was wearing the same gay clothes she had on that day. She talked with me quite calmly. I was a little dizzy. I don't know when she took the child from my arms. How lovingly she kissed him. . . .

"'You're not involved, friend,' she assured me. 'I'm a Communist, but surely Communists also have relatives, friends, and all the other normal relationships. I made everything very clear on

Lotus and Mandarin Ducks (183 cm. × 99 cm.) →
by Chen Hung-shou

This versatile Chekiang artist (1599-1652) is known for his figures, flowers and landscapes. His painting is highly decorative, making skilful use of artistic exaggeration. He also left notable book illustrations and woodcuts.



that score. I explained I had nursed your child, and so I wanted to see him.'

"I was frightened, upset, my head was spinning. I was also moved. 'What's this all about?' I asked.

"I told you. I'm a Communist!' She suddenly became animated, and her voice rose. 'I've been working underground for a long time. You thought I was misbehaving when I lived at your house. Actually, it was all part of my work. Well, now I've been caught. You thought I was a low woman, didn't you?'

"I . . . that is. . . .

"'Never mind. It doesn't make any difference!'

"'Ah, you Communists!' I sighed. 'You're so. . . .' My voice trailed off.

"'Why did I ask you to come? The reason is this: I had a son of my own, but I had to give him over to the care of a relative in the country some time ago. I've never seen him since. For convenience' sake, I took the job you offered as a *nai ma* to your baby. Now everything is finished. . . . My work. . . . I often think of my child, but it never pained me so much as it does today. . . . To save the oppressed, we gave up our own little boy. . . .' She spoke in faltering sentences, as tears rolled down her cheeks and fell on my child. 'That's why I wanted to see this one,' she said in a choking voice, kissing him. Infected by her mood, the baby began to cry.

"Finally, she handed him back to me and said: 'Raise him well. What can be expected from people like you? Let him grow big and strong! You, your kind . . . are finished.'

"I didn't dare to look at her. Misery was written on her bloodless face. But her mouth still bore the suggestion of a bitter smile. The two men who had brought me there, escorted me out. It was as if I was walking with my child through the clouds, as if I was being led to the execution grounds. I felt very dizzy."

Plunged into gloom by Mr. Peng Fei's recital of the woman's strange and tragic story, the lodgers silently mulled over the words: "Your kind . . . are finished." And they stared at the child in Mr. Peng Fei's arms, hoping to see in him something remarkable.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

FANG MING

How Liang Pin Came to Write "Keep the Red Flag Flying"



*Keep the Red Flag Flying** was first published in November 1957. Now, after several years, it is still highly prized by the reading public. Each new edition is welcomed as eagerly as at the novel's first appearance. To date, 878,000 copies have been sold.

A play based on this book has also become regular repertoire for the modern Chinese stage. So this novel is very well-known with the Chinese readers. It unfolds before us a colourful pageant of a bygone age.

Keep the Red Flag Flying describes the heroic struggle put up by poor peasants against the landlords and local despots who rep-

* A part of this novel was published in instalments in *Chinese Literature* Nos. 1-5, 1959.

resented the forces of feudalism and imperialism in the North China countryside from the time of the revolution in 1927 to 1931, when the Japanese imperialists occupied China's three north-eastern provinces. Liang Pin was born in the locality which he presents in his book. During the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression he lived there among the poor peasants and worked in the resistance movement with them under the leadership of the Communist Party. He was not only familiar with the characters he draws, but his life was closely linked with theirs. Liang Pin is a serious writer. He spent years studying and analysing his characters, so that each is vivid and true to life. This is one of the main reasons for the novel's success. Since I was working with him during the time when he was sharing the life and struggles of the North China peasants, each time I open his book it conjures up familiar scenes and I cannot help recalling certain episodes in the author's life when he was writing in those arduous war years.

On May 1, 1942, the Japanese invaders started what they called a "mopping-up campaign" on an unprecedented scale against the anti-Japanese base in Central Hopei. That whole area became the scene of guerrilla fighting. At that time, Liang Pin and I were both working in Lihsien; but I lived several miles away from him and to reach him had to cross five enemy lines and three observation posts. The village where he was staying was less than one mile from a Japanese post. In those days every household kept its gate closed, the streets were virtually deserted and the whole village was silent. If someone ran a short distance down the street, people would cock their heads to listen, wondering whether the enemy had come. I remember slipping quietly into his courtyard once. As soon as he saw me he laughed and ran out from his room. His face was bronzed and he had grown a moustache; stripped to the waist with a coarse towel thrown over one shoulder, he looked just like a peasant. In his hand, however, was not a hoe but a writing brush. He was writing a short novel called *Father of Three Bolsheviks*, which was in a way a first draft of *Keep the Red Flag Flying*. For the father in that earlier work reminds us of Chu Chung in the later novel.

Liang Pin had his early schooling in his home village. While still in primary school, he came under the influence of the first

three Communists of Lihsien. In 1932, he took part in the student movement described in the novel, in the course of which many students were arrested or killed. The same year saw a peasant revolt in Kaoyang and Lihsien, and others of his comrades and friends died in this struggle. These martyrs, staunch Party members and non-Party revolutionaries, made a lasting impression on him, so stirring him that he felt impelled to record some of their deeds.

In 1937, the Anti-Japanese War broke out, and Liang Pin headed the New Age Drama Society organized to arouse popular resistance to the aggressors. I was one of the older boys in this society. Later I did political work in this group, remaining with Liang Pin until the Party sent me to the city to do underground work. Since we devoted half of each year to mass work and mass cultural work, we had friends in all the villages in the middle reaches of the Huto River. Liang Pin often advised us, when we lived with the peasants, to learn to speak their language and to study the character of different types. This is essential for a writer or anyone working in the theatre. And this was what Liang Pin did himself all along. In 1941 we staged some performances on the north bank of the Huto and stayed for a time in Wangkangchen, a village very like Soching in the novel. The rich families lived on the east side, the poor on the west. The landlords here conscripted able-bodied men to attack some defeated troops and took the soldiers' mule-carts and white flour as loot. The troops came back with a regiment and threatened to burn the whole village, but after negotiations they agreed to leave on payment of five thousand silver dollars. The landlords ordered the poor to subscribe this sum, whereupon the peasants on the west side banded together to sue the landlords on the east side. When the poor peasants eventually lost their case in court, one hanged himself, another fell ill with rage and lost his eyesight, while others left home and trekked all the way to the northeast. The struggle did not end here, however. The younger generation was determined to have its revenge. These happenings in Wangkangchen were incorporated in *Keep the Red Flag Flying*.

Liang Pin pondered over all the chief characters of the novel over a long period, synthesizing and enriching his imaginary concepts on the base of close observation of actual life. In the winter

of 1941, I remember a peasant coming to our regional Party committee in Central Hopei. He was a brisk, powerfully built man of over sixty, not very tall, but with a broad forehead and booming voice. Of his three sons, two had been classmates of Liang Pin in primary school and later joined the Party, but one was killed in the peasant revolt of Poyeh and Lihsien, the other fell in a fight against some renegades. Though the old man had lost all his sons, he remained invincibly resolute and optimistic. Whenever Liang Pin was writing short novels, stories or plays, he always thought of this man, and we can see something of him in Chu Chung, the main figure of this novel, too.

According to Liang Pin, Chu Chung combines characteristics of several peasants whom he knew. One of these was a hired hand in his village named Liang Lao-chung, who besides being skilful in all farm work was a man of shrewd judgement and excellent calibre. Warm and kindly to most folk, he had a clear class stand in his dealings with the landlords and in conversation always caricatured them. Another man in his village worked as a carter for a landlord and so had travelled fairly widely. He was bold and straightforward and dared to laugh and swear at all viciousness. He joined the Communist Party at the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War and became the chairman of the local Peasants' Association, proving a staunch fighter against the feudal forces. Liang Pin knew many other stirring stories of peasants who took part in the agrarian uprisings of Poyeh and Lihsien and of Kaoyang and Lihsien. These two uprisings were organized struggles led by the Communist Party, and though they failed they spread the seeds of the revolution far and wide. Thus as soon as the war to resist Japanese aggression broke out, anti-Japanese guerrilla units were quickly set up in this area under Party leadership.

Liang Pin has always had a great respect for the peasants' shrewdness and wisdom, their simple yet clear class stand and their spirit of revolt against the landlords. Some people imagine that peasants are oppressed, mournful and submissive, or narrow-minded, conservative and lacking in initiative; and of course there may be many peasants of this type. Yet this was not the case with the majority of China's poor peasants. Liang Pin saw their essential characteristics and in his writings he lays special emphasis on the solidarity between the poor peasants and hired

hands, their courage and their dauntless revolt against feudal oppression. This is the salient feature of this novel and one which reflects the true situation.

At that time in our drama society we had two men of peasant origin. There was Liu Chih-nan, a member of the Communist Party who cooked and did some administrative work. The first up in the morning and the last to go to bed, during marches he carried a heavier load than anyone else and was always ready to help the sick or the youngsters. After our counter-offensive in May 1942, he went home and served under most difficult conditions as village head and Party secretary. Liang Pin and I often met at his house. His mother was an outspoken, cheerful old soul rather like Mrs. Chu in the novel. He also had a younger sister who would keep a look-out when we were there. Unfortunately he fell in the fighting later on. The other man of peasant origin in our group was also a Party member. One night after the counter-offensive of 1942, the Japanese raided the village near their post where we were holding a meeting. Liang Pin and I left with some other comrades, but we did not know what had happened to the rest. Then this man volunteered to creep back into the village to find out. Both these men were characterized by simplicity, honesty and courage. They were hard-working and absolutely loyal to the Party and to their comrades. Indeed, they were typical of China's poor peasants, and under Party guidance they grew into brave fighters. We can find qualities like theirs in the younger peasants in *Keep the Red Flag Flying*.

There is depth of feeling in Liang Pin's portrayals of peasants and also in his descriptions of their life and surroundings. So-ching Village in the novel is like Yao Village on the north bank of the Huto River where we lived before the enemy's "mopping-up campaign." Pear orchards stretched in all directions for dozens of *li*. In spring it was like a fairyland with great drifts of pear blossom like snow, and girls in gay colours climbing up and down ladders to catch pests on the trees. It is in enchanting settings like this that Liang Pin depicts his characters of the younger generation: Yun-tao, Chiang-tao, Chun-lan, Yen Ping and the rest. There is poetic feeling in the scenes where the young lovers meet in the melon field, the boys and Chun-lan catch a rare finch in the cotton fields, or the Yen brothers till their two *mou* of fertile land.

. . . Here Liang Pin is viewing his old home and the militant peasants through a poet's eyes.

Between the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War and the resistance to the "mopping-up campaign" in 1942, Liang Pin wrote stories and plays running into over 270,000 words. Unhappily, these manuscripts were lost in the war. During the following ten years or so, he was too busy with revolutionary work to do much writing. But the unforgettable characters he had met haunted his memory and he knew he would have no peace till he had written of these men whom he knew and loved so well and recorded their struggles. In 1953 he started work on this novel. He wrote virtually without intermission every day. Once he told me: "I simply cannot stop. The words just flow from my pen." The accumulated experience and emotions of twenty years in the revolutionary struggle had at last found a vent in writing.

Liang Pin is now writing a sequel to this novel. Central Hopei, the geographical setting of this book, was the land of Yen and of Chao in ancient times, a land which is well known for having produced many "high-hearted heroes." But the gallantry and heroism of those ancients cannot compare with the revolutionary struggles of Chinese peasants in this century under the leadership of the Communist Party. From the time of the setting up of an anti-Japanese democratic base to resist Japanese aggression in Central Hopei to the land reform of 1947, epic struggles took place. The establishment of anti-Japanese democratic local government meant the liberation of the peasantry whose hearts and minds had been fettered by oppression for thousands of years, and the Party relied on mass strength to set up the base. In the "mopping-up campaign" of 1942, the Japanese imperialists made a desperate attempt to drive away the Communists and subjugate the peasants by bloody massacres and by studding the Central Hopei plain with hundreds of guardhouses. But the peasants used tunnel warfare to fight back. A network of thousands of tunnels throughout that vast plain was like a Great Wall under the earth. Readers can imagine how, in the struggle that ensued, old Chu Chung and many of the young people in this novel — characters like Yun-tao, Chiang-tao, Chang Chia-ching, Ta-kuei and Chun-lan — became leaders in this district. Some of them were killed, but the revolution kept winning fresh victories until Japanese im-

perialism was defeated, the landlords were overthrown and paid for their crimes. This sequel will end with the prospect of overthrowing Chiang Kai-shek's regime.

Through heroic characters painted on a broad historical canvas, *Keep the Red Flag Flying* reflects the victorious struggle in China during the period of the democratic revolution led by the Communist Party. This book is a valuable record of the Chinese revolution.

Heroic Father and Son →

by Chao Kuang-tao

Chao Kuang-tao was born into a poor peasant family in Szechuan Province in 1927. He started painting while he was working in the Chinese People's Liberation Army which he joined in 1949. Apart from oil painting he has also done quite a number of woodcuts and cartoons.

This oil painting was exhibited in the "Art Exhibition of the People's Liberation Army," which is reported on the following pages.

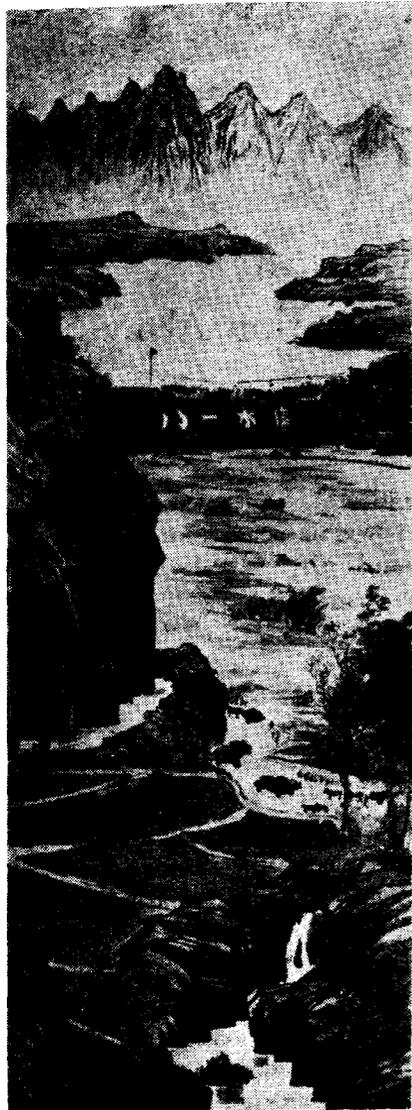


TUAN CHANG

Art Exhibition of the People's Liberation Army

This spring the Chinese People's Liberation Army held its Second Fine Arts Exhibition in Peking. It was an unusual art exhibition. Most of the artists who contributed the six hundred exhibits were amateurs. They included veteran generals and staff officers as well as the rank and file of the army, navy and air force. This gives us some idea of the mass participation in art work in the People's Liberation Army. Among the exhibits were paintings in Chinese ink and colours, paintings in oils, woodcuts, water colours, illustrations, sketches and sculpture, as well as posters, cartoons, stories told in a series of drawings, New-Year paintings and scissor-cuts. The themes of these works, in general, reflected the heroic spirit and high ideals of the men of the People's Liberation Army in their defence of our land and their contribution to socialist construction.

These soldiers deal with the life with which they are most familiar. Their works are full of vitality and true to life. For example, Chao Kuang-tao's realistic oil painting *Heroic Father and Son* shows how exultantly an old peasant, once a soldier himself, sends his son to join the revolutionary army to continue his work of defending the homeland and peace, while the son is riding away confidently after bidding farewell to the old folk who have come to see him off. The artist has used the traditional method of writing an inscription in the blank space of his canvas.



Building the Reservoir

by Li Fan-tsun

The choice of colours suits the subject admirably, while the simple background sets off the central figures to advantage. Thus the whole composition presents a wide vista against which the figures stand out vividly.

The Chinese ink painting *Heroic Hearts at Sea* is based on an actual incident, when some sailors swam back to safety after sinking one of Chiang Kai-shek's gunboats. The artist, Yang Lieh-chang, took part in this action himself. The five sailors in his painting, after sinking the enemy boat and battling for days and nights with the angry waves, have swum to an island. Suddenly they hear a motor-boat approaching. One man seizes a hand-grenade, another his rifle, while two others are giving all their attention to their seriously wounded comrade. Our fighters' high level of vigilance as well as their comradely concern for each other are strikingly portrayed.

The People's Liberation Army is a staunch defender of China in time of war, and a great army for production in time of peace.

It has joined the Chinese people as a whole in the mighty task of national construction. Undeterred by hardships, it goes wherever there is a problem to solve. Its men have built highways and railways and opened up primeval forests, accomplishing magnificent feats during the Big Leap. This is vividly reflected in these works of art. The traditional-style paintings *Lead the Tao River up the Mountain* by Fu Ping and *Building the Reservoir* by Li Fan-tsun, Yu Yu-chung's oil canvas *Filling up the Sea* and Chen Hsin-yi's woodcut *Salvaging Scrap Iron*, are representative in this respect. *Building the Reservoir* is a landscape painting showing a great reservoir in the mountains whose water, smooth as a mirror, irrigates tens of thousands of fields. But this landscape is more beautiful and more dynamic than those in traditional Chinese painting, thanks to the work done by the commune members and the P.L.A., which gives us a sense of growth and prosperity.

The soldiers who help in the task of socialist construction are very dear to the people. Thus Chung Wei's painting in Chinese ink *The P.L.A. Passes a Tibetan Family* depicts a Tibetan family on the grassland who have spread a rug on the ground and made tea to entertain soldiers who are passing by. One man is sitting on the rug answering the questions of a white-haired Tibetan woman and offering her an apple from his rucksack. The different expressions of the figures are meticulously depicted to show the close friendship between the army and the people. Yang Chen-huan's *The Army Builds a Dyke for Us* is another unusual painting in the traditional style which in place of a scene of mass labour presents two peasant girls carrying boiled water and fruit to the troops. But a vast construction site is skilfully suggested by two army uniforms hanging on a palm and red flags in the distance over the dyke. So from this we can imagine the whole scene, the tens of thousands of soldiers working hard to build the dyke and achieve yet another success in irrigation.

Internationalism and revolutionary humanism are two other important themes in this exhibition. Hu Ti-ling's oil painting *The Orphans* shows one aspect of army life at the Korean front. One of the Chinese People's Volunteers is sitting on the edge of a bed sewing hard by a dim light, while beside him two Korean orphans are sleeping. At the other side of the painting, another soldier is leaning against the door looking out at the sky across which



The Grassland Awakes

by Tan Pai-hsin and Lin Teh-hung

the great beams of a searchlight are flashing. The whole conveys an atmosphere of utter tranquillity. We can almost hear the gentle breathing of the children and their murmurs in their sleep, while the atmosphere of peace and contentment suggests that these children have never known the horrors of war or the disasters brought by the U.S. aggressors. Such is not the case, however. For after a brief respite the enemy's ruthless bombardment will start again. Though the soldier who is mending the children's clothes is sewing awkwardly, his genuine compassion makes an unforgettable impression.

Among these soldiers' works are also some reflecting the richness of their life, the poetry in it. Hsu Lin's coloured woodcut *Dawn at the Sentry Post* shows frontier guards doing morning exercises. Strong and athletic, they appear above the sea coast like mountain eagles. Tan Pai-hsin and Lin Teh-hung's woodcut *The Grassland Awakes* brings to mind the tranquillity of the grassland at dawn when the first cooking smoke of the day blends with the morning mist. Wang Shou-chuan's woodcut *The Rehearsal* is a lively depiction of soldiers preparing some items for a performance. Hu Tiling's oil painting *Coming Back from Sentry Duty* has a sentry on his way back to camp picking some wild flowers to take to his quarters. The artist's handling of this simple yet typical incident brings home to us the soldiers' love of beauty.

Practically without exception, all these exhibits had the distinctive Chinese style which makes a familiar appeal. The paintings in Chinese ink and colour embodied techniques from folk art as well as traditional methods of composition and certain distinc-

tive features of Chinese ink sketches. These were not mechanically applied, however, but creatively used to express contemporary themes. Oil painting has had a relatively short history in China, and among the oil paintings in this exhibition were not a few experiments in creating a new style conforming to the Chinese spirit. These efforts were not unsuccessful and mark a promising development in Chinese oil painting. The graphic art which was also a notable feature of this exhibition provided many examples of different styles in the treatment of different themes.

In China today, in addition to exhibitions of the works of professional artists, there are many exhibitions of work done by amateurs. During the last few years the most significant large exhibitions which have made valuable contributions to modern Chinese art are the First Fine Arts Exhibition of the People's Liberation Army in 1957, the Exhibition of Peasant Wall Paintings and the Exhibition of Paintings by Workers, Peasants and Soldiers in 1958, as well as the Second Fine Arts Exhibition of the People's Liberation Army introduced here. This proves that in New China art is no longer created by a few professionals only, but by an increasingly large number of people. Thus many of the works in this exhibition were done by amateurs who had never painted before and did not venture to try until they were inspired by the Big Leap. Though their artistic level needs to be further raised, these tens of thousands of new amateur artists will undoubtedly become a powerful and vitalizing force in China's socialist art.

CHAO LING

A Novel About the Liberation War

China's protracted War of Liberation, led by the Communist Party, was basically concluded on the mainland by the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. It is still very fresh in our memories, however, and after a period in which to look back and think over it our writers are now giving more comprehensive expression to this stupendous, many-sided war. For this reason, a fairly large proportion of recent Chinese novels deal with the War of Liberation, and *Red Sun** is one which has aroused wide-spread interest. The author, Wu Chiang, was a soldier in the People's Liberation Army who took part in the three campaigns described in his book. Thus this novel carries conviction. It is, moreover, vividly and graphically written, with a wide range of characters and a well-constructed plot. It paints a broad, complex panorama of battle fronts stretching for several hundreds of miles, and successfully reflects the spirit of our army; while through a gripping account of the action seen by one particular unit it conveys clearly and specifically the decisive role played in the war by Chairman Mao Tse-tung's strategy of mobile warfare. For it was this strategy which enabled the army to take the initiative, surprise the enemy time and again, and manoeuvre him into an untenable position.

This long novel of 400,000 words deals mainly with the three major campaigns on the eastern front between the winter of 1946

* Published by the China Youth Publishing House, Peking.

and the spring of 1947, when the People's Liberation Army fought Chiang Kai-shek's crack divisions armed with American equipment. Each of these campaigns had its special features. In the Battle of Lienshui we took the defensive, in the Battle of Laiwu we stormed the enemy's positions, while in the Battle of Mengliangko we conducted mountain warfare. The chapters published in this number start with an attack on Lienshui by the Kuomintang's 74th Division, the main strength of Chiang Kai-shek's army. After suffering a reverse, our troops led by Commander Shen Chen-hsin withdrew from Northern Kiangsu to the province of Shantung. There in the Battle of Laiwu they wiped out an enemy division and captured its commander. Then by circling round this mountainous area, marching for seven days and seven nights without proper rest, they lured the 74th Division step by step to the summit of Mengliangko and destroyed it there, killing its commander Chang Ling-fu.

One characteristic of the Chinese people's War of Liberation was that poorly equipped troops were pitted against well-equipped reactionary troops backed by the United States, the foremost imperialist power in the world. Another was that this was a just war waged by a people's army led by the proletariat and therefore imbued with high ideals and a noble aim. This is evident from the actions of many of our officers and men. From Army Commander Shen Chen-hsin, Regiment Commander Liu Sheng, Company Commander Shih Tung-keng down to the section-leaders Yang Chun, Chang Hua-feng and Chin Shou-pen and rank-and-file soldiers like Wang Mao-sheng, all come from the people and have close ties with them. Differing widely in temperament, they have the same devotion to the people, and this is the mainspring of their courage and fortitude. It is clear from the relationship between these men that although the people's army enforces strict discipline, there is a strong spirit of comradeship between all ranks. These soldiers grow in moral stature by helping each other and ceaselessly overcoming their individual weaknesses.

The leader of this unit, Shen Chen-hsin, is the central figure of the book. He is a veteran soldier, a staunch Communist. Friendly and ordinary enough in appearance, he shows genuine heroism when fighting the enemy. During the Battle of Lienshui, when his old comrade-in-arms Su Kuo-ying falls, he suppresses his grief

to make a serious study of the cause of this defeat, and urges his men to estimate their own strength correctly. He loves every soldier in his unit, but does not hesitate to point out their shortcomings and mistakes. He is deeply attached to the regiment commander, Liu Sheng, but when Liu complains because an intellectual has been sent to his regiment as political commissar, Shen pulls him up sharply for his pride, telling him: "Be more humble, comrade! You must look harder for your own shortcomings and for other people's good points. . . . Those who are proud and conceited are always forcing themselves on to a single-plank bridge." Thanks to this severe yet sincere criticism, Liu Sheng realizes that he is in the wrong and says: "It's right what you say. My actions will show you I've taken it to heart." Before Liu leaves him, Shen notices a hole burned in the back of his uniform and immediately gives Liu the only woollen coat he has himself. This illustrates Shen's attitude towards his officers: he is strict when it comes to their political outlook but consideration itself in daily life. Proletarian friendship of this sort, governed by high principles, enables large numbers of officers and men to overcome their weaknesses and attain political maturity.

Commander Shen is typical of the high-ranking officers who work hard and selflessly and supply able leadership. He goes without sleep before and after each campaign to plan and summarize it thoroughly, yet in the heat of battle he remains calm and confident. When Chiang's 74th Division is putting up a last desperate struggle and Shen's divisional commander reports to him from the front on the situation, Shen makes a swift decision and at once dispatches forces to cut off the enemy's escape.

Liu Sheng is completely loyal to the revolution and will resolutely carry out any task, no matter how difficult. But this regimental commander of peasant origin retains some of the narrow-mindedness of peasants. He is anxious for his troops to go into combat and capture enemy equipment, not wanting them to have a name for sitting idle during a fight. During the Battle of Laiwu, when his regiment is ordered to remain behind as a reinforcement in case of emergency, he starts complaining that this is a slight. Nevertheless, since he has been brought up in the revolutionary army, criticism from his comrades-in-arms helps him to correct his mistakes quickly. In the assault on the last summit at

Mengliangko he is mortally wounded, but what concerns him most is how his troops can best reach the top and capture the enemy divisional commander. His last order is: "Reorganize the troops to reach the top. Capture Chang Ling-fu and bring him to me." He does not live to see the final victory. As he is dying, he produces a banknote issued by the government of the old Soviet area, which he has kept carefully wrapped up for fifteen years so that it still looks brand-new. He gasps out to the orderly standing beside him: "Take this to the Party organization department. This note was given me . . . by the chief of supplies . . . the day I joined the Red Army . . . fifteen years ago . . . a memento." A faithful son of the people, he gives his life for the cause of liberation.

Company Leader Shih Tung-keng, like Liu Sheng, is a brave officer who is not good at using his head. In one battle, without studying the situation carefully, he gives the order to charge, taken in by the enemy's pretended surrender. But as the war goes on he becomes more mature. By the time of the Battle of Mengliangko, he is a brave, steady and thoughtful officer. The news of Liu Sheng's death makes the men of his company so sad and angry that they want to hurl themselves against the enemy. Shih Tung-keng, however, is able to keep his feelings in check and coolly work out the best tactics to reach the hill-top and kill Chang Ling-fu.

Since *Red Sun* deals with the development of a series of battles, it also has to portray the enemies of the revolution and with success too. The Kuomintang divisional commander Chang Ling-fu is a fairly experienced counter-revolutionary, cunning and dangerous. This seemingly "enterprising" officer criticizes the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek: "They have fought twenty years against the Communists, and their mistake is to pay too much attention to capturing cities and districts, and not enough to destroying the Reds' strength." When he and his chief-of-staff stand on the hill-top looking down at the other heights and preparing for combat, he dreams that after wiping out the Communists he will inscribe on the precipice: "I halt my steed on the first summit of the Yi-Meng Mountains." When he is surrounded and men of the Liberation Army have reached the cave where he is hiding, he makes a last desperate attempt to escape; but in the

end he finds his grave on Mengliangko. In presenting Chang Ling-fu, the author depicts his stubborn class character as well as his inner cowardice. He presents a stern and dignified front to the world, but at heart he is a helpless weakling. When he sees that defeat is inevitable, he turns upon his subordinates in a towering rage to hide his own fear. This is typical of all reactionaries, for they belong to a dying class. Though they may appear mighty on the surface, this is nothing but a mask.

Despite the multitude of characters in this novel, its plot is neat and compact. The writer has succeeded in combining typical characters and situations to bring out his main theme clearly and artistically. The action moves forward smoothly through three major battles and the narrative is never dull for one moment. The whole book is characterized by revolutionary optimism.

The success of this novel is mainly due to the author's deep understanding of the War of Liberation. He spent more than ten years in the people's army and went through a baptism of fire. Thus he tells us: "These unforgettable heroes and men of many different kinds have never ceased to stir me. Often I could not rest day or night because they seemed to be calling out to me, living in my mind. I have wanted to write about these men for a long time." During the war, Wu Chiang began to collect material for this novel, to which he has devoted much time. He has produced a really fine piece of writing.



YANG MEI-YU

Three New Documentary Films

The Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio has recently produced three documentaries which vividly reflect the three big demonstrations held in the last two weeks to support the resistance of the Japanese, south Korean and Turkish people to American imperialism and its lackeys. Although all three documentaries are fairly short, each shot expresses the heartfelt sentiments of the Chinese people. They are widely acclaimed by the Chinese public.

We Support the Japanese People's Struggle Against the Japan-U.S. Treaty of Military Alliance presents the demonstration of a million people in Peking on May 9. That spring morning, angry men and women, boys and girls, poured out from fields and factories, from schools, research institutes and the street committees, to converge on Tien An Men Square. Standing in the front of the square were the men and women of local militia units. This generation, which has grown up since Japanese imperialism invaded China, will never tolerate a revival of Japanese militarism. During the eight years of war against Japanese aggression, Japanese militarism caused more than ten million Chinese to lose their lives. Neither the Chinese nor the Japanese people will suf-

fer this history to repeat itself. At the rally, Liao Cheng-chih, member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, said: "Socialist China has sufficient strength to smash any aggressors." The noted peace fighter Kuo Mo-jo said at the meeting that the just, patriotic struggle of the Japanese people against U.S. imperialism has made a great contribution to the cause of safe-guarding Asian and world peace, and that peace-loving people throughout the world are solidly behind the Japanese people. His speech was interrupted time and again by the tumultuous applause of a million demonstrators who thundered: "U.S. imperialism get out of Japan!" and "U.S. imperialism get out of south Korea and south Viet Nam."

We Support the Just, Patriotic Struggle of the People of South Korea records the demonstration of 600,000 people in Peking on April 28. At the rally, Liu Ning-I, member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and president of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, greeted the heroic south Korean people on behalf of 650 million Chinese people, expressing our sincere respect for their valiant struggle. He said the Chinese people fully support the recent call and proposal of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party and other political parties and public organizations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "Today, the U.S. imperialists find themselves everywhere perched on volcanoes liable to erupt at any moment," he said. "The people the world over are opposing them. . . . Imperialism and all reactionaries are doomed. The oppressed peoples will surely triumph."

As the writer Liu Pai-yu has said, the south Korean people's fight against American imperialism and Syngman Rhee's dictatorial rule is like "the breaking of angry billows in a high sea. It has written a memorable page in the history of the people's revolutionary struggle." We in China support such courage with all our hearts. Young steel workers who are also militiamen took up their rifles to march towards Tien An Men Square. Peasants from the Peking suburbs, fresh from the fields, raised brawny fists and shouted: "We shall defend peace! U.S. imperialists — hands off south Korea!" Red banners fluttered in the spring wind as thousands of students and young people advanced towards the square. Tien An Men was seething with indignation. Among the

forest of slogans and cartoons ridiculing the imperialists and Syngman Rhee, stood women with white hair and Young Pioneers in red scarfs. They, too, raised their fists and shouted: "We support the just, patriotic struggle of the south Korean people!" In the crowd there was an old peasant from Shantung, both of whose sons died in the Battle of Sangkumryung during the War to Resist America and Aid Korea. He cried angrily: "U.S. imperialism get out of south Korea!" This is the voice of the Chinese people, a voice representing 650 million.

We Support the Turkish People's Just and Patriotic Struggle records the big rally attended by students and Peking citizens on May 4, a day of historic significance in China. Forty-one years ago on this day, in Tien An Men Square, thousands of patriotic Chinese students demonstrated against imperialist aggression and the treachery of the feudal warlords, and braved the bayonets and hoses of the police. So the Chinese students have a glorious tradition of fighting imperialism and their lackeys. When news came from the land of the poet, Nazim Hikmet, that the students of Turkey and their compatriots were demonstrating against the Menderes dictatorship, Chinese students gathered in a rally to express their support. At this meeting, Hu Yao-pang, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League, said: "650 million Chinese have and always will be the most faithful and reliable friends of all oppressed nations."

These demonstrations in Peking marked the beginning only of the action of the Chinese people to support all oppressed peoples against American imperialism and its lackeys. Similar demonstrations are now taking place in all the big cities of China. These three documentaries are evidence how the Chinese people, once oppressed and insulted by the imperialists and their henchmen, now that they have stood up, whole-heartedly sympathize and support all oppressed peoples.

New Books

"A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire" Volume III

People's Literature Publishing House, Peking

This is the third volume of a series which, through narratives and sketches, records the Chinese people's revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. The present volume, devoted to the Red Army's Long March, contains seventy reminiscences by actual participants in the event. Some of the writers were commanders at the time, others were rank-and-file soldiers, political workers or orderlies concerned with supplies and cooking. They came from different units of the First, Second and Fourth Front Armies. The editors have arranged these accounts systematically. Thus Volume III begins with a fairly comprehensive article by Comrade Liu Po-cheng entitled "Looking Back upon the Long March" and ends with "The Meeting of the Three Front Armies." Read separately, these seventy articles show us different heroic deeds, while read as a whole they give us a general picture of the world-famous Long March.

As we all know, the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, in order to advance northwards to resist Japanese aggression, broke through the cordons drawn round it by Chiang Kai-shek who had sold out to the enemy, and set out on its march in October 1934 from Juikin in the province of Kiangsi in Central China. Having first marched westward, it proceeded by devious routes through eleven provinces and much wild and difficult terrain to the north and in October 1936 converged on Northern Shensi where a powerful anti-Japanese base was established. The success of this long march unprecedented in history not only laid the foundation of the victory of the Chinese people's War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, but ensured the triumph of the later War of Liberation. During the Long March, when the Central Red Army reached Tsunyi, Kweichow, in Southwest China, the Central Committee of the Party called the famous Tsunyi Conference which established the leadership of the Central Committee headed by Chairman Mao Tse-tung. After that the Red Army advanced from victory to victory.

Many pages in this book describe the elation of the soldiers after the Tsunyi Conference and the triumph of the military line of Chairman Mao, and vivid, penetrating sketches bring home to us the infinite vitality of Mao Tse-tung's thought. Thus in "Looking Back upon the Long March" Liu Po-cheng writes: "After the Tsunyi Conference, there was a great change and our army seemed to gain new life. We moved in and out as we pleased through the enemy's lines. When the enemy thought we were turning east, we headed west again; when he thought we were crossing the river and turning north, we thrust south again to attack him. Everywhere we took the initiative, fighting like dragon or tigers." Chang Ai-ping's "From Tsunyi to the Tatu River" is a very graphic account which testifies to this conclusion: "The time between the Tsunyi Conference and our meeting with the Fourth Front Army after the victorious crossing of the Tatu River was the most important and decisive period in the Central Red Army's 25,000-li Long March. It was the most active and stirring period in the Long March, as well as one of the most glorious feats in all military history. Without the victories of this period, the Red Army could not have won through danger to safety, or been able to accomplish the great strategic task of advancing north to resist Japanese aggression. This decisive victory was mainly due to the fact that after the Tsunyi Conference the Red Army had the correct leadership of the Central Committee of the Party headed by Chairman Mao Tse-tung, who could foresee and deal with all enemy moves, and who adopted the strategy of large-scale mobile warfare. This was the victory of the Central Committee's Tsunyi Conference, the victory of Chairman Mao's military thought."

The Red Army encountered hardships and difficulties almost without parallel in all world history. Yet these were overcome by its officers and men armed with Chairman Mao's teachings. Thus in General Yang Cheng-wu's article, "Chairman Mao Showed Us How to Cross the Grassland," we are told how the chairman said: "We must advance. The enemy thinks we will go west through Szechuan, not daring to risk crossing the grassland and advancing north to Shensi and Kansu. But the enemy never knows what we will do. We will take the route he thinks we dare not take." Chairman Mao also said: "The basic way to overcome difficulties is to explain clearly to our comrades all the difficulties we may encounter, to explain clearly to them why the Central Committee made this decision to cross the grassland and go north to resist Japan. Provided our comrades understand this, I believe

there is no difficulty which can stop our officers and men." Thanks to Chairman Mao's brilliant guidance, the Red Army overcame untold hardships and accomplished the Long March. Indeed the whole army gained incomparably in confidence. As Chairman Mao wrote in his poem on the Long March: "And when the army has crossed, each face will be smiling."

Many writers record from their own experience the heroic deeds of Red Army officers and men when they stormed strongholds and passes, crossed rapids and closely defended bridges, snow-covered mountains and the treacherous grassland. The dauntless spirit shown is that described by Chairman Mao in the lines:

The Red Army fears not the trials of a distant march;
To them a thousand mountains, ten thousand rivers are
nothing.

Of innumerable instances of superb heroism, it will suffice to mention the march of 240 *li** in one day to capture the Luting Bridge. The average person cannot cover 240 *li* in one day, and this was no ordinary march either. The men had to fight their way forward, contending at the same time with the elements. "A great downpour of rain interspersed with thunder and lightning made the sky so black that they could not see their hands stretched out before them." Yet with extraordinary gallantry they covered 240 *li* that day and went on immediately to attack the enemy and capture the iron-chain bridge at Luting. This book also gives us detailed, colourful accounts of the crossing of the Chinsha River and the Tatu River, feats which are known to every household in China. We see not only the courage and endurance of the people's army, but also its wisdom and tact, in contrast to the weakness and rottenness of the enemy. Examples of this can be found in such narratives as "Capturing Tsunyi by a Ruse" and "The Reconnaissance Unit."

True friendship reveals itself in time of trouble. The Red Army officers and men, led by the Party and armed with proletarian ideology, displayed a profound and comradely friendship for each other. Readers cannot fail to be struck by the officers' care for their men, the soldiers' love for their leaders, and the class friendship shown under gruelling conditions in the wild and uninhabited mountains and grasslands. Many of the contributors to this book have said words to this effect: "The Long March is hard to forget, especially the comradely love we experienced during it." Or "If someone asked: 'What im-

* A *li* is about one-third of a mile.

pressed you most in the course of the Long March?' I would answer without hesitation: 'The brotherly spirit of class love in the Red Army.'" This spirit, which is continuing to educate our younger generation, has become a dynamic force to hasten our socialist construction and the noble task of realizing communism.

As early as 1927, Chairman Mao laid down new principles on the organization and development of the Red Army, stressing the need for close ties between the army and the people under the Party leadership. In December 1929, in a resolution of the Ninth Party Congress of the Fourth Red Army, Chairman Mao again pointed out: "When the Red Army fights, it fights not merely for the sake of fighting, but to agitate the masses, to organize them, to arm them, and to help them to establish revolutionary political power. Apart from such objectives, fighting loses its meaning and the Red Army the reason for its existence."

This principle guiding the relationship between the Red Army and the people was not only observed consistently in the construction of the bases and the Red Army's counter-offensives, but throughout the entire course of the Long March. Innumerable instances testify that whenever the Red Army reached a new region, the people who had been misled by lies first showed fear or even ran away; but after hearing the soldiers speak and watching their actions, they realized the truth and came to have such a love for the Red Army that they could not bear to see it leave. Numerous such moving scenes occur in this book. The references to the strict observance of army discipline in relation to the people even when the men were suffering from terrible hunger are especially striking in this respect. As the political commissar of the Second Red Army, Jen Pi-shih said: "Hunger cannot destroy our determination to serve the people. We must protect their interests and not touch a single blade of grass or tree belonging to them." These fine qualities made the Red Army and the masses become like one flesh and blood, making the people's army indestructible.

Each time the Red Army marched through areas inhabited by minority nationalities, a study was made of local traditions and customs and the nationalities policy was explained to the men. Thanks to the Party's correct nationalities policy, the Red Army successfully crossed many regions then considered impassable. The story of how General Liu Po-cheng became the sworn brother of an Yi chieftain is very well-known in China. "Passing Through the Taliangshan Mountain" by Hsiao Hua relates that incident in detail. "They had neither incense nor candles, but they faced the blue sky

and the crystal stream, and their pledge was firm and binding with the solidarity of brotherly nationalities." This solidarity brought the Red Army useful assistance in those minority areas and made a lasting impression on the fraternal nationalities.

Volume III of *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire* runs into more than 320,000 words, of which the accounts mentioned above form only a fraction. Chairman Mao summarized the significance of the Long March as follows: "We say that the Long March is the first of its kind ever recorded in history, that it is a manifesto, an agitation corps and a seeding-machine. Since Pan Ku divided heaven from earth and the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors reigned, has there ever been in history a long march like ours? For twelve months we were under daily reconnaissance and bombing from the air by scores of planes; we were encircled, pursued, obstructed and intercepted on the ground by a big force of several hundred thousand men; we encountered untold difficulties and great obstacles on the way, but by keeping our two feet going we swept across a distance of more than 20,000 *li* through the length and breadth of eleven provinces. Well, has there ever been in history a long march like ours? No, never. The Long March is also a manifesto. It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes and that the imperialists and their jackals, Chiang Kai-shek and his like, are perfect nonentities. It announces the bankruptcy of the encirclement, pursuit, obstruction and interception attempted by the imperialists and Chiang Kai-shek. The Long March is also an agitation corps. It declares to the approximately two hundred million people of eleven provinces that only the road of the Red Army leads to their liberation. Without the Long March, how could the broad masses have known so quickly that there are such great ideas in the world as are upheld by the Red Army? The Long March is also a seeding-machine. It has sown many seeds in eleven provinces, which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a harvest in the future. To sum up, the Long March ended with our victory and the enemy's defeat."

History has showed the accuracy of Chairman Mao's judgement. The Long March made the revolution blossom and bear fruit. It was a great victory of the thought of Mao Tse-tung. Thus the publication of these records of the Long March is not only significant as another achievement of the masses in writing, but has great historical importance and significance today.

"Advancing in the Light of the Rising Sun" — prose sketches

Liu Pai-yu: Writers' Publishing House

1958 was the first year of the Big Leap on all fronts of socialist construction in China, when the selfless creative labour of the whole people rapidly transformed the country. Even a province like Heilungkiang in China's far northeast, which used to be sparsely populated and desolate, is now in the forefront of construction and full of vigorous life. Novelist Liu Pai-yu came to this district during this period. This was not his first visit to Heilungkiang, however, for from 1946 to 1949, before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, he was there serving as a cultural worker in the People's Liberation Army. During that period he wrote several dozen accounts of army life which today form an important record of the War of Liberation, as well as a significant contribution to the new Chinese literature. By 1958, thanks to the rapid advance of socialist construction, the situation had of course changed completely. Millions of men and women were conquering the vast stretch of Heilungkiang known as the Great Northern Wilds, changing them into China's northeastern granary, a smiling land with a modern industry and culture. Liu Pai-yu has made these stupendous, historic changes the subject of another series of short sketches in which we can feel the fast-beating pulse of this age.

Advancing in the Light of the Rising Sun is a collection of ten sketches. Of these, *A Heart-warming Snowy Night* and *Typhoon* have been published in *Chinese Literature* in Volume 2, 1959 and Volume 5, 1960. The writer said in his postscript to this book: "I cannot say whether this is a collection of stories or sketches. These are gleams that flashed before my eyes and I simply wrote them down to leave some record of the atmosphere and spirit of 1958." Six of these sketches concern Heilungkiang and do indeed give us the atmosphere and spirit of the age, the freshness of newly ploughed virgin soil, as in *The Boundless Grassland*, *The Nunkiang Steppe*, *A Heart-warming Snowy Night* and *Lights on the Irrigation Site*. More important still, the author has presented the new men of the socialist type who are building up the Northern Wilds with unflinching courage. These are men like the chairman of a co-operative who jumps three times into the torrent to save the dyke; Chang who risks his life to put out a forest fire; the worker in the steel rolling mill who was so ground down in the old society, living as a vagrant, that he treasures the happy life today all the more. Another typical character is Chang Tsui-hsia, a girl who loves singing and who volun-

teers to take part in building up the forest areas because she longs to conquer nature. When she first arrives, she finds many things very difficult, but by throwing herself whole-heartedly into her work she gains a deeper understanding of the aim and significance of life so that her singing takes on a new vitality. Lin Li-keh, the young technician in *A Heart-warming Snowy Night* ignores heat and cold, wind and rain, as he travels hills, valleys and plains, putting up wherever he can. Like so many of his colleagues, he has high ideals and the courage to shoulder new tasks. Such men have created a new life, becoming steeled themselves in the process. They are new men of the socialist type, resolute and with high aspirations. Liu Pai-yu's characterization is penetrating and moving.

The other stories in this collection are related to army life. *Typhoon*, one of the most outstanding, tells how one stormy night some soldiers of the People's Liberation Army rescue a woman about to give birth and makes over their office to her, while outside in the furious wind and rain they wait anxiously for the baby's first cry. Chen and Kao, the heroes of two other stories, are brave, tactful and optimistic, fired by revolutionary romanticism. They can enjoy themselves under the most difficult conditions, and they always accomplish superbly the tasks assigned to them even at great personal risk. Thus when the telephone wire is cut by enemy bombardment, Kao repairs it under gunfire, persisting even when his clothing catches fire. To defeat the enemy they do not hesitate to lay down their lives. Liu Pai-yu's intimate knowledge of army life gives depth and body to his portrayal of these men.

Like all Liu Pai-yu's writings, this collection is characterized by its lyrical style, burning political passion and vivid pictures of the greatness of the common man. It therefore makes a powerful appeal to the reading public.

"Ngo-ping and Sang-lo"

Yunnan People's Publishing House

Ngo-ping and Sang-lo is an enchanting narrative poem of the Tai people who live in the province of Yunnan in Southwest China. Recently, thanks to the hard work of those concerned with folk literature, this poem which was formerly handed down orally has been recorded, edited and published.

This poem tells the tragic love story of a young Tai named Sang-lo who leaves home to search for freedom. During his journey he meets Ngo-ping and they fall in love. After pledging themselves to each other, both go home. Sang-lo's mother wants him to marry a rich girl, however, not a poor girl from far away. To win freedom and a happy life, the two young lovers marry in secret, and Ngo-ping conceives. Sang-lo's mother, with her false ideas of family dignity, unknown to her son murders his lovely young wife with a bamboo dagger. Then, appalled by the destruction of his love and his ideal, Sang-lo takes his own life.

This long poem makes a sharp exposure of the evils of the system of arranged marriages and the old feudal family, represented by Sang-lo's mother. It acclaims true love and the young men and women who risked their lives to win freedom and love. Such lovers were rebels in feudal society. Of course, under strong social pressure in the past, their lives were bound to end in tragedy; this was not a passive tragedy, however, but one breathing the spirit of revolt. While enlisting hearers' sympathies for the devoted couple, it aroused them to fight against reaction. Sang-lo was a young hero with high ideals, who treasured freedom. Gentle, good and intelligent, he remained passionately faithful to his convictions and boldly rebelled against feudal society. When he saw his ideal destroyed by brute force, he decided without hesitation to dissociate himself from the feudal forces and give up his life to prove his loyalty to his love. In this he epitomizes the fine qualities of the courageous Tai people who remained for ages undaunted by oppression.

Ngo-ping is the personification of lovely Tai girlhood — sweet, pure and utterly selfless. To find love and happiness she journeys hundreds of miles to join Sang-lo. When she is cruelly murdered by his mother, she bears her lover no grudge and her last thoughts are of him. Many sensitive touches in the poem bring out the nobility of this young girl.

Ngo-ping and Sang-lo is a fine example of Tai lyrical and narrative poetry. A number of stanzas use lyrical modes of expression and lyrical dialogues which are skilfully interwoven into the narrative. The whole poem is strongly romantic. It makes apt use of similes, metaphors, contrasts, artistic exaggeration and vivid images to present widely differing characters.

Since its translation into Han language in 1959, this poem has received great attention from literary critics as well as ordinary readers. This pearl of Tai poetry has now become a treasured part of the heritage of China's multi-national literature.

Chronicle

"Princess Wen Cheng" Produced in Peking

Princess Wen Cheng, a new play by the veteran playwright Tien Han, was recently staged in Peking. It deals with the alliance by marriage between a Tang princess and the king of Tibet 1300 years ago. When an envoy was sent by King Sron-tsan Gampo to the Tang capital to ask for the hand of a Tang princess, Emperor Tai Tsung agreed to send his niece Princess Wen Cheng to Tibet.

The princess made the long and arduous journey to arrive in Lhasa amidst the cheers of the populace. There, she became the wife of Sron-tsan Gampo. She took with her not only the friendship of the people of the central part of China but also introduced their cultural achievement to the local populace in the form of seeds and farm tools, musical instruments and books, craftsmen, physicians and medicine, and clothes, jewels and ornaments. This did much to promote the solidarity and friendship between the people living in the central part of China and those of the frontier regions.

The beautiful story of Princess Wen Cheng's marriage is still popular in Tibet, where her name is known to old and young and her memory is cherished. Tien Han made a careful study of historical materials before he started writing. These included the *Old Tang Dynasty History* and the *New Tang Dynasty History*, local chronicles, folk legends, Buddhist records — Princess Wen Cheng was a devout Buddhist — Tang paintings and maps showing the route to Tibet. The playwright made skilful use of the many delightful folk tales about the princess to add romantic colour and life to his play. A superb performance was given by the well-known actor and stage director, Wu Hsueh, in the part of the Tibetan king and by the young actress Cheng Chen-yao in the title role.

National Music Ensemble

The Central National Music Ensemble recently established in Peking specializes, as its name indicates, in China's national music and folk song. Its function is to develop our national and folk music

to meet the growing requirements of the people. Members of the group include Chao Chun-ting, noted player on the *sona*, a wood wind-instrument, the flutist Wang Tieh-chui, the tenor Chang Chien-kuo who was formerly a factory worker, and the soprano Yuan Su-chun who comes from a peasant family. Most of these musicians have won prizes in world youth festivals and international contests during recent years. The ensemble is most successful in its authentic rendering of folk songs from Hopei and the northeast, as well as in reproducing the distinctive local styles of Shantung, Anhwei and the northeast in the use of wind and percussion instruments. It has outstanding exponents of the *cheng* (Chinese harp), *chin* (lute), *sheng* (pipe) and *se* (mandolin) whose repertoire includes the *Kuanglin San*, an ancient tune lost to the world for a thousand years and only recently revived. In his address at the founding of the ensemble, Lin Mo-han, a Vice-Minister of Culture, pointed out that China has an extremely rich heritage of traditional national music and folk song and that this Central National Music Ensemble should make an effective contribution towards the further development of China's music.

Excavation of a Han Dynasty City

In 1958, the site of a city dating from the Han dynasty (B.C. 206-A.D. 220) was discovered in the south part of Chungang County, Fukien. This ancient city covered an area of 400,000 square metres and many flat and tube-shaped tiles of the type most commonly made in the Han dynasty were found on the site. Preliminary diggings in December 1959 by the Fukien Cultural Relics Committee and the Nanping Relics Survey Team revealed valuable items: pottery, iron implements, bronzes and building materials. The pottery included jars, bowls, boxes, basins and a spinning-wheel and spindle. These showed marked improvement both in design and quality over the pottery of the neolithic age previously discovered in Fukien. Among the iron implements were ploughs, hoes, saws, swords, daggers, knives and hooks. There were also bronze spearheads, buckles and ornaments. Other important relics unearthed were the remains of ash pits and hearths, a gravel road and the foundation of a house. The roughly hewn foundation stones were ranged neatly in five rows with twenty-one stones in each, while a layer of small round pebbles between them formed a square base for the house. The ancient city

wall had a gravel foundation covered with a layer of sand on which earth was pounded until it was firm and solid. This wall, six metres thick, is still in fairly good condition today.

The excavation of this ancient city shows that the Han culture extended over a wider area than previously believed.

African Literature in China

Interest in the literature of the African peoples has been growing in China in recent years, and many outstanding works by African writers have been translated and published here. Recently published translations of African works of fiction include three by South African writers, *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner and *The Path of Thunder* and *Mine Boy* by Peter Abrahams; *La grande Maison, L'Incendie* and *Au Café* by the Algerian writer Mohammed Dib; two novels by Kamerun authors, *The Old Negro and the Medal* by Ourano and *Africa, We Don't Understand You* by Mahdi; and *The Son of Senegal* by the Senegal writer Ousmane. The recently translated and published *Anthology of Modern African Poems* contains the works of such important poets as L. S. Senghor, Tadjina and Diop, and *Victory Belongs to Algeria* by Sadana. In addition a *Collection of West African Legends* was also published recently.

La grande Maison and *L'Incendie* are the first two parts of Dib's great trilogy *L'Algerie*. Part III, *Le Métier à Tisser* will soon be in the hands of Chinese readers also. In this trilogy, the author gives a powerful description of the untold sufferings of the Algerian people. With a trenchant pen, the Kamerun writer Ourano in *The Old Negro and the Medal* has exposed the irreconcilable contradictions between the colonialists and the oppressed. Ousmane's *The Son of Senegal* is an outstanding novel which gives a realistic picture of the struggles of a Negro revolutionary vanguard which blazes the trail for the broad masses in Africa. In his *The Path of Thunder* and *Mine Boy*, Peter Abrahams affords us a glimpse of the fight against racial discrimination now being waged in South Africa.

Music and Dance from Hungary

The Central Art Troupe of the Hungarian Young Communist League recently made a tour in China on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the liberation of Hungary. The Peking audiences who attended the troupe's performances gained an indelible impression of the great variety of dances and music which our Hungarian friends brought to China. *Before the Examination, The Herdsman, By the Well, Lasses—Dear Enemies* and *The Easter Water-sprinkling Dance* make good use of national melodies and rhythms to reflect the life of young people in Hungary today. The traditional *Silk Ribbon Dance, Bottle Dance* and *Székely Dance* with their portrayal of simple daily tasks bring out the wit and humour of Hungary's young men and the gaiety tempered by shyness of the girls. Every performance of the Rajko Orchestra was a joy to hear. This troupe appeared with equal success in other major cities of China.

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The Story of Little Black Horse

by Yuan Ching

Little Black Horse was a young beggar, who before liberation spent his time loitering on the streets. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, he was sent to work on a state farm. As he was not in the habit of doing any work, he slacked, made trouble and ran away from the farm. After meeting many difficulties in the outside world, he finally came to realize that to take part in building up his country through hard work was the only correct path for him to take.

The author Yuan Ching has given us a vivid picture of Little Black Horse — his simplicity, goodness, cleverness and bravery, and of the lives of other youngsters like him under two different social systems. Her delightful and convincing style has made this book very popular among young Chinese readers.

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KUAN HAN-CHING

BY TIEN HAN

Kuan Han-ching was China's most outstanding dramatist of the 13th century, the golden age of Chinese drama. This physician and versatile playwright is known to have written 67 plays, 18 of which are extant. His plays — tragedies, court cases, historical dramas — are full of realism and militancy. Eight of his best plays were published in English under the title *Selected Plays of Kuan Han-ching* by the Foreign Languages Press in 1958.

Tien Han, the well-known modern Chinese playwright, wrote this historical drama *Kuan Han-ching* in 1958, the year when people throughout the world commemorated this great artist of some 700 years ago. It has been well received on the Chinese stage.

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