

# CHINESE LITERATURE



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## Men of Red Hill Island

When our boat docked, it was already noon. This was my first visit to Red Hill Island. I had come here to collect material for a story on the joint defence of the island by the local militia and the army garrison. After I got ashore I found that this was not the right place. I had to climb over a ridge and then ferry across an inlet before I could reach the main part of the island.

It was a very hot summer day. Although it was generally windy on these islands, there was not the slightest stir in the air. Clouds hung low, suffocating and oppressive. I was in shirt-sleeves of light linen, yet I was sweating hard as I trudged to the ferry. To my great disappointment there was not a shadow of a boat. I gazed into the distance from a height. There were a few small boats tied to a jetty on the other side of the inlet. But the distance was several hundred metres across, my voice could not reach them. Besides, all the fishermen were out on the sea for the yellow fish run. Who cared to leave a boat here for my convenience?

The heavens were not co-operative either. It started to rain. This put me in a sad plight. Before I decided what to do, however,

I heard a cough from below. I went down a few steps and discovered a tiny skiff nestled in a creek by the hill. An old man in a palm raincoat was sitting in it, puffing leisurely at a bamboo pipe.

I waved to him and called out, "Hello, comrade! Please ferry me across."

The old fellow raised his head slightly and flung me a casual glance. Then he lowered his eyes and went on sucking the pipe. I suspected he was hard of hearing, so I cupped my hands and shouted at the top of my voice, "Hello . . . please . . . ferry me . . . across!"

Again he raised his head slightly and flung me a casual glance. This time he did say a few words, in a hollow but deep voice, "Be patient. I'm on official business right now. Can't spare a minute for you."

He went on relishing his pipe. Apparently he had nothing to do at the moment except enjoy smoking, yet he said he could not spare a minute for me! He made me mad.

"Look," I said, "I'm in a hurry, I have urgent business."

These words produced some reaction. He rose, knocked out his pipe, picked up a rifle from the prow, and ambled ashore. Shading his eyes with a hand, he looked up the path I had come on. Then he slowly approached me and said, "What urgent business do you have on the island?"

Frank old man. But as I knew nothing about him and the islands were on the frontline, I did not want to trust him with my real intentions. I told him ambiguously, "Some business with the garrison on Red Hill Island." Quite unexpectedly this answer provoked a series of inquisitive probes: Where I come from, where I worked, what kind of business I had with the garrison, and so on.

"Hail! What's the use of going into such details?" I said. "I'm charged with important duties. All you have to do is to ferry me across to the other side."

The old fellow didn't miss the impatience in my tone. He sized me up and down, rather belligerently. "I'm afraid you'll have to be a little accommodating with me, even though you're 'charged with important duties'. We're men of Red Hill Island, you know."

Again he shaded his eyes and gazed up the shore. This gave me an opportunity to have a good look at him. He was about fifty, face bronzed and covered with long whiskers, his bare chest tanned deep brown. Must be an experienced fisherman who has weathered many storms I thought. He seemed constantly on the alert though quite pig-headed.

I gathered that he would not take me across in his boat until he was sure of me. Therefore I produced my identity card. He examined it carefully. After having checked the photo he returned it to me.

"Your first visit to this place?" he asked. "Remember this is the frontline. You can't pass unless you've made it clear about yourself. All right then, wait a minute. We'll untie the boat as soon as Little Mao comes."

He brought the skiff alongside the shore and held out the oar to me so that I could step in. As soon as we settled down, sitting face to face, the old man became very talkative. He chatted about a thousand and one things. Now and then he stood to look up the hill.

"Here he comes," he said at last.

I gazed in the same direction. A young soldier, with two heavy loads balanced on his shoulder pole, was coming along the path I had walked. He was panting from over-exertion.

"Little Mao, where did you fetch these loads?" asked the old mate as he took over the burdens. "Do you know how many hours you've spent on the trip?" His eyes dropped to the loads and he said, "What a wet mess you've made of them! You ought to have covered them."

"The man in charge was not there and I had to wait a long time for his return. But look what good stuff I got!" said the young soldier.

The old fellow had by then taken the loads into the boat and I discovered they were dynamite. Having covered them with his palm raincoat, he released the boat and rowed it across the inlet to the other shore.

"Little Mao," said the old man after the boat had stopped, "I'll deliver this stuff to the work site, they're waiting for it. You take this comrade to company headquarters."

Comrade Chang the company commander was very helpful. After lunch he acquainted me with the conditions of the locality. A strategic road was being constructed. Both the garrison and the people on the island had been working hard in order to finish it ahead of schedule. Chiang Kai-shek's agents had got wind of it and were trying to get more information. Our fishing boats returning from the sea had already noticed signs of their activities. Meanwhile, Comrade Chang told me quite a few stories about our fight with them. His narrative about Tang Ah-ken, commander of the local militia, particularly attracted my attention. I asked him to give me a little more detail about this man. He became pensively silent.

"How shall I begin?" he said. "Well, I'll start with the project..."

According to the original plan the present construction was to be done by the garrison. But the local people insisted on taking part in it. Considering the fact that they were busy with their own work, the company commander firmly declined their offer. But one day Tang came straight to the work site with his company of militiamen. They set to work, whether the commander agreed or not.

Little Mao, the communication sergeant, stopped them. "Uncle Ah-ken," he said, "haven't we told you that your help is not needed?"

"Help?" Tang Ah-ken asked in an offended tone. "We're local people. Can you call men of Red Hill Island working for their native place helping? What would you, outsiders, call yourself then?"

Uncle Ah-ken's retort made all the people of the work site laugh. Little Mao had quite a name for his gift of the gab, but this time he was tongue-tied. And Uncle Ah-ken refused to give him a respite either. He pressed on. "Little Mao, time is precious. Let's get on with our job." He swung the carrying pole with two loads of stone on his shoulder and marched off with a steady gait.

"That's what Uncle Ah-ken is like," the company commander commented.

"Is he still out at sea?" I asked.

"No. But, you've just seen him, haven't you?"

I heard heavy strides in the courtyard. I looked out through the window. It was the old man.

"Uncle Ah-ken," the company commander called out, "you've come just in time. A comrade wants to see you."

"Me? What for?" Uncle Ah-ken walked in before his questions were answered.

"This is Tang Ah-ken, the person I was just telling you about," said the company commander. Then he turned to the old man and continued, "Uncle Ah-ken, this comrade has come especially for information about our militia. You'd better have a chat with him."

Uncle Ah-ken burst into laughter when he saw me. "You don't have to introduce us," he said. "We've been friends for some time."

"Right, we got to know each other at the ferry." I shook hands with him.

"Talking of our militiamen on this island," he said, "I can assure you they are no ordinary sort. Unfortunately they're out at sea right now. Wait until those young chaps come back tomorrow. Then you'll have endless tales to write about." He turned to Chang. "Company commander, the commune leaders told us our fishing fleet will be back tomorrow evening. Party Secretary Chen asked me to go to the commune for a meeting, but don't worry, I've already made arrangement for the night patrol."

Before he could leave I asked when he could spare some time for me. He pondered a minute, then said, "I'll be free this evening when I come back from the meeting."

"Good, I'll be waiting for you."

My mind was full of misgivings as I saw him leave. In my judgement only sturdy young men could be militia leaders. But here the militia commander was an old man.

The company commander seemed to have guessed my doubts. "He doesn't look like a militia commander, does he?" he said. "But you're mistaken if you go by his looks."

He went on with a brief account of the old boatman. He was the deputy Party secretary of the island's production team and had been commander of the militia from the day it was formed. During the last few years the militia had captured nine Chiang Kai-shek boats that attempted to harass the mainland. Two years ago, in the spring, in consideration of his health the Party branch had wanted to get

someone to replace him in the militia. But he flatly rejected the idea.

"I'm in love with the job," he said. "No matter who replaces me, I can't remain quiet at home if anything turns up."

In the evening I waited impatiently for Uncle Ah-ken. But he failed to appear. I finally went to bed after midnight.

I got up at dawn. The old man was just coming into militia headquarters, returning from the beaches with a small unit of militiamen, his familiar rifle slung over his shoulder, his clothes soaked with dew. He hailed me as soon as he saw me. "I must apologize. You must have waited a long time last night. But it was impossible to send word to you."

The fact was that when he was crossing the inlet on his way back from the meeting at commune headquarters around midnight, he saw a blue signal flare hovering over Wolf Crag in the distance. He watched for a while, then hurried back to the village to assemble the scouting unit. Together they made for Wolf Crag in forced march. It was there that Uncle Ah-ken spent the night.

The weather on the island turned tricky. The new day emerged with a clear, cloudless sky which only yesterday had been veiled in a misty drizzle. All the cadres of the production team went out to sea, leaving the village in the care of Uncle Ah-ken. After breakfast I went to look for him. His door was locked. A little boy told me he was probably on the beach where they were sunning fishing nets and volunteered to take me there. We came to the place after winding along picturesque paths in the hills.

A melodious song led my gaze to an open space by the sea. At once I saw Uncle Ah-ken in the midst of a group of women who were boiling fishing nets. On a row of wooden frames a variety of fishing nets were drying in the sun. As I neared them I heard Uncle Ah-ken's angry voice, "Who authorized you to use them?"

"Me! Can't I, head of the net-making unit, authorize them to use a few pieces of wood?" A middle-aged woman retorted. The girls giggled.

"A few pieces of wood! Indeed!" Uncle Ah-ken became all the more displeased. "It's building material!"

"You don't have to tell me that," the middle-aged woman said smiling. "Don't worry! If the garrison needs it right away, we can send it back."

The boy who had acted as my guide whispered that the woman was the director of the island's net-making factory and that Uncle Ah-ken was her husband! They had boiled the nets yesterday but could not sun them because of bad weather. Today, in order to save time, they had come to the beach even without taking breakfast. There were not enough drying frames, so they moved a few wooden poles from the construction site as a makeshift. They meant to return them as soon as the purpose was served.

I greeted the old man, "Uncle Ah-ken!" He came over, still out of sorts. We turned to go. At the edge of the beach he turned around and said imperatively to the women, "You got off cheap this time. In the future, if your director gives you the same wicked advice, be sure not to take it."

The young women burst into laughter, but they had already started to take the poles back to construction site.

We walked along a zigzag path by the shore. He talked about the exploits of his militiamen, punctuating each sentence by a suck at the local tobacco in his pipe, but never said a word about himself. We came to a creek. He stopped, pointing to a rocky bluff on the other side, and said, "You can write a lot about that."

At first I thought he was teasing me. But then I realized he was serious. He began to tell me the story of the place.

"It's called Wolf Crag," he said. "A hundred years ago when the British aggressors imposed their 'Opium War' on us, that place was their first stepping stone to our islands. When the Japanese invaded they also started their landing from that point. From then on people called it Wolf Crag." He sucked hard at his pipe twice and then puffed the smoke out vehemently. "Of course," he went on, "that's all mere history now. But today there are still people who try to use it as a stepping stone again. Only we do not give them a chance. The moment they put out their feet they fall into our

trap. During the last few years the enemy have several times come here in boats attempting to sneak in, but we caught them all."

"I understand you've actually caught nine boat-loads," I said.

"Exactly. But that's only what we ought to do. To tell the truth, every time we heard that enemy agents were unearthed somewhere in our country, we suspected the bastards might have come through our islands. It's a very unpleasant thought."

"They might have got in through some other places."

"That's not the way to look at the matter. They must find some place to put their feet on our land — if it is not your place, then it must be ours. In any case all of us must be vigilant and not let a single enemy agent slip in."

Our conversation was interrupted by a call. It was Little Mao who was running towards us.

"Uncle Ah-ken! Uncle Ah-ken!" he shouted.

We stopped him. He reported, "Uncle Ah-ken, we've just received instructions from headquarters: we must get ready for action at once. The company commander wants you at an emergency meeting."

"I'll be there in a minute. Please tell our platoon leaders to wait for assignment, and get the signalmen ready."

It was getting dark. All of Red Hill Island was ready for action. The defence boats steamed into Wolf Crag Bay one after another, patrols marched out of the fishing village in the direction of the beach, and the garrison forces were in battle array. But a kind of calmness prevailed — the lull before the storm.

The quiet, however, did not last long. A blast from a conch-shell rose from the village just as the darkness set in. Not long after a chorus of songs rang over the hills and fields. Carried by the wind the lines went like this:

We're men of Red Hill Island organized into militia,  
Together with the garrison we form a mighty force,  
All brothers, fighting with one heart,  
Shoulder to shoulder, guns firmly in our hands,  
To guard the gate of our motherland...

I liked the song. I hurried to the open space outside the village and found a large crowd gathered. A tall figure standing on a rock with a rifle on his back was conducting the singing. He was beating the tempo with his sinewy arms so vigorously that he seemed to be rowing a boat. It was Uncle Ah-ken. Gradually the voices died down. He looked up at the sky and said, "It's getting late, we must set out. Are you all clear about the situation?"

"Yes!" said the militiamen in one voice.

"Good. Be prepared for battle. First platoon leader!"

"Present!" a young man answered.

"To your position as assigned, at the back of the hill. Second platoon leader!"

"Present!" answered a young girl.

"Take your men to the Little Dragon Pool. The other platoons, follow me!"

As the militia left I went back to company headquarters. I found only Little Mao on duty at the walkie-talkie.

The refrain of the inspiring song I had heard a moment ago was still echoing in my mind, bringing up Uncle Ah-ken's figure rowing a boat. I set to writing the dispatch I had originally planned.

Company commander Chang returned around eleven o'clock, informing us that the fishing fleet would be coming in some time after midnight and that some suspicious signal flare had been sighted. He spread a sea chart on the table and pored over it in the light of a hurricane lamp.

Just then the walkie-talkie sounded: "Hello, weather station, hello, weather station, I want Station Master Chang, Station Master Chang."

The company commander strode over to the instrument and spoke into it, "Station master, station master."

"The tide is rising. Pay attention to the gale. Direction 850..."

The commander immediately relayed the message to all the observation and patrol posts.

"Marvellous!" the company commander smiled mysteriously at me. "Probably you're lucky this time. Wait and see what interesting things might happen."



I inferred from his remark that the message might have something to do with enemy activities. Again the walkie-talkie spoke: "Station master, a gale is starting to blow at Wolf Crag. Direction: northwest." I recognized Uncle Ah-ken's voice.

"I get it. Keep close watch on the direction of the gale!" The company commander folded up the chart, turned to Little Mao and said, "Take this comrade with you to see what's happening out there."

We stumbled along on the rugged paths among the hills until finally we came to the bay. Through the murky mist I could see dots of light flickering out on the sea, almost like feeble stars in a distant sky. I concluded that they must be lights from the returning fishing fleet.

Down on the bay I saw the faint figures of our soldiers and militiamen moving onto the defence boats. Uncle Ah-ken was briefing Company Commander Chang and the platoon leaders on the situation, his hand pointing to a very weak light not far away that was

drifting slowly by itself in a northwestern direction. He summed up in an anxious tone, "No mistake. We've had our eyes on it for two hours. That boat has been drifting weirdly about all the time. It is trying to sneak into the midst of our fishing fleet. We're waiting for your order, commander."

The company commander surveyed the situation carefully with his eyes. I could not make out any difference between that wandering light and those of our fishing boats. How could it, then, arouse Uncle Ah-ken's suspicion? I asked.

"You must know that we are men of Red Hill Island," the old militia commander answered. "It can't fool us. First, it must be a small boat, and such a vessel can never go out to sea alone. Second, it is not familiar with the routes here. The place it has just passed is called Black Tiger Rocks. Our boats keep away from it according to instructions issued by the government last year. Third, the signal light itself is wrong."

"What's wrong with it?" I asked. "Aren't all the signal lights yellow?"

"Right. But you have to wait in order to understand what I mean." Then he turned to Chang, "Company commander, shall I give the signal?"

The company commander nodded.

Uncle Ah-ken climbed on a height and blew his conch-shell with all his might. In an instant a flashing red light appeared under every yellow light. They set off one another, striking the eye like so many bright gems. Only that weird light which remained unchanged, looked particularly lonely.

Ooo... ooo... ooo. The conch-shell sounded more blatantly.

That lonely light, overwhelmed by the huge noise, suddenly disappeared in the darkness.

With a wave of his hand the company commander issued the order: "Act according to our third plan!"

Most of the garrison and militia leaders jumped into the defence boats while several others led a joint contingent of armymen and militiamen to their position on Wolf Crag. The tiny armada guided

by the boat rowed by Uncle Ah-ken steered out of the bay and vanished into the darkness.

The tide was rushing in. The heaving sea pounded the shore like wild beasts. The rattle of firearms at the foot of the hills punctured the monotonous roar. The lights of the fishing boats out at sea became brighter and brighter as they drew near.

The conch-shell sounded again, ringing powerfully above the racket of gunfire: Ooo . . . ooo . . . ooo.

Gunfire afar, gunfire near. . . .

The armada, each marked by a signal light, soon deployed in a half-circle far out on the sea.

“Hello, do you want to save your skin? If you do, surrender immediately. No escape for you off Red Hill Island! Hear?” Uncle Ah-ken’s voice echoed on the shore, dominating space and even the roar of the sea.

At daybreak Red Hill Island released its battle communique No. 10: An enemy landing boat intercepted, five U.S.-Chiang Kai-shek armed agents caught, five rifles and submachine-guns captured. Together with this communique I sent out my dispatch.

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*A Revolutionary Committee Member* (oil painting)  
by Tang Hsiao-ming ▶



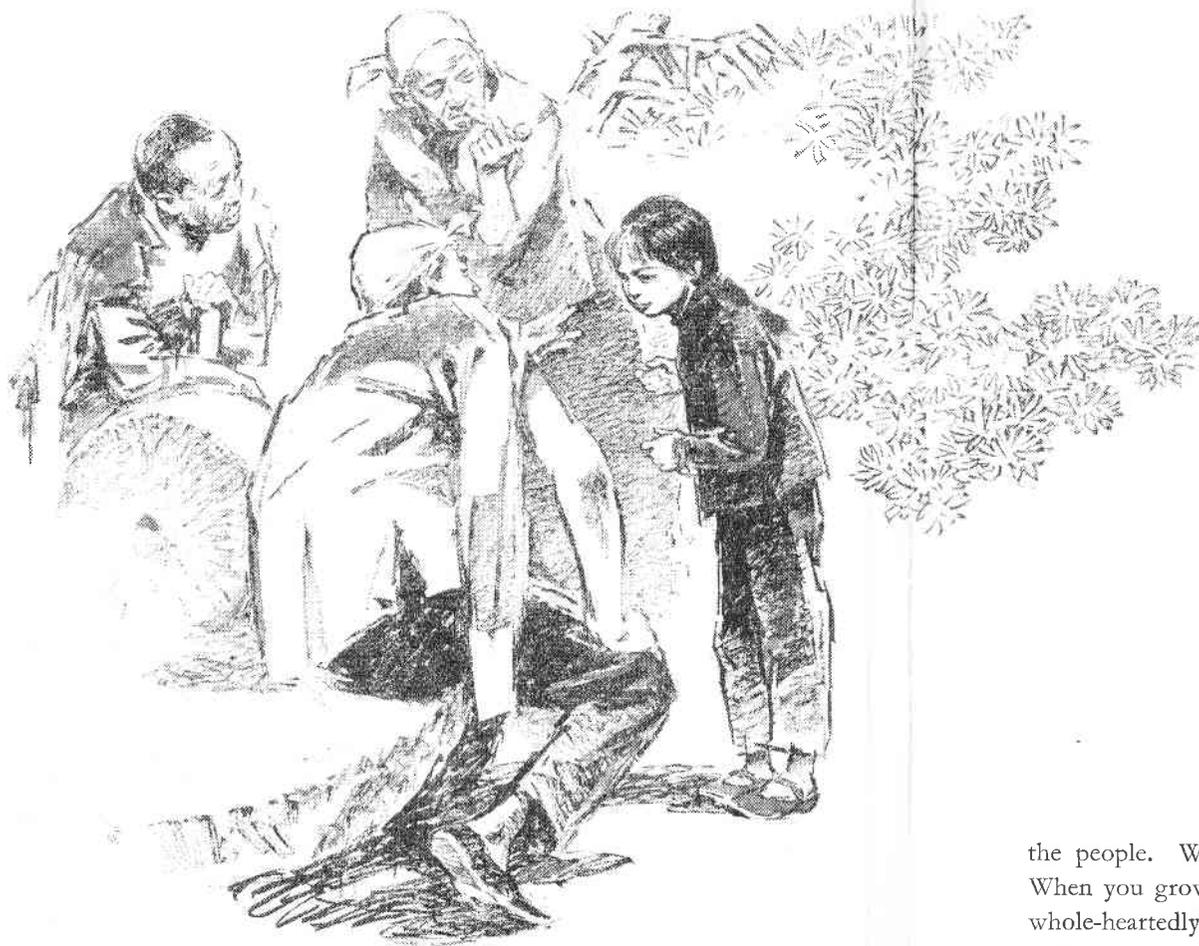
*Tsin Ching*

## Liu Hu-lan

The central Shansi plain stretches to the horizon. The River Fen, winding southward to flow into the Yellow River, cuts through it. On the west side, in Wenshui County, there is the little village of Yun-chouhsi. Here, in the year 1932, Liu Hu-lan was born.

In 1937 the Japanese invaders crossed the Great Wall and entered Shansi Province. Instead of leading the people to defend themselves, the warlord Yen Hsi-shan, who had ruled the region, ran away. The fall of Wenshui County into the hands of the Japanese aggressors was imminent. It was then that the guerrillas of the Eighth Route Army, led by Chairman Mao, came to the Shansi plain where they founded a base for guerrilla warfare. The next year, an anti-Japanese democratic government was set up in Wenshui County.

One day at noon, while a hot sun blazed overhead and crops drooped in the heat, people congregated on the threshing ground in Yun-chouhsi Village. Sweat streaked their faces and soaked their clothes, while the sun-tanned bodies of the men who had stripped to the waist, glistened in the sun. But nobody seemed to mind the heat as they listened quietly to a young man who stood talking to them.



"Neighbours," he said forcefully. "The Japanese devils have invaded our Shansi Province. They're killing countless citizens and Warlord Yen, instead of resisting them, has ganged up with these foreign bandits against our Eighth Route Army and the people who are fighting. We must organize, resist the invaders and defend our homes with our lives to save our nation..."

The people were tense. Anger gleamed in their eyes. Liu Hu-

lan, then a small girl, edged forward to stare wide-eyed at the speaker. The women whispered among themselves.

"What he says makes sense. Who is he?"

"Don't you know? That's Ku, who heads our county government. Guess how old he is?"

"They say he's only nineteen. I heard he led the guerrillas who destroyed some of the devil's trucks and wiped out many enemy soldiers."

Little Hu-lan blinked as she repeated, "Only nineteen!"

Like gusts of fresh wind, news of how Ku and his men were waging heroic battles against the Japanese enemy kept reaching the village. People would gather round their village Party secretary and discuss them excitedly. Hu-lan, all ears, was always among those in the crowd, listening attentively.

"Why is Ku so brave?" she once asked.

"He never thinks of himself," Chen, the village Party secretary, answered. "He thinks about us peasants, and his heart is one with the people. What good is a person who only thinks of himself. When you grow up, you must be like Ku and work for the people whole-heartedly."

Though this was too difficult an idea for Hu-lan to really understand, the fearless spirit of the young revolutionary was imprinted on her mind.

In the autumn of 1940, the Japanese invaders set up strongholds across the plain and carried out their brutal policy of killing, burning and pillaging wherever they went. Life in the villages was becoming very difficult. The peasants couldn't even spend New Year's Eve at home; they had to make hasty preparations to withstand sudden enemy attacks. Comrade Ku Jung-tien, the head of the county, led

his men in patrolling the county day and night. One day at dawn, they were suddenly encircled by enemy troops. Ku ordered his men to withdraw while he himself covered their retreat. When the Japanese soldiers tried to pursue them, Ku fought single-handed for a whole night so that the peasants could get away safely. But this time, Ku, who always took the lead in an attack and was the last to retreat, gave his life for the people.

When the news of his death reached the village of Yunchouhsi, the peasants gathered on the street in twos and threes. They stood around forlornly, tears in their eyes, speechless with grief. Hu-lan wept bitterly. How she hated the Japanese devils and the warlord Yen Hsi-shan.

The peasants of Yunchouhsi soon turned their grief and tears into action. They intensified their resistance against the invaders. Often, after sunset, Hu-lan noticed her father putting on his padded jacket and leaving the house with a small sack of food.

"Where's dad going?" Hu-lan would ask her grandmother curiously.

Granny would whisper, "He's off to the western hills, with grain for the county's anti-Japanese democratic government. How can the Eighth Route Army fight the devils, if they've nothing to eat, child?"

Hu-lan's mother also told her stories of revolutionary struggles.

One morning, before Hu-lan was up, shots rang out somewhere in the village. She sprang out of bed. While she was dressing, there was more firing outside interspersed with the burst of hand-grenades. Hu-lan made for the door, anxious to find out what was happening. But her granny pulled her back sharply, so that all Hu-lan could do was to crouch down by the door and peer through a crack.

She was amazed to see two men dash out from a lane one after the other and, recognized them as Wu and Wang, young messengers from the district. "Come and get me if you can, you bandits," shouted Wu, racing south as soon as he emerged. The other one, Wang, turned east from the lane and also shouted as he ran. Close behind them a bunch of Japanese devils gave chase. Hu-lan was very concerned and anxious. "How queer!" She wondered how they ex-

pected to escape when they were making such a noise? The firing continued for quite a while. Hu-lan was very worried. What had happened to the two young messengers? She slipped out as soon as granny's head was turned. The whole village was talking about the incident. The young men had come with the head of the district to attend a meeting the previous evening. At dawn, Japanese soldiers suddenly surrounded the compound where they were. Their leader told them to climb over the back wall and run for their lives. They obeyed, but they shouted as they ran, purposely drawing the enemy after them so that the head of the district would not be discovered. Before they were killed, the two tossed several grenades at the pursuing enemy, killing and wounding a number of them. Hu-lan burst into tears when she heard they had died, and the village Party secretary, trying to suppress his own grief, comforted her, saying, "Stop crying, child, what's the use of tears? The important thing is that we must remember them and let them be our example." He stopped a minute before saying, "This debt of blood must be paid in blood."

Such things were deeply etched on Hu-lan's young mind. She grew up within the sound of anti-Japanese gunfire, and was guided by the shining example of valiant heroes.

## II

In August 1945 the Japanese aggressors surrendered. Joyfully the people of the liberated areas celebrated the victory and the little village where Hu-lan lived seethed with excitement. People stood around laughing and chatting happily. Children dashed up and down the streets while young people celebrated with cymbals and drums. Hu-lan, now a tall, robust girl of thirteen, stood smiling broadly as she talked to others about the victory. After eight long years of war against the Japanese invaders, this victory was indeed something to rejoice over.

That night Hu-lan could not sleep. She lay thinking of the price the people had paid for victory. She remembered Ku, the young

leader of the county government, the two messengers Wu and Wang, and thought of all the many nameless martyrs who had given their lives during the war. Admiration and gratitude filled her heart.

But such happy days did not last long. The forces of the treacherous Chiang Kai-shek and those of the bandit Yen Hsi-shan were united, including also some of the puppet troops left behind by the Japanese. Once again liberated Wenshui County was under attack. Reactionary troops occupied the county town, but the surrounding countryside was still in the people's hands. The situation, however, was very tense. Coming struggles cast their shadows. In view of the situation, the county Party committee decided to hold a "Training Class for Women" where activists from various villages could assemble. Comrade Lu Hsueh-mei, who headed the department on women's work in the county Party committee was in charge of the class.

Hu-lan had known Comrade Lu for some time, for during the war against the Japanese aggressors, Lu went from village to village, working among the masses. She was very efficient and able. Hu-lan admired her and yearned to be like her. When the young girl learned there was to be a training class, she raced off to find Comrade Lu.

"Sister Lu, I want to join the training class. You must let me."

Lu thought she was too young. "Hu-lan dear, has granny given you permission? You're still so young, perhaps you shall have some training later on."

"No, I've waited long enough," Hu-lan straightened up with a look of determination. "If I go on waiting, the revolution will be won and there will no longer be anything for us women to do."

Lu could not help laughing. "The revolution will be won! Far from it. Though the Japanese have been defeated, our poor peasants have not yet stood up and women are still not emancipated. Don't you know that Chiang and Yen's brigand troops have started to attack our liberated areas?"

"When the reactionaries come, we'll have to beat them back. Sister Lu, isn't this a good reason why I should join the training class?"

Hu-lan was so insistent that Lu did not know how to refuse her. She was also struck by Hu-lan's adult ways and the young girl's sensible arguments. Comrade Lu finally gave her consent but only after insisting that Hu-lan went home and explained to her granny what she was going to do.

Once home, Hu-lan went about the house smiling and singing happily all that day. As usual she fetched water, helped to cook and clear away but she did all these chores with such devotion and care that her mother did not have to lift a finger.

"You've done enough, child," her mother said with a loving glance. "You should rest now."

Hu-lan thought happily that since she would be gone by tomorrow, she must help all she could with the work that day. She then asked granny to change her clothes so she could wash them before she left. Hu-lan kept busy all day at various jobs, as if she meant to finish all the house work. But not a word did she say about going away the next day. Hu-lan was sure that her granny would not want her to go. She decided it was better to explain everything later.

The young girl was up before daybreak. Helping her mother, she had breakfast ready extra early. "I have to go out for a while, ma," she said after they had eaten. Not knowing what was on her daughter's mind, her mother absent-mindedly replied, "Go ahead."

It was a sunny morning without a single cloud in the sky. Like a bold young eagle, Hu-lan wanted to try out her wings across the vast plain. She rushed out of the village, joined two companions she had arranged to meet, and went straight to the training centre.

To Hu-lan even to prepare for the training class the first day was interesting. Together with other women who arrived, she helped to fix up the place. They put up slogans on the walls and bustled around until dark.

When training began in earnest, the women were kept very busy. Responsible comrades from the county Party committee often gave them lectures. They told the women about class society and how one class exploits and oppresses others. They discussed the need to end all exploitation and how the poor would finally emancipate them-

selves. They showed the women the beautiful perspective of communism in the future. Liu Hu-lan listened engrossed.

"The landlords bought their land with money, didn't they?" asked one woman at a discussion after a lecture one day. "Why do you say they obtained it by exploitation?"

Hu-lan thought carefully and explained, "But how did the landlords get enough money to buy land? They never worked in the fields; their money came by hiring others to work for them. You don't think the money just jumped into their hands automatically, do you?" Then she continued, "Take Landlord Shih Ting-pu in our village. His hired hands do all the work. He never sets foot in the fields and wouldn't even know how to use a hoe. Yet, he and his family wear silk and satin clothes and eat good wheat flour. He bullies us poor people. Now, where did his money and influence come from if not by exploiting us poor people?" The other women nodded in agreement when Hu-lan explained things so clearly.

Hu-lan could not read or write very well. Now, in every spare moment, she tried to learn, scribbling away on the back of a used account book. She would crouch beside the low table on the *kang* bed and practise writing late into the night. Sometimes she would fall asleep, her head resting on her book. When Lu, back from her late meetings, gently pushed open the door, however careful she was, Hu-lan would wake up. She would then go on with her writing and reading. "Come to bed, Hu-lan, it's getting late," Lu would urge, touched by the girl's perseverance. "You'll have new lessons to learn tomorrow."

"I'm not too sleepy yet, Sister Lu," Hu-lan would reply. "You go to sleep now yourself."

One day Lu talked to the women about the national situation. "When the Japanese devils were here bullying and oppressing us, Chiang Kai-shek and Yen the warlord went off to the safe interior of the country with their army of several millions and didn't give a damn what happened to us people. Now, with the Communist Party leading us we've defeated the Japanese devils, they've come back to lord it over us. . . ." Lu watched to see how her students reacted. Little Hu-lan was listening attentively, her eyes sparkling with hate and

her lips taut with repressed anger. Hu-lan was no longer the same girl. There were no tears in her eyes now, though she was seething with rage. She longed to join in the struggle against the enemy as soon as possible.

The forty days of training soon passed. Hu-lan's dream was finally realized when she was assigned to do mass work among the women in her own village of Yunchouhsi.

Liu Hu-lan went home. She found her family eating a meal together. "Hello granny!" she called out cheerfully.

How happy granny was. She held Hu-lan close to her and could hardly take her eyes off the girl. "So you've come back, eh?" her mother teased with a smile. "Why did you leave without telling us? Granny was quite worried about you."

"Don't you go away again, Hu-lan. Stay home with granny like a good child," said granny.

Hu-lan chuckled, finding it impossible to tell them how she felt: "You don't understand, granny. You see, your grand-daughter is a revolutionary worker now."

### III

Back in her village, Hu-lan, with the support and help of the Party branch, quickly set up winter literacy classes. Before long, the villagers elected her as secretary of the Women's National Salvation Association. By then, the Chiang and Yen brigands had launched civil war on a nation-wide scale. The people and army in the liberated areas, led by Chairman Mao, rose in self-defence to safeguard the fruit of their victory over the Japanese. They firmly repulsed the attacks of the reactionary army. "Everything for victory at the front" was the militant slogan adopted by the Party organization in Yunchouhsi Village which led the people in the fight.

Hu-lan, who responded to the call with increased activity was busy day and night. Even when she returned home very late, her mother was always waiting up for her, and was at the door as soon as she heard the girl's footsteps outside. When Hu-lan was in too much of a rush

to eat a proper meal during the day, her mother kept some food hot for her. Hu-lan went into many homes organizing big meetings and small discussion sessions. She aroused the women, encouraging them to spin cotton and make shoes for the army. The mass work among women went smoothly and they had one thought in common: To do their best in support of the front.

"Hu-lan may be young," people said, "but she works well and whole-heartedly in the interest of the revolution."

The bandit troops under Yen occupied the county town in Wenshui County and several other big towns. They ventured out frequently to attack the surrounding villages, rob the peasants of their grain and seize them for forced hard labour. The Eighth Route Army often counter-attacked. One day a wounded Eighth Route Army man was brought into Yunchouhsi to recuperate. Hu-lan, seeing that he was badly wounded, promptly arranged for him to be put in the house of a peasant whose son was also in the army.

Early the next morning, Hu-lan called the other women together and told them, "A wounded Eighth Route Army man has been brought to our village. We members of the Women's Association must look after him. We must try to get him some nourishing food so that his wound will heal quickly."

She herself boiled water, made soup and fed the wounded soldier spoonful by spoonful. She took no rest until, after some food and care, he began to recover.

The women wondered what food would be best for him.

When, after some thought, Hu-lan said "Eggs would be good", they decided that they would all try to get him some.

Hu-lan dashed home and opened her little savings box. Her mother had suggested only a few days previously, that she should buy herself a pair of stockings but she had not touched the money. Now she emptied the contents into her pocket and went out.

That evening she went to see the wounded man with six dozen eggs she had bought with her money and another eight dozen given by the other women.

In May, 1946 Hu-lan was transferred to work in the district Women's Association. She went often with Lu Hsueh-mei to do mass work

in the neighbouring villages. In those days, Hu-lan was often seen together with tall Lu Hsueh-mei going from one village to another in wind, rain, or under a blazing hot sun. The district Party committee indicated to Shih-fang, who was in charge of the Party's organizational work, that he should consider Hu-lan as a possible Party member and Lu, who was in constant contact with the girl, was told to help her understand Party principles.

"You know, Hu-lan," Lu told her one day. "A revolutionary should be eager to join the Communist Party and dedicate herself wholly to the cause of the Party, even to the extent of giving up her very life if necessary."

Since Hu-lan had been thinking about this for some time, Lu's words encouraged her. "Tell me, Sister Lu, who are these Communists?" she asked, for in those days the Party's organization was kept secret.

"You guess," answered Lu with a smile.

"I think you're one."

"How do you know?"

"You're just what I think a Communist should be. Sister Lu, do you think I might join the Party?"

"You can certainly try."

Not long after, the Party Central Committee issued directives for the launching of the great movement for agrarian reform. The Wenshui county Party committee decided to start the movement in Tahsiang Township, about two miles from Yunchouhsi Village, and to summarize the experience gained there before launching the movement in other villages. To temper Hu-lan further in revolutionary work, she was sent to take part in the movement.

Hu-lan worked harder than ever. She went among the poor peasants and hired-hands, talked to them and aroused their class consciousness. She was also fearless in struggling against despotic landlords and pouring out the bitter suffering of the poor peasants at mass meetings. The agrarian reform at Tahsiang was very successful, thanks to good leadership and the full mobilization of the masses. The peasants took more than 216 acres of land and 150 tons of grain from the despotic landlord Lu Teh-fang and others. Agrarian reform

swept aside the landlord's power and authority and placed land — the symbol of emancipation — firmly in the hands of the poor peasants and hired-hands.

In the course of the movement, Hu-lan gained a better understanding of how the feudal landlord class, like a great mountain on the backs of the peasants, weighed them down and realized that it was the root cause of all that the millions upon millions of peasants had suffered for thousands of years. To completely remove this burden and eliminate the root of the trouble, the people should rely upon the leadership of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao. The more Hu-lan thought about it, the more she was convinced. With eagerness and a great sense of urgency, she handed in her application to join the Communist Party.

In June 1946, though Hu-lan was only fourteen, the district Party committee approved her application. She became a candidate member of the Party; Shih-fang and Lu were her sponsors. When she reached the age of eighteen, she might then become a full member.

In a thatched hut in Tahsiang Township, Hu-lan made her pledge. With glowing cheeks, her heart pounding wildly, Hu-lan pronounced solemnly: "I'll always follow the Party directives and do my very best."

"How will you do that?" asked Lu.

Hu-lan's answer rang out clearly: "I'll not be afraid to shed my blood or die. I'll not let difficulties overwhelm me or bow my head before the enemy. I will carry on the revolution till victory."

#### IV

The agrarian reform movement was then started in Hu-lan's village. "Landlord Shih Ting-pu has caused so much suffering, now we'll get our own back," the peasants whispered among themselves. When the landlord got wind of this he was frightened. Hastily, he sent his son to the house of Wu-tse, the secretary of the Peasants' Association, with a basket of mutton as a gift. Wu-tse, who enjoyed good food and drink, gloated over the sight of so much meat. "Ha, what fine mutton!"

A few days later at a meeting of Party members called to study agrarian reform and how the movement should develop, Wu-tse blabbed: "Times have been pretty bad lately and it'll be difficult to mobilize the masses. I'm afraid the struggle will be difficult to organize. It seems to me that conditions are not ripe and it would be better to delay this movement."

The others stared at him in surprise. "No. We'll struggle against the landlords and despots, we can't compromise with them," said Shih-fang. "We'll arouse the masses and wage a struggle simultaneously. When the situation isn't good, struggles against the landlords help to mobilize the masses and deal blows at the enemy."

Most of those present at the meeting agreed that it was necessary to wage struggles, so Wu-tse stood up. "If we're going to struggle, we should aim at someone the masses dislike. I think that well-to-do middle peasant. . . ."

Before he could finish, Comrade Shih-fang cut him short: "To pull out a tree, we should get at the root and our struggle should begin with landlord Shih Ting-pu and his brother."

"Yes," said Lu Hsueh-mei, "they're the two biggest landlords in our village. They've always lorded it over the people and exploited the peasants. The people hate them more than anyone else. We should struggle against them. We shouldn't struggle against just a middle peasant."

Hu-lan had also seen through Wu-tse and what he was trying to do. "I support Comrades Shih-fang and Lu Hsueh-mei," she said, springing to her feet. "We all know how much land these two landlords own. They sit idly at home all day long, and yet they eat white bread and wear fine clothes. They also lend money out at such high interest that people can never repay them. Liu Ma-erh and his family worked for them for a whole year and all they were given was seven measures of beans. He and his family all nearly starved that year. . . ." She was too furious to continue. The others angrily went on listing the crimes of these two landlords.

"I'll go and rouse Liu Ma-erh and his old woman as well as their neighbours," said Hu-lan. Others also volunteered to be responsible

for various families and dispersed to work among the masses. Thoroughly annoyed, Wu-tse slipped away.

A struggle meeting was held. Shih Ting-pu and his brother were repudiated. These landlords who had been powerful for years lowered their heads in shame, admitting their crimes and ways of exploitation. The suffering peasants poured out the accumulated bitterness of thousands of years. With joy and satisfaction, they shared out the exploiters' land. The masses were then more determined to support the revolutionary front and defeat the reactionaries. Their confidence grew. Extremely happy, Hu-lan was completely absorbed in her work among the poor villagers.

Yunchouhsi accepted the task of making two hundred pairs of shoes for the army. All the women began making them. Some stitched the characters "Wipe out the Enemy" or "Persist in Struggle" on the soles, others embroidered a tiny flower on the lining. Everyone wanted the Eighth Route Army men to find the shoes she had made comfortable and strong so that they could fight bravely against the enemy. Hu-lan went about the village all day long, organizing this work. In about a week most of the shoes were ready.

One day, Hu-lan was in the village office, checking the shoes as they were handed in. "How nice and sturdy they are," she thought happily. "Every shoe embodies the love of us women for our own army. Only Tuan, that landlord's widow, is different. She tried to refuse when I asked her to make shoes, and she hasn't brought in any yet."

Just then, Widow Tuan bustled in. "Oh, how hard you girls are working, Hu-lan," she said, pretending to be friendly. "You're such a good women's leader in our village. Just look at this pile of shoes, each pair is a beautiful piece of work. Well now, here's my pair of shoes." So saying, she dropped a pair of shoes onto the pile and left.

Liu Hu-lan went on checking without bothering to reply. When she came to the pair the landlord's widow had left, she discovered that they were extraordinarily light. She bent the soles and felt the uppers. The edges of the soles were brushed over with black paint; the widow had tried to hide her sloppy handiwork. Hu-lan was very annoyed.

"This is the pair you brought, isn't it?" she demanded after sending for the widow to come back. "They're so light, we can't accept them the way they are."

"Now, now, don't say that," the widow argued. "I used layers of brand-new cloth in making them."

Wu-tse who happened to be in the room came over. "I don't find anything wrong with these shoes. You might as well accept them."

"No. I won't. Shoes like these aren't good enough to send to our army. The Eighth Route Army men are shedding their blood at the front, how can we be so slipshod about their shoes." She turned to face Wu-tse. "You may say there's nothing wrong with these shoes, but I say they're no good. We'll cut through the soles and find out what's inside."

Ever since the meeting when Hu-lan had been so outspoken in her support for the struggle against the landlord, Wu-tse had held it against her. Now Hu-lan was opposing him again. He was very angry. "If there's nothing wrong with them, why cut them open?" he asked crossly. "Who'll be responsible for the spoiled shoes?"

Hu-lan had heard rumours about some shady dealings between Wu-tse and the widow and was annoyed at the way Wu-tse stood up for the woman. It was not just a question of shoes, but involved a number of other issues. To safeguard the Party's interest, Hu-lan felt she had to get to the bottom of this matter. "You can hold me responsible," she said without the least hesitation. She made a gash in the sole with a knife and found it stuffed with paper and rags instead of proper cotton cloth. The women present were most indignant. "Her shoes bring shame on all us women in Yunchouhsi," said one woman angrily.

"Black-hearted wretch," said another. "The Japanese devils were driven off by the Eighth Route Army and now they are fighting the Yen brigands. Can we send them shoes like these?" Still another insisted: "Let's hold a struggle meeting against that widow, that'll teach her a lesson and others like her."

Wu-tse was livid with rage. He hated Hu-lan for exposing him

and yet did not dare lose his temper. "You can't blame the widow," he muttered under his breath.

Hu-lan could hold back her anger no longer. "Why are you always standing up for such people. Be careful on whose side you stand!"

Her words touched Wu-tse to the quick. His face was flushed. "How long is it since you've had the right to tell others what they should do?" he roared at Hu-lan. "How much does a child like you know?" He stamped angrily out of the room.

Hu-lan promptly reported the matter to the district Party committee. Investigation showed that Wu-tse had more than once colluded with landlords and taken their stand. He was no longer worthy of the name of a Communist and the district committee decided to expel him from the Party. He was removed from his post as secretary of the Peasants' Association. A women's mass meeting was also held at which Widow Tuan was severely criticized and told to make five pairs of good sturdy shoes as a penalty for her trickery. The village's mass movement in support of the front went on with more fervour than before.

In those days of war, Hu-lan did not content herself with doing good work in the village, but went to the frontline to help. "Fighting isn't the task of the army only," she often told others. "Everyone has his share of responsibility. One more person on the frontline means that much more strength pitted against the enemy, and more enemy annihilated."

One day in August, a band of Yen's troops from a neighbouring county came out to rob the peasants. They were encircled by our army and fierce battle ensued. At the head of the Yunchouhsi Village stretcher-team, Hu-lan went to Tahsiang, where the frontline headquarters were. There, she boiled water and cooked for the soldiers and wounded. The army commanders told her repeatedly, "This place is in grave danger. Don't come here again." Hu-lan answered, "Aren't all you comrades here? Why should I be afraid?" The fighting went on until dark and many brigand soldiers were wiped out. Only then did Hu-lan return to the village, a smile of victory on her lips.

## V

In September the crops began to ripen across the Shansi plain. It was harvest time again. The warlord Yen Hsi-shan's reactionary army executed a brutal "mopping-up" campaign, flooding the plain with a vast number of his soldiers. They poured into Wenshui County, stationing their men to its west and on the northwestern heights to cut off contact between the people on the plain and the liberated area in the Luliang Mountains to its west, hoping thus to crush the people's political power on the plain. Hidden secret agents now showed their heads. Landlords' armed forces under various names — "Return to Our Homeland Corps" or "Revenge and Defence Corps" — became arrogant again. Enemy bases were set up in several villages close to Yunchouhsi. Across the plain, Yen's bandit troops were seizing people, tormenting prisoners by hanging them up for beating, extorting confessions and demanding grain. The struggle intensified day by day.

While the district Party committee organized armed work teams who fought the enemy on the plain with tenacity, they also sent local cadres in batches into the mountains to ensure their safety. Lu Hsueh-mei came to Yunchouhsi one day, to inform Hu-lan of the district committee's decision.

"The situation has become critical, Hu-lan. The Party committee thinks you're too young to stay here. It's been decided that you are to go to the liberated area in the mountains."

Hu-lan was astonished. I may be young, she thought, but I'm a Communist. A crisis like this provides a good opportunity for steeling and testing oneself. At the most dangerous moments, a Communist should do her utmost for the people and the Party. She should never shrink back for the sake of her own safety. After all, I grew up here and know everything and everybody. I can work better here. "Sister Lu, let me remain here. I'm familiar with the people and the surroundings, I'll persist in the struggle," she promised.

"Do you realize that it will become more and more difficult in the future and the enemy will be very brutal?"

"Weren't you always talking about being steeled in struggle? I'm not very able and I can't do very much, but at least I'll do what little I can."

Lu was glad to see her so firm and brave. Though Hu-lan was young, she was very resolute. She was a new member of the Party but, at that critical moment, she had no thought for her personal safety. Lu gripped Hu-lan's hand tightly. "All right, let me discuss this with the Party organization again before we decide."

Hu-lan's request was relayed to Chen who was now the head of the district government. After some discussion in the Party committee, it was generally thought that since Hu-lan had but recently been admitted into the Party, this fact was little suspected. Furthermore, she was so young she might perhaps escape the enemy's notice. These were all favourable conditions for her work. Having obtained the approval of the county Party committee, Hu-lan was allowed to remain in the village.

The Party secretary of the county committee came in person to talk to Hu-lan. "To remain here and persist in the struggle means grave danger and unpredictable difficulties, Hu-lan," he said. "You may be discovered by the enemy. You'll have to be constantly prepared for the worst. Unless you remain composed and able to think calmly at difficult and dangerous moments, you may bungle things. Remember, for a revolutionary, courage is of course necessary, but you must also be good at preserving the organization, safeguarding your comrades and yourself too. The Party trusts you and believes that you'll stand firm and persist in the struggle until victory."

His words sank deeply into Hu-lan's mind. She said firmly, "I shall do as the Party says. I'll overcome all difficulties, fearing neither bloodshed nor death. I'll see that the Party's work is not exposed and I'll fulfil the glorious task entrusted to me by the Party." She was deeply stirred, knowing that what the Party secretary said showed the Party's trust in her. Her mind was made up. She would shoulder this heavy load, no matter what it might involve.

At first Hu-lan was still able to go about doing her work in various villages. But as the enemy continued to launch surprise attacks and searches, she had to hide out in the fields during the day and slip

back into the villages at night. She took slogans and leaflets to underground Party members who posted them out on walls. The masses were encouraged to know that the Party and the people's army were fighting near them.

As the situation worsened, the enemy sent Pei-huai, who had been the head of Yunchouhsi Village during Japanese occupation, back to work in the village. The wretch hounded the people for rent and taxes continually, gave the enemy information and bullied the peasants, working hand in glove with the brigand soldiers. He became a thorn under the skin of the people and made it difficult for Party members to continue their work. In disgust, the masses called him "That Bastard Village Head".

Hu-lan told the liaison comrade all the crimes of the bastard and asked him to relay this to the district Party committee, requesting that someone be sent to get rid of this snake in the grass.

One cold December night while a blizzard raged outside, Hu-lan sat near the lamp mending a jacket for her grandfather. Liu-erh, a militiaman came in.

"Chen is back," he whispered.

"Where?" asked Hu-lan, surprised but very pleased.

"At his house. He's brought an armed work team with him."

Hu-lan went out at once. She was anxious to see her comrades. It had been so long and she had so many things to tell them that the short distance between their houses seemed much too long. She was warmly greeted by Chen as soon as she entered. The sight of so many dear comrades was heart-warming. It was like being with her own family again; her eyes were moist.

"District Head Chen, our villagers hate the guts of that bastard, Pei-huai. They long to see him wiped out."

"That is exactly what we are here to do," Chen replied.

Hu-lan was pleased beyond words. "Let me go out and keep watch for you, while you carry out your mission."

"Can you manage by yourself?" asked Chen with concern. "Shall I send someone to go with you?"

"There's no need. It's better that I go alone. People won't

notice me. Go ahead now." Hu-lan tightened the towel round her head, rubbed her red chapped hands and left the house.

Chen and the armed work team made their way to the bastard's yard and climbed over the walls. They took the bastard out onto the dyke surrounding the village. "On behalf of the Wenshui People's Government," said Chen, "I sentence you to death for serving the Chiang and Yen brigands so faithfully."

After justice had been carried out, Hu-lan took the opportunity to report on her work in the village.

"You've done well," said Chen encouragingly. "You've had a pretty hard time." He told Hu-lan how many enemy troops the Eighth Route Army had wiped out and how many towns were liberated. The revolution was developing everywhere.

"May I tell this good news to the villagers to cheer them up too?"

"Yes, do. But the better the revolutionary situation, the more bitterly will the enemy struggle in their death throes. Their 'mopping-up' will be intensified and conditions here will probably become worse. Your work will become more difficult."

Raising a tightly clenched fist, Hu-lan said, "As long as the revolution is advancing throughout the country, even though things are difficult here, I'm happy!"

"We'll have to be going," Chen said at last. "Be very careful. If anything new develops, we'll come again." They quickly disappeared into the night.

The next day, the villages buzzed with excitement as people passed on the news. "Isn't it wonderful, the bastard has been executed by our Eighth Route Army." Hu-lan smiled to herself. Little by little, she spread the good tidings of how the Eighth Route Army were wiping out the enemy. The people were cheered. Like the first light of dawn on the eastern horizon, hope lit up their hearts.

## VI

The New Year of 1947 arrived. After the bastard was brought to justice, the enemy, in a frenzy, retaliated with barbarous ferocity.

Things became extremely difficult. In this new period of bitter struggle, a new phase began in Hu-lan's life. At daybreak on January 8, Yunchouhsi was suddenly attacked by a troop of some twenty men led by the captain of the Seek Revenge Corps stationed in Tahsiang Township and Hsu, a company leader of the Yen brigands. They seized and took away five men, among them the Party liaison comrade, San-huai and Liu-erh, a militiaman, as well as the traitorous Wu-tse, the ex-secretary of the Peasants' Association. At once, the peasants became apprehensive and tense.

Hu-lan's mother said, "It looks pretty bad to me, Hu-lan. You'd better go up to the mountains right away."

Hu-lan shook her head. "I'm a Communist, ma. I can't leave until I have orders from the organization."

Like others in the village, Hu-lan was dismayed and indignant about the sudden attack. Conscious of her responsibility she kept asking herself how the enemy had obtained inside information, and how they knew where the liaison comrade and the militiaman lived? But why did they seize Wu-tse too, she wondered. What were the enemy up to? It was a dangerous situation. She thought of the Party's directive: persist in the work, take a firm stand and destroy all evidence to prevent it falling into the enemy's hands. She thought over how she might still struggle against the enemy even if she were arrested. Under no circumstances would she betray the revolution. The next day she told the other women activists in her village, "We don't know what's happened to those the enemy has seized. If we're arrested too, we mustn't tell the enemy any thing." She remembered that there still might be some documents issued by the district Party committee to the Women's Association in Tungpu Village and rushed there to find the secretary. "Look carefully to see if there are any Party documents in your house. If there are, burn them immediately." Now that she had done all she could, Hu-lan felt slightly relieved. She was prepared to meet the most severe test.

Three days later, Comrade Chen suddenly arrived at Yunchouhsi with the armed work team. Hu-lan, glad to see some of her own comrades back again, told them what had happened during the past few

days. "No matter how dangerous it becomes, I'll persist in the struggle. The Party doesn't have to worry about me," she assured them.

"It's now very dangerous for you to remain in the village, Hu-lan. The Party organization has decided you must go into the mountains. It's a bit too late to leave today. Tomorrow we'll send someone to fetch you."

"What about the work in the village?" asked Hu-lan.

"Don't worry. I've arranged everything."

Hu-lan nodded in agreement.

The next day, Hu-lan's mother was up before daybreak to get a few things ready for her daughter. Liu Hu-lan changed into clean clothes. As she washed her things, her thoughts were far away in the Luliang Mountains, where she was going, a place she had so looked forward to visiting. But what about those who had been arrested? And Comrade Chen and the others who were staying behind to carry on the struggle? How many problems they would have to face!

Suddenly, she heard gongs sounding in the distance. They came nearer, until it was possible to hear the village crier's voice also. "Listen everybody," he shouted. "Men and women, old and young must assemble at the temple south of the village. One person only may stay at home to take care of things. If two stay, it'll be taken as evidence of liaison with the Eighth Route Army men." Hu-lan realized the enemy had come again. But how had they managed to arrive without warning?

Obviously that despicable traitor Wu-tse had betrayed the village revolutionaries including Hu-lan. When the enemy had arrested the five men a few days previously, it was only a ruse. Their real intention was to make full use of Wu-tse's information and arrange for a wholesale blood-bath. Before daybreak, Chang, a special commissioner of the Yen bandits and Company Commander Hsu, launched a sudden attack on Yunchouhsi, this time with more than a hundred soldiers. They blocked all roads and pathways leading in and out of the village and posted sentries all along the dyke. When the village was completely surrounded, the troops marched in, forcing the liaison comrade and the militiaman they had seized three days before to walk at the head of the column, their hands tightly bound behind them.

Wu-tse, lurking behind among the bandit soldiers, also slunk into the village.

The gongs sounded a second time. Hurriedly wiping her hands on the edge of her tunic, Hu-lan went to the door to find out what was happening. "Quick, Hu-lan," her mother urged. "Go and hide in your Sister-in-law Tuan's house. When the soldiers come just say you are there to take care of the new mother and her baby. Hurry now."

Hu-lan let herself be swept along by the crowd going towards the temple until she came to Tuan's door, then she quickly slipped in. But she found Tuan's niece there already, attending to the baby. As Hu-lan stood undecided, four other young women slipped in one after another. "I heard those hateful bandits chopped two men to death yesterday, at Tahsiang," said one. "It was dreadful! I've come here to escape going to the temple."

The gongs sounded a third time. A boy rushed in searching for his mother. He told the women to go to the temple because the soldiers were searching every house. Every word he said pierced Hu-lan's heart. If the enemy found so many people in this house, they might kill not only them but the new-born baby too. Whether they shot her or chopped her to death, she must face this herself instead of bringing harm to another family. At this thought, she straightened up. Her eyes rested on the mother and tiny baby, then with a glance at the others in the room she said, "I'll go."

The bandit soldiers were going from house to house searching for people whose names were on the black list they carried. Some people with their hands bound behind them were marched out, one by one. Old Man Chen, uncle of the district chief, way past seventy, was taken away. Then, the wife of another Party leader, and an innocent peasant were also seized. Before long a number of blameless people with hands tied were lined up outside the temple. With dragging feet, reluctantly the peasants were driven to the square outside the temple.

When Hu-lan left Tuan's house, the streets were loaded with sentries. It was impossible to go anywhere but to the temple. With sudden resolution, she went bravely in that direction. The square



was full of peasants who had been herded there. Hu-lan made her way to where her mother was standing and silently stood behind her. Though nobody said a word, the very air seemed explosive. "Liu Hu-lan!" barked a soldier who had stolen up quietly till he was beside her. Hu-lan turned her head and looked him straight in the eye. "What do you want?"

"Our company commander is calling for you. Just tell us what you've been doing for the Eighth Route Army, and you'll be all right. I promise. But if you don't, watch out!"

Hu-lan gave him a look of contempt. "I've nothing to tell!"

She acted quite calmly, although knowing that she faced a severe trial. Her own pledge when she was admitted into the Party rang in her ears: I'll not be afraid to shed my blood or die . . . will not . . . bow my head before the enemy. She knew that the moment had come when she must give her life for the revolutionary cause.

The villagers near Hu-lan, looked anxiously at her. Her parents' eyes, expressing concern and love, were fixed on her. Her little sister looked at her wide-eyed. In a few minutes, several counter-revolutionary scoundrels arrived yelling loudly as they drove her into the temple. The crowd protested angrily. The bandit soldiers levelled their bayonets at the peasants threatening them.

Hu-lan was taken into a room for interrogation. Chang the bandit chief, a heavily bearded man, shouted fiercely at Hu-lan: "Who killed the head of your village?"

"Who knows?" Hu-lan answered coldly.

"What have you been doing to help the Eighth Route Army?"

"Anything and everything!"

"Which Communists have you seen lately?"

"I haven't seen anyone."

Chang sneered menacingly. "Someone has confessed and says you're a Communist, you're one of them!"

With a dignity that defied the enemy, Hu-lan replied, "Did he? Well, I am a Communist. So what?"

The enemy grinned when Hu-lan "confessed" that she was a Communist, thinking that they could then force important information from her.

"Confess and save yourself," they coaxed with sly smiles. "We'll give you a piece of land if you do."

"Even if you gave me some gold, I wouldn't confess."

"You're young, but you sound tough. Aren't you scared to die?"

"If I were I'd not be a Communist!"

The enemy chief pounded the table and roared in anger. This young woman Communist had Big Beard Chang thoroughly baffled. He had not expected a slip of a girl like Hu-lan to be so stubborn.

After a pause, Big Beard tried to trick her. He told Hu-lan she must promise never to help the Eighth Route Army again. He had no sooner finished speaking than she answered, "You'll never get such a promise out of me."

"All right. If you come back with us to Tahsiang Township today, at least you'll stay alive." Hu-lan realized that this was only another enemy trick.

"No! I'll never go there with you."

Big Beard pounded the table again. "Tie her up. Kill her!" he yelled.

Several bandit soldiers surrounded the young girl. Her eyes blazing with hatred, Hu-lan faced the enemy with scorn and contempt. Pushing the men aside she walked out of the room alone towards the execution ground. On one side there was a pile of hard wooden clubs. But in the front of the temple platform, three chaff-choppers had been placed, their cold, sharp blades gleaming.

On one side of the temple stood the peasants: men and women separated into two files. Hu-lan stood beside the platform, only several feet from the chaff-choppers. The liaison man, Comrade San-huai, the militiaman Liu-erh, and four others stood on the other side.

"Are these seven people good or bad?" Big Beard asked the peasants.

"They're good!" the masses called out again and again.

So strong and startling was this answer that it flustered the enemy. The soldiers promptly turned their machine-gun towards the people.

Using rifle-butts, the bandit soldiers tried to force the peasants to club the seven to death. But they refused to budge.

At this point some traitors, coached by the enemy beforehand, stepped out. The lackey Wu-tse picked up a wooden club and set up the chaff-choppers. The brutal slaughter began.

The heroic liaison man and his five comrades were all killed, their blood staining the chaff-chopper and dyeing the earth crimson.

Hu-lan was forced to watch this ghastly crime. Flaming anger consumed her, as with clenched teeth, and flashing eyes, she stood there all alone.

This inhuman murder stabbed the heart of all the Yunchouhsi villagers and indeed all the people of China. These revolutionaries, led by the Communist Party, in the most gruelling years of struggle against the Japanese imperialists, had fought the enemy under all conditions and risked their very lives. Yet they were now wantonly murdered by the Chiang Kai-shek and Yen reactionaries. This great injustice bred a deep hatred that would never be forgotten.

"Are you scared now? Will you confess?" asked Big Beard, his voice shaking.

Hu-lan's voice rang out strong and steady: "I'd rather die than confess."

The young girl was the only one left standing close to the chaff-choppers then dyed crimson, their blades already a little blunted. Wu-tse and the other executioners had backed away nervously, waiting with bloody hands hanging limp at their sides.

Grief-stricken, the villagers turned their heads, rage blazing in their eyes, unable to bear the sight of such an atrocity.

Hu-lan stood erect on the execution ground, a giant with an iron will. Slowly, she turned for one last look at the line of women among whom were her mother and sister, and glanced next to the line of men where her honest, upright father stood. Then her eyes lingered on all the villagers present, as if bidding them farewell. They understood that Hu-lan was saying goodbye to all her neighbours in Yunchouhsi, asking them not to grieve and saying to them: "The flame of revolution will never be extinguished; victory will soon be yours." Finally, she asked the enemy, "How am I to die?"

毛澤東題  
生的偉大  
死的榮光

“Just like the others,” hissed the bandit chief.

Liu Hu-lan smoothed her hair, retying the towel she wore around her head and holding her head high, she skirted round the bodies of the six other martyrs, and stepped onto the trail made by their blood until she stood before a chaff-chopper.

Liu Hu-lan, good daughter of the Chinese people, an outstanding member of the Chinese Communist Party, gave her young life for the liberation of the Chinese people and the cause of communism. Songs sung by the villagers about this young heroine stirred the waters of the River Fen and echoed among the Luliang Mountains, encouraging the people on their march forward.

Staunch and indomitable before the enemy, Liu Hu-lan epitomized all the noble qualities of a Communist. On August 1, 1947, the Shansi-Suiyuan Sub-Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party authorized that she be posthumously honoured as a full member of the Party. Chairman Mao Tsetung himself wrote of Liu Hu-lan's brief but radiant youth: “A great life! A glorious death!”

*Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng*

## Aiming High

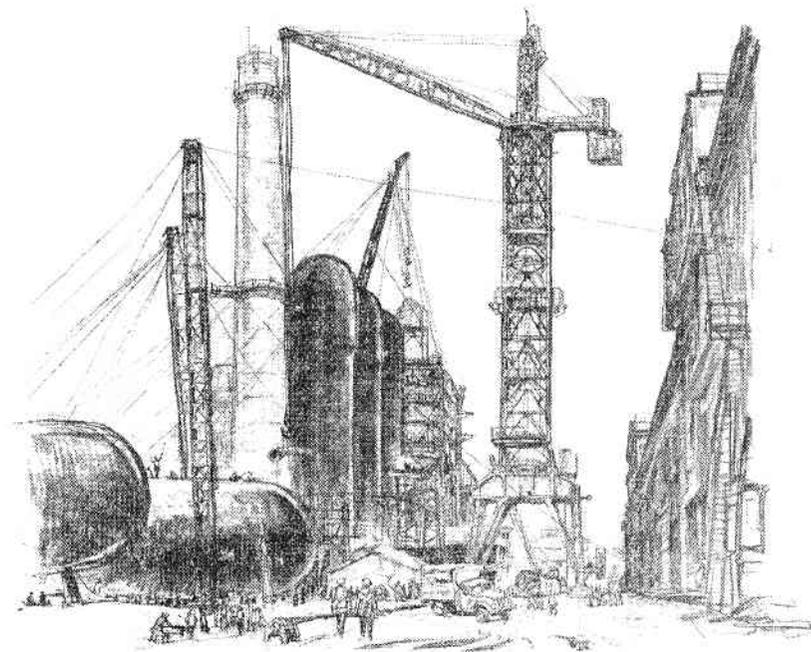
It was a fine September day. On both sides of the Yangtse River paddy was ripening. Weeping willows trailed their branches over the reservoirs, their deep water as green as emeralds, while tall ramie grew in profusion along the embankment. Hills and valleys in the distance merged into the blue and purple mist of the sky. The view, right to the distant horizon was particularly attractive at this time of year.

Fang Hua, a man in his early thirties, jumped off a truck at the end of the highway. He took in the glorious coloured landscape as he walked along a side-road till he came to a fork. While hesitating over which way to turn a water buffalo appeared. A boy of about fifteen, wearing a bamboo hat, was sitting on its back. As it broke into a trot Fang Hua thought the boy would be thrown off at any moment. He stopped the animal.

"Better get off," he said to the boy. "Or you'll break your neck."

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This reportage was written by a group of workers of the Project 9424.



The boy laughed. "It's such fun," he replied. "I can hang on all right. Don't let this wild beast scare you!"

"I was a cowherd myself. No buffalo ever frightened me," Fang said. "By the way, can you tell me how to get to the headquarters of Project 9424?"

The buffalo-rider took off the bamboo hat to use it as a fan. Fang discovered to his surprise that the cowherd wore her hair in a long bob, for "he" was a girl.

"Climb that hill," she said pointing to the one ahead, "and you'll come to the Project 9424 construction site. Headquarters is midway down the slope on the other side of the hill."

Someone called from far off: "Little Tsui, come back!"

"I'm coming," the girl shouted, as she lashed the animal on the rump with a willow branch. The buffalo broke into a trot again.

Fang was a member of the Communist Party. He had joined when he was serving in the Chinese People's Liberation Army. After he

was demobilized, he had taken part in the construction of two giant coke ovens. Later he became a technician in a boiler installation team. Now he had been transferred to Project 9424, where he was going to lead the work in the construction of another giant coke oven. When he came to the top of the hill he noticed huge slogans painted in red on the rocks and lower down in the valley bulldozers roaring above the bustle of the construction workers. He realized this was the Project 9424 work site. Standing a while he sized up the place, then went on down the hill.

Headquarters consisted of a number of sheds made of matting. An office worker took Fang to one of them and asked him to wait there, because Comrade Chao Sung-chuan, the man in charge here, would soon be back. The shed was quite small. A bit of blue sky showed through a crack in the roof, while the floor was freshly-dug earth through which recently-cut grass roots still showed. A portrait of Chairman Mao hung in the middle of one wall with a quotation from the great leader: **"Going all out, aiming high and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism."** A few boards nailed together served as a table by another wall and there were also some makeshift benches. The table was neatly covered with old newspapers, and rolls of blueprints as well as a pair of bifocals were placed along the wall.

An open book lay on the table, with a pencil beside it; a few lines had been underscored which read, **"The history of human knowledge tells us that the truth of many theories is incomplete and that this incompleteness is remedied through the test of practice. Many theories are erroneous and it is through the test of practice that their errors are corrected."** Fang knew at once that this was Chairman Mao's essay, *On Practice*. Beneath it was another book, *Handbook on the Construction of Coke Ovens*. Fang concluded that the director must be an experienced, down-to-earth leader, who held high the red banner of Mao Tsetung Thought.

A kindly voice at his back awakened him from his day-dreaming: "Are you Comrade Fang?" Fang turned to see a grey-haired, well-built man standing in the doorway. Fang asked, "Are you..."

"Chao Sung-chuan," the man answered, holding out his hand.

After a firm handshake he went out, but quickly returned with a basin of water so that Fang could wash and refresh himself.

Meanwhile, another middle-aged man burst into the shed, bringing with him a gust of wind. He was so big that he almost blocked the doorway. Ignoring Fang, he shouted, "Old political commissar, give me two thousand big bamboo poles or I'll put up a big-character poster denouncing you."

Chao simply smiled, saying, "I'll be pleased to read your big-character poster. But I can't give you a single bamboo pole."

The big fellow came over to Chao, while explaining with a broad grin, "Old commissar, don't take me so seriously. What I really want is some bamboo poles. If you can't give me so many, two-thirds of them will do."

Chao laughed. "I don't care whether you're serious or not. You'll have the bamboo poles only when you really need them. You think that since we have a large supply right now, you'll build up a stock for yourself. You won't have them. Instead, you should be criticized."

The big fellow scratched his head.

"Let's have some anyway," he said. "I want to build a shed to shade our veteran workers from the sun."

"Well! That's better," Chao said. He quickly wrote something on a piece of paper and handed it to the man. Then Chao continued, smiling, "See that you use them for the workers or you'll get it from me."

Reading the hasty scribble, the big fellow muttered, "That's all you'll give me — only a few pieces, and all this fuss about criticizing me and telling me to watch out!"

Chao slapped the big fellow's shoulder, saying, "I have to be severe with you!" Then quite seriously, he went on, "Carry on with the mass criticism in earnest and ask the veteran workers to join in the discussion. Let's see if we can save some steel reinforcing rods in constructing this coke oven. Chairman Mao teaches us, **'Without concrete analysis there can be no knowledge of the particularity of any contradiction.'** The ground here is more suitable than in

Shanghai. Perhaps we can use fewer steel reinforcing rods for the foundation of the oven."

"The veteran workers are studying this problem right now," the big fellow said. "We promise to do the job in a much more economical and faster way."

He left in a rush, stirring up another gust of wind. Chao ran after him and called him back.

"Let me introduce you, this is Comrade Fang," he said. "He'll be in charge of the building of the coke oven."

"I'm Cheng, Cheng the Big Fellow," the man said, presenting himself, "otherwise known as Cheng the Big Gun."

Chao told him, "You're the very first person who came to work on this construction site, and since you're in charge of the actual building work for the Construction Company, you must help Fang all you can." Then he added, "Comrade Fang comes from the boiler team. When he was in the PLA artillery, he was a gunner."

"So he worked with guns too," Cheng said laughing. "Then we're twin guns. But if he's a modern steel gun, I'm only an old-fashioned native one. And you, political commissar, are the commander-in-chief of all guns! We shall certainly use guns at this construction site."

All three laughed. To tease Chao, Cheng continued, "As a newcomer, Fang, you likely think our old political commissar is pretty soft. He fetches water for you to wash, for example. When I first got here I was treated like you and he's so modest he insists that he's a layman on the job. But after two months or so..."

"What then?" Chao asked.

"You'll find out he's more expert than most experts. He'll make so many suggestions and proposals that he'll leave you quite breathless. And this isn't all. Something else will follow."

"What's that?" Chao insisted. "Let's hear."

Cheng wrung the water out from the wet towel and calmly mopped his face.

"A dose of criticism!" he said.

In one bound Cheng threw the towel into the basin and showed them a clean pair of heels. Chao roared with laughter. Then he

told Fang that rough and rude though the big fellow might appear, and always trying to be witty, he was nevertheless a dare-devil and a hard worker on the work site. Then Chao turned the talk to the job on hand.

Chao had been a political commissar in the army for many years before he was transferred to this civil job. After long periods of leadership it had become a habit with him to know his workers thoroughly before he assigned them to a job. Now that the construction of the coke oven had become the pivot of the entire coking project, he needed all the more urgently to know Fang, a young newcomer. Chao had been told briefly that the young fellow, while serving in the PLA, had distinguished himself in the study of Chairman Mao's works, had performed outstanding deeds and shown a thoroughgoing spirit in tackling problems. He also took a correct stand during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Yet Chao was not satisfied. He wanted to know whether the young chap, who was going to take a leading position, would strictly follow the correct political line, or would be weighed down when shouldering heavy responsibilities.

But Fang was not a blind follower. He wanted to understand the personality of his superior, too. His brief encounter with Cheng the Big Fellow indicated that Chao got on very well with his subordinates, and that pleased Fang. But, he told himself, he would only know his superior well through personal contact.

Finally Chao spoke, in a very friendly way, "We have to begin producing coke by next July. I've read all the data concerned. The selection of firebricks on the construction site alone requires eight months, not counting the time needed for building, heating the oven and installing related equipment. And yet the 12,000 tons of firebricks we need are still on their way. There's a hell of a lot of work to do. As an expert, can you make any suggestion?"

Fang realized that Chao was an experienced leader, who had been through many battles. "I'm a green hand at leading the job," Fang admitted. "I can't offer you concrete suggestions although I know the difficulties that face us. However, this is what I feel about the matter: In the past Liu Shao-chi put bourgeois reactionary 'authori-

ties' in charge of all technical and professional matters in accordance with his counter-revolutionary revisionist line. Our boiler team suffered from it. Now that we proletarians have seized power in our own hands, it'll be absurd if we can't do a better job."

This statement, which had no direct bearing on the actual problem, nevertheless interested Chao greatly. From his experience in handling various projects since demobilization he keenly realized what havoc the vicious revisionist line had caused in all branches of work. Fang had expressed his own ideas exactly. Chao was pleased, but he did not show it.

"Well then, give me the plans you've brought," he requested. Fang stood up and said seriously, "I did bring a plan. But it's no proletarian one."

Chao asked, "Is it a plan the bourgeois reactionary 'authorities' drew up in the past with all their old rules and regulations?"

Chao looked directly at Fang and the young man did not avoid his searching glance.

"You've guessed it," Fang replied.

"You mean to use it as a negative example for us to criticize so that we can achieve construction out of destruction, eh?" Chao asked again with a twinkle in his eye.

"You're right, political commissar. We must let the veteran workers have a free hand in debunking the plan. In the process we'll work out plans to achieve greater, better and more economical results in socialist construction."

Chao was delighted, as he noticed the young man's self-confident expression. "Chairman Mao teaches us, **'There is no construction without destruction.'**" Chao continued, "The veteran oven-builders haven't arrived yet, but this will be the first giant coke oven built in China since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Its success will depend on whether the masses can be mobilized to carry through the project in accordance with our requirement for greater speed and yet higher quality. But to achieve this aim, all revisionist ideas must be thoroughly refuted." On this point Fang's thinking and his were one and he was well impressed by the young man. He knew that the most important question in the choice of a leader was

whether his political thinking was correct and whether he followed the correct line. The two of them chatted about a number of things till supper time. Chao invited Fang to live in the same dormitory with him, saying that as a layman, he wanted to learn about the job from Fang. The very word "layman" reminded Fang of Cheng the Big Fellow's remark, and he began to laugh. Chao saw the reason immediately. Half-jokingly, he said, "It won't take me two months to leave you breathless too."

On the way to mess, Chao asked Fang if he knew an old worker by the name of Wei Pao-teh in the boiler team. Chao wanted to know whether Wei, who was over sixty, had retired or was still in good health. Fang only said that he himself had been one of the veteran worker's apprentices; that the old man, determined to take part in their project, had already left with comrades of the supply section in quest of firebricks, and that he was working to get things ready for the building of the coke oven.

## II

Wei was a man with a strong will and many ideas. Although he had retired, he didn't care for a life of leisure. He often visited his former team and always attended the study sessions of Mao Tsetung Thought sponsored by his comrades. Whenever the team took on an important assignment, Wei would offer suggestions on ways and means of solving difficult problems, based on his past rich experience. One day, at noon, he heard that an experienced old worker was needed to accompany a two-man purchasing team going to find suitable firebricks for Project 9424. He was interested and went to the team's waiting room for a look. It happened that the chief was out at a meeting and the visitors were by themselves. Chatting with them he learned that Project 9424 was named after the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of China, which closed on the twenty-fourth day of April and that a giant coke oven was to be built there. He was very excited. How happy he would be if he could take part in it! He decided to ask for the job. But on second thoughts he

hesitated. Would a retired man be accepted? He must show them what he could do.

A motor was standing in a corner of the room. About a hundred fifty pounds, Wei calculated. He walked over and began to move it. The two visitors tried to help him, but he refused, saying, "It's nothing! Don't bother." He lifted it and took it outside. Then he hid behind the door till he stopped panting. In a few moments he went in again with the motor and put it back in the corner, jabbering to himself, "It's out of order. Can't be used."

When the other men praised him for his strength, he carefully shifted the conversation to the building of coke ovens. He pointed out the importance of selecting the right firebricks, particularly for a giant coke oven, the special properties these firebricks should have and how intricately related were the 433 different types of firebricks required for the construction of the oven. He poured out all the experience he had acquired in the trade for over thirty years. The listeners, greatly impressed, realized that this was an old worker with high political consciousness and technical skill. They decided he was the man they wanted to have for a trip to locate firebricks.

At first Wei pretended to refuse, saying, "I'm afraid our chief won't agree."

The two visitors were disappointed. They tried to persuade him by stressing the importance of the project and how little time they had to do this difficult job.

"All right then," Wei agreed happily, "come again tomorrow. I'll see what I can do when the chief comes back. If he agrees, all's well. If he doesn't, you'll have to stress the importance of the project and tell him you've got to have me for the job. If the three of us work on him, it'll probably be all right."

The two men agreed. After they had left, Wei thought this was a golden opportunity that he must not miss. As soon as the chief returned, Wei stood up and announced, "I'm going away tomorrow to help locate firebricks. They sent two men over from Project 9424 construction site to ask us for help. And I agreed."

Unable to make head or tail of this, the chief asked in surprise, "But you're retired. How can you go on such a trip? Think of your age."

"Yes, I've retired, but my thinking hasn't," Wei answered smartly. "I'm still in good shape. You can pound me three times with an eighteen-pound hammer and I won't budge. They don't think I'm old."

"But you are old. You should rest."

"No, I want to do everything I can for socialism." Wei spoke seriously. "In 1958 Chairman Mao laid down this general line for us: **Going all out, aiming high and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism.** Our boiler team suffered under Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line and was misled by the capitalist roaders among the leadership. They interfered with Chairman Mao's revolutionary line badly. But the present Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution has put things right again. That's why our team has a new look. I'll brave any risk to defend Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. Please let me work on this project."

Wei's wish was finally granted. He joined the two comrades in the supply section on their trip.

Wei, after all, was an old man. After travelling through several provinces he was noticeably thinner and run down. But he stuck it out. Sometimes he missed meals and made do with only a few biscuits. No matter how tired he was, any clue to firebricks enlivened him again. When one steel plant promised to supply 500 tons of firebricks Wei was happy beyond words. But when he examined them, his heart sank. The bricks had been kept in a warehouse for more than ten years. The surface of some had corroded. The silicon refractory bricks, in particular, were so wet they looked as though recently salvaged from a pond.

"They are difficult to obtain," Wei said sighing. "They were made by the hard labour of our class brothers. But now..."

"That's what Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line has done," a comrade from the plant explained. "We didn't need so many bricks to build a coke oven like ours. But the regulation stipulated for sixty per cent extra as reserve. As a result, after the oven was finished, these bricks were useless. They only came to light again during the present cultural revolution."

"We'll try to use them for our coke oven," Wei said, quite enthused. "Only by doing this can we repay our class brothers for their labour."

He picked up a brick and tapped it with a hammer. Although the surface was impaired slightly, the basic quality was not. He tapped another with the same result.

"However, they're wet and I must find out whether they'll crumble at high temperature," he said.

He told his comrades to pack the better ones and send them to the work site at once. They warned him that the edges of some were worn. According to the old rules and regulations, if they were worn in excess of a certain depth and length, they were useless. But actually some of these were far worse than that.

"These are old regulations," Wei said. "You can't deny they're partly correct, but they're by no means immutable. It depends how you adapt them. If the side of a brick facing the fire is corroded, then it'll certainly be no good. But not otherwise. These are not worn on the inside. We mustn't let ourselves be tied up by conventions."

His comrades were convinced. The next day, as further proof, Wei sent some silicon refractory bricks to be tested and the result confirmed his judgement. The bricks were good in quality. Then he tried out the wet ones to see if they could withstand high temperature. He lined up several close to a furnace, then moved them nearer gradually until he had them right in the furnace. Only two pieces crumbled in the intense heat. Cheered by this, his comrades wanted to know what gave him the idea of the experiment.

"Of course, we generally use dry firebricks for coke ovens," he explained, "but the mortar is wet. This wets the bricks it joins. They're different from these wet bricks only in degree. It's not that they cannot stand a high temperature, but it must be raised gradually. Great heat without some preliminary treatment would certainly cause the bricks to crack or crumble. That's what happened to those two. Before the cultural revolution we already had the idea of using wet bricks for the construction of coke ovens. But the capitalist roaders wouldn't allow it. They thought the *Handbook on the Construction of Coke Ovens* as sacred as the Bible."

In the evening, Wei received a letter from Fang Hua. The young man told him that he had been sent to do leading work at Project 9424 shortly after Wei left and had been on the job for over a month. With the help of the leadership everything had gone smoothly. Headquarters intended to organize a contingent of over five hundred men composed of both veteran workers from the boiler team and new ones recruited from poor and lower-middle peasants to build the oven. Preparatory work was going on at full speed and the firebricks were arriving at the work site in batches. He hoped Wei would go there soon.

Wei had trained many young men, among whom Fang was his favourite. The young fellow had a great affection for the Party and for Chairman Mao. Politically sound, level-headed, with a passion for work, he was very efficient and resourceful, never giving way before difficulties. After reading his letter, however, Wei felt both pleased and slightly worried. True, his new assignment would enable Fang to temper himself along Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. But could he fulfill the task, so heavy and new for him? Any mishap would incur a great loss to the state. It was not really a personal matter. Most of the workers were new hands, and veterans from the boiler team so few! But Fang had not said a word about difficulties in his letter. Wei remembered that the people had all raised their political consciousness in the course of the cultural revolution and he believed that the broad masses of workers, guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, would pool their wisdom to conquer all difficulties.

When Wei read the letter again he noticed one brief sentence at the bottom of the page. "Comrade Chao Sung-chuan asks to be remembered." Who was this Chao? Wei searched his memory. He could not identify it with any of his former neighbours, apprentices, friends, or mates. It was one of his travelling companions who told him that Chao, an ex-political commissar from the army, was a leader at Project 9424. Tapping his head, Wei at once remembered where he had first met Chao.

It was in 1964 when Wei, on a trip to some place or other, made a detour to a garrison to see his son who was a staff officer there.

After the visit Wei left in the same car as a newly demobilized political commissar, who was being transferred to a civil job. This commissar was the man Wei's son had praised during their talk as a very principled, down-to-earth political worker, who held high the great red banner of Mao Tsetung Thought. Friendly and with a good sense of humour he was liked and respected by all. His comrades-in-arms were very sorry to see him go. One of the staff officers said, "Although he appeared stern and liked to warn people by saying, 'Careful, you don't get it from me', he did not mean to be harsh. What he insisted upon was that everyone did his best. If anything really went wrong, the commissar was always the first to take the blame." His name was Chao Sung-chuan.

On the way Chao had asked many questions about the work Wei was doing. He answered in great detail not only about the work in progress, but also about the life of the workers. When they parted each had a very favourable impression of the other.

Now that Wei knew Fang was working under Chao, he felt very relieved. He re-examined the itinerary with his two comrades and worked out a most exact time-table. He was anxious to finish the present task in the shortest possible time so that he could return to the work site ahead of schedule.

### III

What Chao had said was no joke. Hardly had two months elapsed before Fang began to feel the pressure of work. But he was no shirker. He always took an aggressive attitude towards difficulties. When assigning him a task Chao always gave due consideration to this factor.

Several thousand tons of firebricks had already arrived at the work site, but most of the workers had not. Only eighty new ones had registered while the basic forces — the veterans from the boiler team — were still busy on another project. Unless drastic action was taken, coke would not be produced on schedule.

Fang pushed open the door of Chao's office and found him bending over the table, concentrating on the study of Lenin's *Materialism*

and *Empirio-criticism*, and underscoring certain lines with a red pencil. Fang was about to back out when Chao said, "Don't go. Let's hear what you have on your mind." Fang walked in.

They lived in the same dormitory. It was Chao's habit to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought in the evenings and to think over what he had learned at work during the day. Generally he went to bed very late. On the contrary Fang studied in the morning and went to bed early. Usually he snored as soon as he shut his eyes. But for the last few evenings he tossed about in bed, unable to sleep.

Chao gathered that it must be the problems connected with the construction of the coke oven that tormented Fang. He wanted to discuss them with the younger man but had refrained. Chao had plenty of experience in educating young workers. They were tempered far better in difficult situations. It was not necessarily the duty of a director to make everything smooth for them. On the other hand, only a mediocre young leader would shift every difficulty on to his superior for solution. As for the question of how to achieve victory in the battle for high-speed construction of the coke oven, Chao preferred to wait for a few days and see what suggestions Fang would make.

And that was exactly what Chao was waiting for when the latter showed up in his office. The young man had certainly had a hard time of it during the last few days. But he would not ask instructions from Chao until he had found some solutions for himself. Fang believed that each had his own specific responsibility just as cart and horse had their own separate functions. Chao was responsible for his part in the project, so that Fang should not ask for instructions without tackling the problems himself first. He ought to share the burdens with the director, not shift it all on to the leader. That was why he had not looked for Chao till then when he had already worked out his own plan.

Chao spread a sheet of fresh paper on the desk and waited, pencil in hand. Turning with a smile to Fang who sat opposite him, he said, "Well, tell me about your plans."

Fang knew that the director had a full grasp of the problems so he did not talk about them. He spoke concisely about what he proposed to do.

"I suggest the following: First, ignore the old idea that all the twelve thousand tons of firebricks we need must be at our disposal and sorted before the actual construction of the oven is started. We'll do both jobs simultaneously. In this way we'll save four months. Second, disregard orthodox opinion that a hangar must be completed for the bricks before sorting them and before the actual building begins. We'll build a part of the roof over our large hangar first and carry on with the sorting while the rest of it is being completed. This will save another two weeks. Third, instead of following the old rules that the floor of the hangar must be paved with two layers of red bricks with a layer of water-proof tar paper between them, we'll use one layer of red bricks. They're enough for the purpose as Master Wei's experiment has shown." Fang looked up at Chao and continued, "My final suggestion to you is: Pick out a dozen veteran workers from the boiler team and start sorting bricks at once."

Without batting an eyelid, Chao said, "Give Cheng the Big Fellow three thousand bamboo poles and tell him to erect a big hangar in the shortest possible time. There shouldn't be a single one of the bamboo poles unused by tomorrow evening. We'll start sorting the day after tomorrow."

"The day after tomorrow?" Fang asked in surprise. He thought it would be at least a day before the veteran boiler workers would arrive, let alone completing the other preliminary jobs.

Chao glanced at his watch. When he saw it was already eight he nodded to himself.

"Yes, we'll start sorting bricks the day after tomorrow," he repeated. "The twelve veteran workers you've asked for will be here in two hours."

Fang was flabbergasted. As he stood up he said, "So you'd seen eye to eye with me and already notified the veteran workers to be here?"

"No," Chao said, also standing up. "I'm a layman at this job. I only thought if they came a bit earlier they would be much better

prepared to start work. That's why I notified them ahead of time." He closed the *Handbook on the Construction of Coke Ovens* he had been reading.

Fang smiled. When Chao was closing the book he caught sight of a question mark in pencil beside the line in which it said that the construction of a coke oven could be started only after the firebricks had all been sorted. Fang admired the way Chao had studied the matter and his judgement. But what made Chao say that such problems had never occurred to him, Fang wondered. It was obvious that Chao took such an attitude for the explicit purpose of encouraging his subordinates to tackle problems themselves with full confidence. Chao saw that Fang was impressed and knew at once what was going on in his mind. He broke the young man's reverie, saying, "Why don't you go to find Cheng the Big Gun?" Only then did Fang leave.

After all the preliminary preparations had been made, the new workers divided into several groups, each led by one or two veteran workers, and began sorting the bricks. Chao and Fang joined them.

The bricks differed in size and type. Altogether there were 433 varieties. These had to be separated and those badly damaged on the way removed. Then they were put in heaps according to the requirements and the progress of the construction work. Coached by the veterans, the new workers soon learned the technique. The work went smoothly.

Chao was busy piling bricks with the others. By chance he noticed a young girl in a red sweater, who stood on a pile of bricks almost as high as a house. She was handing down the biggest bricks to people below. As she was small in size, a veteran worker, fearing the job was too strenuous for her, advised her to come down. Instead, she became even more energetic, handing down two bricks at a time, and laughing heartily as she urged those below to work faster. In her haste she nicked her hand on the sharp-edge of a brick and it began to bleed. An old worker ordered her to go to the first-aid station at once.

She climbed down from the pile but refused to leave the job and continued to pass the bricks. Chao pulled out a handkerchief from

his pocket and said to her, "Hold out your hand." The girl obeyed, and he tied it up for her. Then Chao asked, "What's your name?"

"Tomboy."

Chao was amused. "How did you come by that name?" he inquired.

The girl giggled, explaining, "Because that's what I am, so my parents call me that. My family name is Tsui. I'm usually called Little Tsui by others."

"From the way you hand down the bricks you give the impression that you're doing bayonet practice," Chao remarked. "Perhaps you're a member of the militia?"

"You almost guessed," she answered. "The very fact that you made such a guess suggests that you're —" She was about to say "also a member of the militia", but seeing Chao's grey hair, at the last minute she ended up by saying "interested in watching the militia do bayonet practice."

"You almost guessed too," Chao told her, laughing.

When her hand was bound up, she asked, "Old comrade, where do you live?"

Chao pointed to a row of straw-matting sheds: "Over there, the first shed."

Actually he had not yet moved in. He had only decided with Fang that they would take their bedding along that evening and live there together with the veteran workers. In the evening he and Fang, as inmates, began chatting with these workers on how to increase efficiency, improve work plans and start an emulation campaign. Little Tsui peeped in at the door, but retreated as soon as she discovered there were so many people about. Chao, telling her to come in, asked if he could do anything for her.

"You fooled me today," she said. "What made you say, 'You guessed.' You're an old political commissar."

"Can't an old political commissar be interested in watching people do bayonet practice?" he joked.

Little Tsui made a wry face. She handed Chao his newly-washed handkerchief. "This is yours. Please take it back," she said.

Fang was struck by her looks which seemed somehow familiar to him. Before he could ask her, she had already recognized him. She said, "Don't be scared by my wild buffalo!"

Fang instantly remembered the incident at the fork in the road. He told the others how wild she was.

"No wonder her parents call her a tomboy," Chao remarked.

Fang asked her if she had any comments to make about the work that afternoon.

"Very good, but a bit too chaotic," she answered.

"This was our first work day," Chao went on. "I think it was quite good. On the average we each sorted about half a ton of bricks. But we'll have to do better than that. We'll each have to sort nearly a ton to keep up with the schedule."

Little Tsui looked disappointed, saying, "So, it wasn't very good." Thinking for a moment, she added, "Old political commissar, I've a suggestion to make."

"Out with it then," Chao urged.

The girl clenched a fist, saying, "We ought to be organized in groups like the militia, into squads and platoons, not the way we were today. It was too chaotic!"

"Right. What's more?"

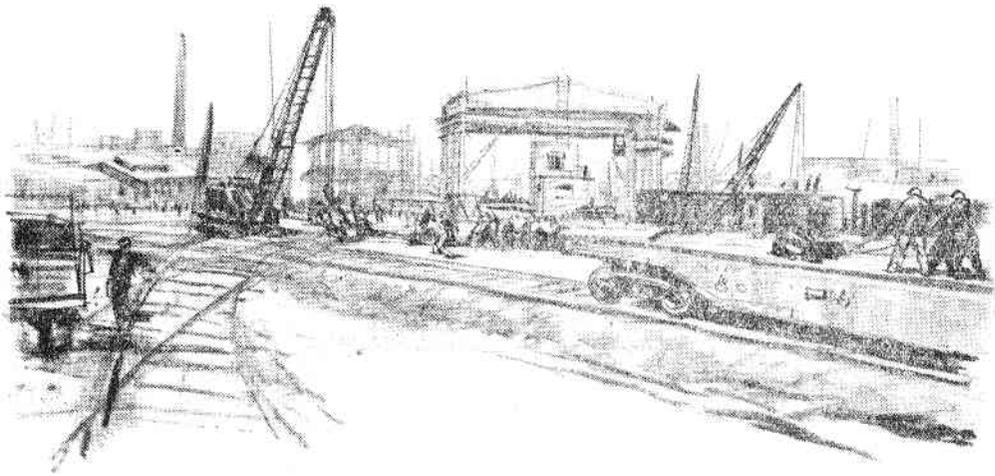
"We must start an emulation drive, and mark up what we do. We can draw a red flag for the squad that does the best, and a water buffalo for the one that lags behind."

Chao burst into laughter. "I'm all for an emulation drive," he agreed, "but primarily in politics. We'll cite those units that show a deep love for our great leader Chairman Mao, that promote unity and mutual help among themselves, that understand the significance of producing coke at the earliest possible time. This is the only way we can speed up the sorting of bricks. Advanced units deserve praise, those lagging behind require help, but we must never let them earn the reputation of being like water buffaloes." While they all laughed, Little Tsui continued, "Our old political commissar puts politics in command. That's fine. It's awful to be compared to a water buffalo, so heavy and slow. The squad who gets the name will try hard to shake it off."

The shed shook with peals of laughter.

The speed of the work increased day by day. Soon, several hundred intellectuals from the town arrived. Full of revolutionary enthusiasm, they were resolved to remould their world outlook by taking part in the fiery battle on the project. From the very moment they arrived they worked with might and main, paving the road base, laying rails for the temporary railway and sorting bricks. They even managed to commandeer a few tractors to transport bricks. All this helped to speed up the work.

One day they were busy filling in a depression in a road half a mile long in order to facilitate transportation. Snow was swirling from an overcast sky. Fang told them to quit work. One middle-aged man wearing glasses from the city refused, saying, "What does a little snow matter? We're working against time to produce coke as early as possible. Besides, we can only remould our thinking by tempering ourselves under difficult conditions." He began removing the bamboo poles that lay in a disorderly mess on the road. Others followed his example. Fang was wondering what to do when Chao arrived. Without a word Chao shouldered a huge bamboo pole and went off with it. Fang saw that was the thing to do. He followed suit, joining in the battle to remove the poles quickly.



Only later did Fang learn that the spectacled man was Chi Yunsheng, a Communist.

#### IV

All the personnel for the construction of the coke oven had arrived at the work site. When Chao saw his old teacher, the veteran worker Wei, he was very pleased. They promised to work together wholeheartedly to ensure the success of the project.

Strange as it might seem, during these most hectic days when no one had time even to breathe, Chao was quite placid. He packed his knapsack and went off to visit other work sites on the project. Neither Fang nor Wei could persuade him to stay.

"Let me see you off then," Wei said, taking over his knapsack.

"All right," Chao agreed.

The two older men walked together in the direction of the temporary shelters for workers, some distance away.

"Are you sure you can leave the work here?" Wei asked.

"I think so," Chao replied. "What I expect of you and other workers is that you constantly remind Fang of Chairman Mao's teaching: **'Modesty helps one to go forward, whereas conceit makes one lag behind.'** On the surface of it, my staying here might seem to be of some help to the work. But it might also prove harmful, for after all I'm a layman at the job. If I leave all the responsibility to Fang, he'll study Chairman Mao's thought more thoroughly and rely all the more on the masses. This will be good for the work and help Fang's growth as well."

"Perhaps you're right there," Wei said. "There's a saying, 'The master teaches, but the apprentice must acquire the skill by his own practice.' You can't guide him by doing his work. Besides, you can't tie yourself down just to the construction of the coke oven. Other branches of the project are just as important. But I do hope you'll come to inspect our work from time to time."

"My dear Old Wei," Chao said, laughing heartily, "we're not living thousands of miles apart. No matter where I go, I'll still be

on the project. We're sure to see each other now and then." Soon after, they parted.

According to Chao's suggestion, they waged a political battle prior to the construction of the oven. As Fang put it, "It is necessary to root out all the remnants of the counter-revolutionary revisionist influence that might remain in people's minds, particularly the leaders." Only in this way could speed, good quality and economy be ensured for the construction of the coke oven in accordance with Chairman Mao's revolutionary line for socialist construction. The aim of this battle was to raise the political level, go all out, put an end to the old rules and regulations that restricted the initiative and creativeness of the workers and enable them to give their best.

Fang held a series of meetings at which many told of their bitter suffering in the past and the good life they were enjoying in the new society. They discussed the importance of producing coke and making steel, denounced the fallacies preached by Liu Shao-chi, and studied the "Constitution of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company" personally approved by Chairman Mao. The political atmosphere grew more and more intense within a few days. Applications for difficult assignments and statements of determination to shoulder heavy tasks appeared on the walls of the workers' hostels. Labour enthusiasm ran high.

Veteran workers made an all-round schedule for the fulfilment of the task. In the process, there was sometimes quick agreement, sometimes hot discussions. When there was a difference of opinion, they studied together Chairman Mao's writings and the "Constitution of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company". A time-table for the completion of the construction job in fifty-six days was finally adopted at a big meeting of the workers.

Cheng the Big Fellow led his men day and night in erecting the giant hangar. The mechanics set about making various tools needed by the workers. The carpenters were busy preparing scaffolding. Fang Hua himself headed the office workers from the city in laying rails and getting the transport line ready. Wei instructed new workers in the technique of building coke ovens.

At least two hundred skilled workers were needed for this. But

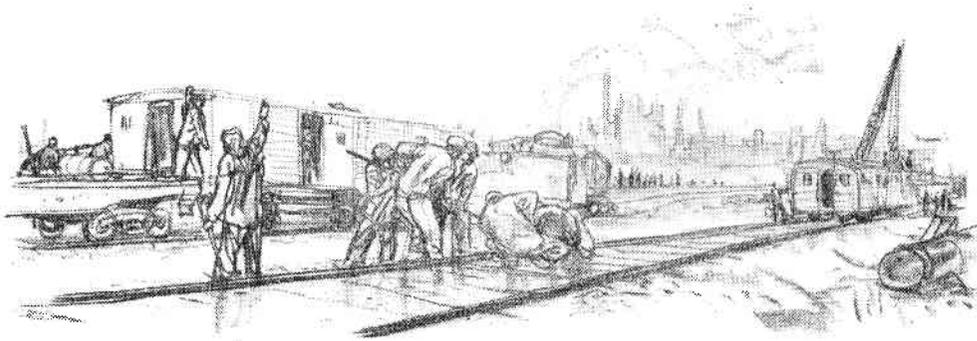
they had only about a hundred from the boiler team. So Cheng the Big Fellow offered his painters as reinforcements. With an additional contingent of artisans provided by the local people's commune, at last they had the required number of workmen. Grouped before the refractory firebricks, Wei led the newcomers in the study of Chairman Mao's works first, and then taught them how to build coke ovens. Finally he found a place where he could demonstrate the technique in a practical way. The workers, guided by Wei, began to erect dummy ovens and then took them apart again. They experimented and gained experience from each trial. In less than ten days they became quite skilled. They discussed each other's work and pointed out those who were good enough to build the oven and those who still needed more practice.

In the evening Fang and Wei talked over their plans by lamplight. Now that all the bricks had arrived, they intended to start building as soon as possible. They must report this to Chao so that headquarters could approve their programme right away. Suddenly an unhappy-looking young man turned up. He asked for permission to take part in the construction of the oven. Wei recognized him as a mechanic from a people's commune, who had been voted down by his fellow workers as not yet skilled enough to build the oven. His request put Wei in a very awkward position.

"Well, your request..." Wei found difficulty in continuing. But the young fellow completed his sentence, obviously very agitated, by saying, "... must be granted, otherwise how can I face my fellow poor and lower-middle peasants in the commune who sent me here for the job?" Gasping for breath, he added, "If my work turns out below standard, you may flay me alive."

These words touched Fang, for they were uttered with such sincerity. The young fellow might not be very efficient professionally, but with such determination, in time, he would certainly catch up with the others. Fang winked to Wei and nodded to indicate that the young man should be accepted.

"You'll work in the team with me," Wei said showing his deep feeling. "I believe we'll do our job well, and obtain greater, faster, better and more economical results."



There was quite a commotion outside the door where many commune members waited to hear what answer the young man would get. They cheered for they too were quite touched.

## V

The hangar was completed. The date to start the construction of the coke oven had also been approved by headquarters. Electricians had installed thirty-nine mercury lamps in the hangar which, about 250 feet long, nearly 70 feet wide, and over 60 feet high, was bathed in bright light day and night.

The first thing to do was to pave the foundation of the coke oven with red bricks, numbering 38,000 pieces. But they had not yet finished laying the light transport railway. By refusing to be bound by the old regulation that "no construction work should be started before the completion of all transport facilities", they used wheelbarrows to deliver the bricks. Since there was a slope at the entrance to the hangar going up this slowed them down. So Chi Yun-sheng and two other cadres stood there and gave an extra push to every barrow-load. Although in shirt-sleeves, they were still sweating, and had to mop their faces every now and then.

Fang stood at the top of the incline. Young, strong and conversant with all the technicalities required, he had gone wherever the work was most difficult during the preparatory stage. But now he stayed there, staring at the steel bars and cement that were to be used for the

base of the oven. He seemed to be wondering whether the amount of work required here was enough to satisfy the veteran workers once the order to start was given.

Behind him a group of brick layers headed by Wei, with trowels in hand, were waiting in silence for the order. Outside the door of the hangar Little Tsui, who was responsible for the supply of cement, peeped in from time to time. If she had been allowed to have her own way she would already have started delivering it. But she kept herself under control, almost hypnotized by the general calm that prevailed before the big battle began. Two men, Chao and Cheng the Big Fellow, crouched in a corner of the hangar, hardly noticed by anybody.

At last, Fang issued the order: "Start!" The workers were in three different categories, one to deliver bricks, another to supply cement and the third to lay the bricks. They swarmed onto the oven base, already reinforced with concrete, in good order. Soon, the red bricks spread out over the base.

"Cement!" an old worker broke the silence.

A new worker answered the call by carrying over a pail of cement.

Then a second worker repeated the demand, and another pail was delivered. But the ever increasing demands put Little Tsui in a flurry. She rushed out of the hangar to examine the situation. Those delivering cement were almost flying to and fro between the brick-layers and the supply point, carrying one pail at a time. She herself plunged into action. Snatching two large buckets, and filling them to the brim with the liquid cement, she put one on each end of a carrying pole balanced on her shoulder.

"Cement!" Wei yelled.

"Here!" she answered, putting the two buckets right in front of him. With a broad grin Wei nodded to her approvingly.

Seeing that she had found a way to meet the demand, all the other carriers looked around for bigger buckets. Some were too late and had to content themselves with ordinary pails, but they carried four at a time.

All of a sudden the file of carriers thinned out while demands increased. Fang dashed out of the hangar to find the cause and saw

that one of the two cement mixers had broken down. What surprised him even more was that only a few carriers were left waiting by the mixer that was working.

"Where have they gone?" he asked.

A carrier on the run answered with a brief "over there", indicating the direction with a nod. There in the distance Cheng the Big Fellow was operating a large mixer. It was pouring out cement into the carriers' buckets one after another, so that they were all kept busy. Fang was certainly relieved.

"Where did this giant come from?" he asked Cheng.

"The old commissar kept it in reserve in case of breakdowns," Cheng the Big Fellow answered. Then he told Fang how Chao and he had been keeping an eye on the work. Seeing that the supply of cement was not meeting the demand, Chao had ordered Cheng to prepare the additional giant mixing machine. Then, when one of the smaller machines had broken down, Cheng had put it into operation and called the carriers over to maintain the supply.

Fang asked, "Where's the old commissar now?"

Cheng the Big Fellow said, "He went to fetch another operator, because I've to attend a meeting at headquarters."

Fang realized that although he was given every opportunity to work independently Chao had been keeping an eye on him in case he needed help. The young man had a warm feeling of comradeship. Very impressed, he said to Cheng, "Let me take over the machine. You'd better take a little rest before you go to the meeting."

"Have you lost your head?" Cheng asked, glaring at Fang. "You're supposed to direct the work over there. Go back to your own job. Or beware, you'll get it from Chao!"

Fang returned to the hanger.

Now that all the difficulties had been removed, the construction speeded up day by day. In the end only the top remained to be completed. According to the conventional regulations for oven building, to close the huge opening at the top it needed 60,000 bricks. Fang proposed that clay be used as a substitute. This would save a day's collective labour as well as this large quantity of bricks. One comrade, however, had misgivings, believing that the quality of

the oven would be affected. At this point Chao arrived. He was asked to make the decision.

"Certainly I can decide that for you," he said as though it were a joke. "Chairman Mao says that an egg changes into a chick at a certain temperature. What happens to clay at a high temperature?"

The distrustful comrade tapped his forehead and grinned. "Of course! The clay becomes brick."

"We study Chairman Mao's philosophic works for guidance in our work," Chao continued seriously. "We mustn't separate theory from practice."

The comrade in doubt, hearing this was quite satisfied.

## VI

The construction of the giant coke oven, completed after thirty-eight days or seventy-two shifts of hectic work, created a record for the whole country. After it had dried and all the equipments were installed, it began to produce coke. The veteran workers from the boiler team had to return to Shanghai for other jobs that were awaiting them. Fang was also leaving so he went to headquarters to say goodbye to Chao. Chao did not notice him, for he was absorbed in the *Handbook on the Construction of Coke Ovens*. Fang stood there quietly watching, as Chao carefully crossed out one of the question marks he had previously made. Fang wondered why. All the old regulations beside which Chao had put question marks had been proven incorrect during the process of building the oven. Why had Chao waited so long before crossing out his queries, Fang wondered. Checking this with Chairman Mao's teachings in *On Practice* Fang understood that Chao had waited until coke was being successfully produced. The young man felt that he had learned much from Chao and respected him all the more.

At last the old commissar noticed Fang. Chao told him that the coke oven was working well; its quality was satisfactory. When informed of the young man's departure, Chao put down his pencil, and said, "I'll see you off part way." Without waiting for Fang's approval,

Chao stood up and made for the door. Just then Cheng the Big Fellow rushed in, calling out, "Old commissar, I'm leaving for Shanghai."

"Why so soon?" Fang asked.

"It's short notice," Cheng answered. "But I must be there to join the study session for the consolidation of the Party."

"Good, I'll see you off part way too," Chao said.

They chatted on the way till they came to the fork in the road. Fang discovered that several hills in the neighbourhood had been razed to the ground since he had arrived and in their places the chimneys of a blast furnace, coke oven and sintering plant pierced the clouds.

"What a change!" he exclaimed. "Less than a year and now we're producing coke."

"But this is only a physical change," Chao said significantly. "Under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, much more precious. . . ."

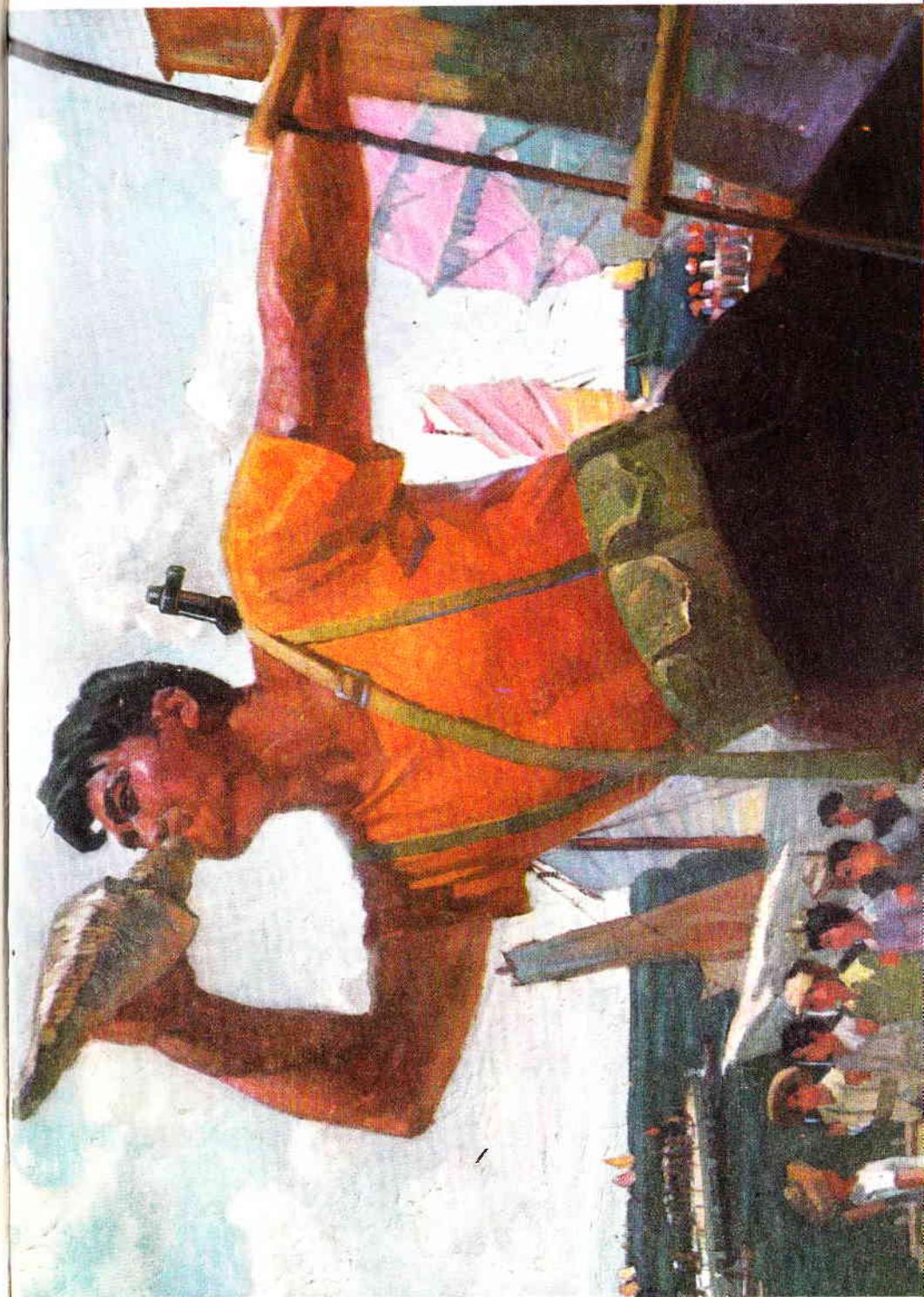
The old commissar, whose words intrigued Fang, was interrupted by another worker. It was Little Tsui dressed in a clean overall, on her way to the plant to start her shift for the day. When she met them Chao remarked, "See how our new workers look in the seventies!" He was full of admiration.

"Don't tease me, old commissar!" Little Tsui pleaded.

A few buffaloes, prodded by their riders, were heading at a run towards them. Little Tsui noticed her younger sister was among the laughing riders. She stopped them and scolded her sister, saying, "You're already fifteen, you shouldn't behave like this. Get down immediately."

"No," the girl responded, "you behaved the same way last year."

Her words reminded Fang of many other things. He knew what Chao had left unsaid when he was interrupted. He glanced at Little Tsui, thought of all he had experienced recently during the progress of the construction job, and compared it with the country in the past. The more he considered all this the more he felt that there was still much to be learned about the ideas that Chao had had no time to put into words.



*Chang Tsung-chung*

### The Militia Sentry Post

Sheer cliffs rise as though sliced by a sword,  
Piercing the shifting clouds as they float past.  
High above stands a militia's sentry post  
Overlooking the sea and propping up the sky.

Bathed in sunshine all the day long,  
Under a spangled canopy of stars at night,  
Returning patrols hear its bugle call of welcome,  
At the sound of the conch-shell, fishing fleets depart.

Splattered all over with salt sea foam,  
The fishermen haul in heavy nets.  
Their eyes, sharp as daggers, are never sheathed,  
For they guard the safety of our motherland.

Tameless, savage seas may roar below,  
And high above the stormy tempest rage,  
But perched between, our sentries stand together  
With the people, one Great Wall along our coast.

*Hou Chin-ping*

## Footprints

A chill wind blows across the hills;  
A spring drizzle blots out the sky.  
Commune members are in the fields already,  
Yet one is always out before them.

His feet leave footprints in the morning mist,  
Startling the sleeping birds within their nests.  
With basket slung on shoulder, spade in hand,  
He halts for a moment on a hilltop.

Who is this out so early?  
Who is this starting work so soon?  
It's Wang, our commune Party secretary,  
He only stops to gather more manure.

Yesterday he visited our Red Flag Team,  
Now he's off to Sun Village to gain more facts.  
But rather than waste a single minute  
He gathers fertilizer on the way.

He was a guerrilla fighter in the mountains,  
He left his footprints on the highlands there.  
Breaking through all enemy blockades,  
He held high the red banner, welcoming the dawn.

These days he's set out on a new war-path,  
But the life of this fighter never changes;  
His footprints over our winding hill paths,  
Are still made by his coarse straw shoes.

He talks to former poor peasants, encouraging them,  
Helps reclaim barren hillsides, open up canals.  
His outer clothes are marked with mud and sweat,  
Inside, his heart beats in rhythm with the masses.

A revolutionary fighter's footsteps never lag,  
For they're guided by the goal of communism.  
Each line of footprints is a fine bright thread,  
Embroidering a new picture in our mountain home.

*Su Chi-hsiung*

## The Ching kang Mountains

From the shore of the southern seas  
I gaze afar, to where crimson azaleas  
Mantle with fire the Ching kang Mountains,\*  
Whose towering peaks pierce the clouds.

Years ago in these same mountains, a flame was lit  
By Chairman Mao, which became a fiery revolutionary beacon.  
He called on workers and peasants to fight together,  
And with their swords hew out a fine new world.

Tirelessly he built an army of revolutionaries;  
Coarse cloth uniforms the fighters had and hempen shoes.  
Bamboo sheds, mud huts for shelter and melons their only food.  
From such ranks heroes arose in their thousands.

\*In western Kiangsi where Chairman Mao personally led the workers' and peasants' armed forces to establish in 1927 the first revolutionary base in China's countryside.

At night by lamplight he taught the truth;  
"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."  
Often he directed fighters among those perilous peaks  
Counter-attacking enemies till in fear they fled.

Meteors streaked across the storm-wracked skies;  
Blazing fires of revolution flared up everywhere.  
Now, all over our land red flags fly high  
That were once flickering flames in the Ching kang Ranges.

Majestic, time-honoured, are these epic mountains  
Whose arms cradled the new born revolution;  
Now on their breast bamboos grow green and sturdy  
And all paths are linked with the Five Continents.

We fighters love and cherish these mountain ranges,  
Whose glorious traditions we shall leave to our successors.  
As we sing of them we remain for ever true to him  
Who created and preserved for us these glorious traditions.



*Tao Chia-shan*

## The Taching Spirit Radiates Far and Wide

Outside a fierce storm rages, thunder rumbles,  
Inside there's the clang of a smith's hammer.  
Not rain, sweat drenches him, as he stands  
Beating machine-parts into shape.

The clang of his hammer is loud and clear,  
The finished parts are laid in piles.  
He remembers the pledge he made at the rally,  
How warm and honey-sweet the thought.

Chairman Mao told us to learn from Taching,\*  
This golden key unlocked all hearts.

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\*An oil field which was built from scratch in the spirit of self-reliance and arduous struggle.

Following the example of the "Iron Man"\*  
With high aims, forward the masses marched.

As he goes at it with hammer and tongs,  
The young smith hears his name called.  
Turning, at once he recognizes who it is:  
It's Old Tsui, the new Party secretary!

Old Tsui, with a happy smile on his face,  
Rolls up sleeves and tightens belt,  
Then lifts a hammer, an eighteen-pounder.  
How skilfully this veteran works!

Amazed, the young smith wonders,  
"Is he familiar with this craft too?  
He was once a child beggar, so I was told,  
And suffered under a cruel master's hand.

"As a guerrilla, he fought the Japanese  
In the sorghum forest.\*\* He won merits, going south,\*\*  
Wiping out bandits: attended heroes' celebration meetings,  
In the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea...."

Now Old Tsui works as a smith once more,  
Great veins on his forehead swell with strain:

---

\*Referring to Comrade Wang Chin-hsi, a Communist and a model oil worker known as the "Iron Man" who fears neither hardship nor death.

\*\*During the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945), army men and people used to move about and hide in the sorghum fields when fighting against the Japanese aggressors.

\*\*\*During the Third Revolutionary Civil War (1945-1949), the Chinese People's Liberation Army crossed the Yangtze River to liberate Nanking, the capital of the reactionary Chiang Kai-shek regime, and the southern part of the country.

So fast does his hammer rise and fall,  
Drowning out the clamour of the storm outside.

How superbly he wields the hammer,  
How exact the machine-parts he's forged.  
Impossible not to admire such work as this;  
Old Tsui's an expert, there's no doubt.

When the young smith asks the Party secretary,  
"Where did you learn to swing the hammer?"  
Old Tsui answers with a laugh,  
"It's a long, long tale to tell, my boy.

"In the old society, when I was twelve,  
Forced into a capitalist's workshop,  
I was too young to lift the weighty hammers;  
My arms swelled, my feet ached.

"With whip in hand, my black-hearted master,  
Rained down blows between each hammer stroke,  
Till with bloody welts my back was covered.  
He sucked the life-blood from us workers!

"The hammer witnessed my deep hatred,  
The anvil was stained with my blood and tears.  
Six long years I toiled beside the furnace,  
Then I ran away and joined the guerrillas."

With voice raised, one hand held high,  
Old Tsui stood erect, fearless, proud,

"I followed Chairman Mao to make revolution,  
Then defended our beautiful motherland.

"For years I'd not been back to my old job,  
For years I'd not touched a hammer.  
The moment I came here and heard the sound,  
My fingers itched to strike, this time for the revolution.

"Now our factory has started to learn from Taching,  
We must press on in the battle for production,  
Compared with the Iron Man, I'm lagging behind,  
I must catch up and follow his example."

The new Party secretary's words,  
Like adding fuel to flames,  
Warms the heart of the young smith  
His revolutionary purpose leaps ahead.

Grasping tight the veteran's hand,  
Enthusiasm soaring, the young worker says;  
We've both hit on the same idea!  
We'll advance together like the Iron Man.

The youthful smith and Party secretary  
Both swing the mighty hammers;  
Forging red hearts beside the fiery furnace  
They take the lead in the thick of the battle.

Clang . . . clang . . . one strike follows another  
The more they work, the more tireless they become,

Staunch revolutionaries are forged beside the anvil,  
The red glow shines on old and young.

Two men, though of different generations,  
The fire's reflection on their cheeks,  
See before them the striding Iron Man,  
The Taching spirit radiates far and wide.



## *Sketches*

*Chien Pei-heng*

## Snow Lotus

The sky high over the grasslands was especially blue that morning, having been washed by a night rain. In the east the morning clouds shimmered with the crimson light of dawn. A cool breeze, laden with the sweetness of wild flowers and milk, was wafted my way. Yet on my first trip to a herdsmen settlement in the area as a reporter, the thoughts of the life I might encounter there were more enticing than the beauty of the highlands. Besides, Hsiu-ying my companion, a meteorologist whom I had met the previous day, was urging me to be quick. "Let's get moving, sister," she said. "We must start early in order to arrive at the Red Flag Commune in two days."

Two sturdy horses, one chestnut and one white, were led out. Though not skilful, I was prepared to ride horseback. But I hesitated when the animals snorted.

"They're trying to scare you. Take no notice and mount," said Hsiu-ying to encourage me.

I walked up to the white horse but, at the sight of a stranger, she veered and kicked up her heels.

Hsiu-ying dashed over, pulling on the reins while shaking a fist at the horse, "Behave yourself, now. Do you want to taste my whip?" The mare lowered her head, twitching her ears docilely.

"Mount, now. She looks very wild. But if you pay no notice she'll calm down right away," Hsiu-ying assured me.

I took heart and jumped into the saddle.

Galloping over the grasslands, jumping brooks and climbing hills, I was too tense to notice all the beauty of the grasslands.

We stopped to rest in a luxuriant grassy meadow. Water from a spring quenched my thirst while the breeze cooled me. Lying side by side on our backs we two young women had a pleasant talk.

"It seems to me that you are very familiar with the grasslands, Hsiu-ying," I said.

"Being a meteorologist I travel a great deal."

"Why?"

"What's the use of meteorology if it doesn't serve a practical purpose? Besides, meteorological theories must be integrated with practice before precise weather forecasts can be made."

I didn't get it at first so I put another question to her, "Frankly speaking, I can't quite see the relation between the two."

Turning over, she explained carefully, "There's so much to be learned on a tour of the countryside. I can become familiar with the topography, collect first-hand material and learn to sum up the experience of the masses. Last but not least I am being re-educated by the poor herdsmen. I also pick up ideas and opinions from army-men and others about weather forecasting so that I can serve national defence and socialist construction better." She sat up and pulled out a notebook from her pocket, saying, "I've gathered scores of local sayings and drawn some dozen weather-charts while travelling around the grasslands."

I took her notebook which was underlined here and there with red and green pencil. In the notebook she had recorded examples of the resourcefulness and unlimited wisdom of the masses. I also noted that Hsiu-ying had stated her desire to serve the people wholeheartedly.

"The grasslands are an enormous volume of information, sister," Hsiu-ying said with feeling. "It provides me with many first-hand facts and much knowledge not previously gained and makes me realize the necessity of making an effort to investigate each actual situation.

As the white cloud masses floated across the blue sky, they disintegrated into fleecy wisps. A lone eagle soared higher and higher until it merged into the horizon. Hsiu-ying stood up abruptly.

"We must hurry. A wind will spring up this afternoon."

"The sky is too clear for wind, isn't it?" I queried dubiously.

"There's a local saying: 'When eagles soar high, there's either wind or rain.' Besides, these clouds overhead are heralds of the wind."

A few white yurts appeared among the waves of grass on the distant horizon. Hsiu-ying shouted happily, "That's the herdsmen settlement, our first stop. We'll have lunch there." At the crack of her whip the chestnut horse darted off at full gallop.

I clutched the reins tightly and clamped my legs around my mare, determined to overtake her.

As we neared the settlement, Hsiu-ying, cool and calm, let her horse fall back into a canter. Turning around she commented, "You've learned to ride well, sister."

"There's still much to learn from you who've grown up here on the grasslands," I told her with admiration.

"Do I look like a local girl? Ha, ha, ha," she burst out laughing happily. After a while she turned around and in real Shanghai dialect, with a twinkle in her eyes, confided in me, "Well, I'm from Shanghai." Having said this she trotted gaily on again.

The afternoon sun, like a blazing furnace, beat down on the valley, scorching everything until it seemed that a single match might set it all on fire. The heat suffocated and parched me. Even my horse champed on her bit. Both we and the animals would suffer from heat-exhaustion if we went any farther.

"We must cool off a bit before we go on, Hsiu-ying," I suggested.

"There is no need," she contradicted, slowing down and wiping

her face. Looking up at the sky, she went on, "Are you too hot? The Old Lord of the Sky will send us a cool shower pretty soon."

Not long after the weather did change. Black storm clouds piled up behind the mountains. Suddenly lightning snaked across the sky, the crash of thunder shook the very earth while tiny hailstones pelted down on us.

Hsiu-ying jumped nimbly from her horse. "Dismount, sister," she shouted to me. "Hold on to your horse and take shelter beside her."

Hsiu-ying fished out a wind indicator from her satchel and rushed up a small slope. Through the grey rain screen I could see her, indicator in hand, carefully measuring the speed of the wind.

When the storm subsided she skipped back, very satisfied. "Isn't this a rich life we're experiencing, sister? A breeze cools us one moment and the next a shower washes us!"

"But you are drenched," I said in concern.

"Never mind. This storm has given me a little meteorological information." She was apparently quite thrilled.

The sun reappeared. Clouds still hovered over the mountain tops, while the wind, reined in once more, caressed the rippling grass where raindrops lingered like sparkling diamonds, and the wild flowers looked brighter after the shower. I was quite carried away by the beauty of the grasslands.

"How interesting your profession is when you're able to detect and record the myriad changes of weather."

"Yes, it is interesting," she admitted. "But there's still so much that needs to be unravelled," she added, shaking her head.

The setting sun disappeared behind the distant ranges while the rolling grasslands flowed on to lap at the feet of the Taishan Mountains. The landscape was quickly draped with a screen of night.

When we reached a desolate valley Hsiu-ying jumped down from her horse. "Here we are, sister. We're staying at this 'inn' tonight," she said to me gaily.

I looked around in astonishment. Hemmed in by gloomy moun-

tains, the narrow stretch of grass was crossed by a river, its rushing water playing an accompaniment to the howling wind.

"Are we stopping here?" I asked in amazement.

"Right here." As she spoke she flashed her torchlight on to the mouth of a dark cave. "It's quiet enough. There'll be nothing to disturb us." She helped me to unharness my mare, took out a thermometer and led the horses off to graze.

"So, she calls this an 'inn', does she?" I thought to myself. The cave, only as wide as a large double bed, was about four feet high, its opening almost hidden by tall grasses. The straw which covered the ground inside was damp, rotten and stinking. I was still standing there staring around stupidly when Hsiu-ying returned. She quickly spread her fur-lined coat on the straw and said invitingly, "This is cosier than a spring mattress, sister. Come on. Try it."

A small pile of rocks to be used as a stove stood beside the opening of the cave. After lighting a fire Hsiu-ying fetched some water from the river in an empty tin. The fire lit up her healthy complexion while she fed it and boiled the water. She was as adept as if she were cooking in her Shanghai home. When the water had boiled she poured me a brimming cupful. As she took out some butter and parched flour and mixed them thoroughly she told me, "This is the favourite food of the herdsman. I couldn't swallow it at first. But I've learned to like it. Now it tastes better than rice to me. If you are going to be a reporter here you must learn to eat it too." After the meal she wrapped her fur-lined coat around her and was immediately asleep. But sleep did not come to me. I lay listening to the duet of water and wind.

Hsiu-ying woke up some time later and found me still awake. Tucking me in, she said with concern, "Try to sleep. The going will be hard tomorrow." Lulled by the warmth of her care I closed my eyes and soon dozed off.

I was awakened by a slight rustling of the straw. When I looked around my companion was not there but I heard her careful footsteps outside the cave. What was she doing at this time of night? I wondered. Worried about her I sneaked out to have a look.

The moon, bright and cold, lit up the valley and the grass where Hsiu-ying stood gazing up at the starry sky. After some time, she squatted and switched on her torchlight. She was actually recording the temperature and observing the weather in the middle of the night.

I was filled with respect for her as I ran over and said, "Even on a fine night like this, Hsiu-ying, how vigilant you are!"

"The duty of a meteorologist is to observe the weather at all times; the wind and clouds by day, the stars and moon by night. We must be especially careful during fine weather and watch for unexpected changes." Pointing at the twinkling stars she said, "It looks like a calm night. Yet when the light of the stars flashes so unceasingly it is an indication that air currents in the upper atmosphere are moisture laden and a storm is brewing."

When we went back to the cave she lit a candle. "Get some more sleep, sister. I've rested enough."

Hsiu-ying produced a copy of Chairman Mao's *On Practice* and began to read attentively by candlelight. All my sleepiness gone, I sat beside her and read till dawn.

An imposing snow-capped mountain rose before us. Half way up, from the mist that encircled it, a meandering path descended.

"Our destination is on the other side of this peak," Hsiu-ying told me. "It is easier to skirt the mountain, of course. But, in order to unravel the secret of the weather here I'd like you to make a trip over it with me."

We climbed a path with two hairpin bends on horseback. But the wind increased gradually until we were forced to dismount and lead our horses. The higher we went the more strenuous our climb became.

Slowly the mist engulfed us until it blocked out the surrounding peaks. My heart beat fast in the strong air currents. Then large snowflakes began to fall like myriad fluttering butterflies or petals falling from pear blossom in spring time.

After we emerged from above the mist we continued climbing. Hsiu-ying suddenly shouted in excitement. I looked where she was pointing and saw a most majestic scene. Billowing clouds were being



wafted by wind into a cleft between two mountains. They flowed like the great waves at the mouth of the Yangtse River.

Overjoyed, she grasped my arm. "I've discovered the cause of the abundant rain in Hsiumatán at last, sister." She shook her fist at the mountains, "Ah, mighty mountains, we've been doing research for years in our offices to try and discover this." She showed me a rainfall chart. "Look here. The grasslands beyond this mountain have little rain all the year round. But the rain is quite sufficient here. We didn't realize that the warm moisture-laden currents from the sea entered straight through this valley." With a red pencil she made a mark on the map.

Without waiting to rest Hsiu-ying began working away busily on another slope. This time she was measuring the depth of the snow, murmuring to herself, "Oh snowy mountain, you're one of the treasures of our motherland. You've been waiting for us for centuries. But the sunlight of Mao Tsetung Thought will soon melt your snows to irrigate the vast grasslands and generate electricity and heat for the people."

Quite accidentally, among tender white-tipped leaves, I caught sight of a dark red flower on a fluffy stem, standing proudly erect

in the snow near Hsiu-ying. This beauty on the snow-capped peak left me speechless.

Going over to it Hsiu-ying picked the flower and exclaimed in delight, "Ah, a snow lotus! This is the flower which dares to challenge wind and snow."

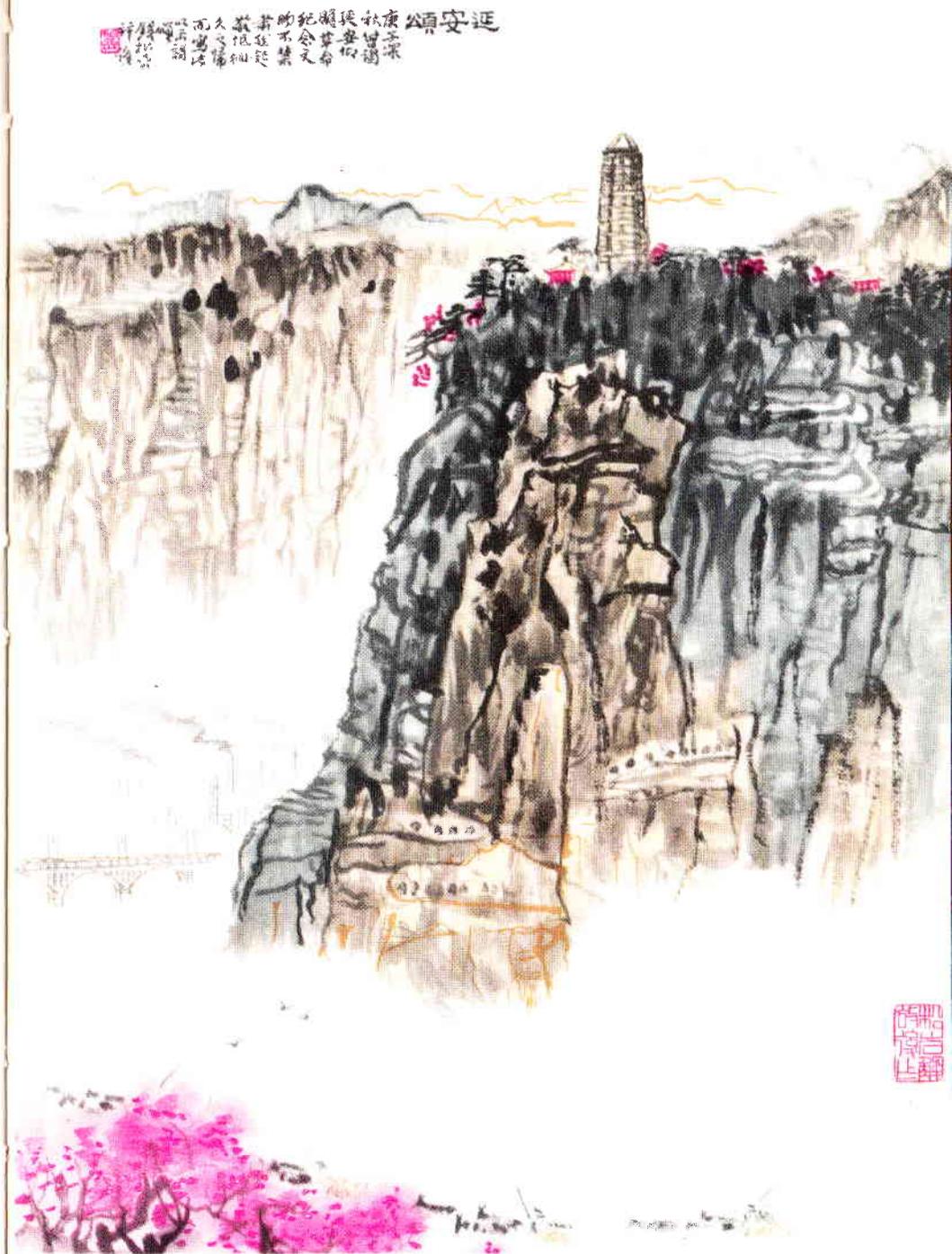
I looked at the snow lotus — a slender but lively harbinger of spring on the snow-covered mountain — and felt that Hsiu-ying was just such a flower fostered by Mao Tsetung Thought.

Smoke rose from the yurts nearby. We had reached our destination. As dusk was falling, the setting sun gilded the snowy peaks and painted the grasslands in crimson light.

*Yenan*

by Chien Sung-yen ▶

This is the wood block print of a painting of the same title in the traditional style.



延安頌  
庚子年  
秋  
吳昌碩  
畫

## A Song of Friendship

In early 1952 we Chinese People's Volunteers battled on a snow-clad mountain in Korea. Usually I worked in an anti-aircraft unit but as our coal supply had run short I was sent to get more fuel one morning. Li Hsiang, a lively eighteen-year-old reserve artillery man was assigned as my assistant.

The coal yard was some ten miles away. As the truck bumped along the highway, I noticed Li was sitting with his eyes shut, his head resting on the back of the seat. Although Li was energetic and vigilant in battle, he could sleep at the drop of a hat.

"Hey! Sleeping again, Hsiao Li?" I joked, nudging him for fun.

"No," he replied without opening his eyes. "I was just thinking."

"About what?"

"It'll soon be New Year, you know. They'll miss us."

I understood the story behind what he said, and knew who "they" were.

Several months previously he had been wounded just when our troops were on the move and could not look after him. He was

put under the care of a Korean granny recommended by the Korean Party organization. The old woman's son, a fighter in the Korean People's Army, had been killed in action, and her daughter-in-law Hong Sun, who worked some distance away from their village, seldom went home. It was this granny and her little grand-daughter Ying Za who attended to Li.

After a few weeks Li recovered and I went to fetch him back. The moment I pulled up in front of the cottage, I found Li very energetic, arguing with the old granny over carrying a big bundle of cabbages. "I'm all right now, granny," he insisted. "I can manage it, it won't hurt me."

"No. It's my responsibility to look after you, to make you strong so that you can go back soon to fight," the old woman said. "Stop arguing. Go inside and rest."

She grabbed the bundle and lugged it to the kitchen all by herself.

"Uncle, to get stronger you must rest," little Ying Za advised. "Then you can go back to the front and shoot down more enemy planes."

I was deeply touched by this glimpse I had of how deeply the Korean people loved us Chinese People's Volunteers and hated the U.S. invaders. When they noticed my jeep they came over. I explained that Li was to return with me. The news saddened granny. She checked his wound thoroughly before turning him over to me. Li gathered the little girl in his arms for a final hug and then we left them.

After that Li revisited granny and her grand-daughter several times. But the last time he went the villagers told him that they had moved away because of the enemy's constant bombing. But Li always looked forward to meeting them again.

There's an old saying, "At festival time people yearn more than ever for their loved ones." This was what Li was thinking of now that the year was coming to a close.

On our way to the coal yard our truck rounded a corner and stopped in front of a newly-dug well beside a small cottage. Our driver said it was a water supply station recently set up to service passing

vehicles. He got out and went to the well with a bucket. But when he began to draw up the water an old woman came out and took it from him, saying sternly, "Let me do it!" She hauled the filled bucket over to the truck and poured the water into the radiator. "If I'd been a step slower you would have filled the radiator yourself," she chided the driver. "Well, I may just as well tell you, every vehicle of the Chinese People's Volunteers that passes by here I service with my own hands!" She plumped the empty bucket onto the ground with a thud.

Li stuck his head out of the truck window. With a grin he called, "Granny!"

"It's you," she said delightedly, catching sight of us as we got down from the truck. She grasped us both by the arms. "How good it is to see you after all this time." Her wrinkled old face was all smiles.

"Where's little Ying Za?" asked Li eagerly.

"She's inside." Granny pointed to the small cottage and invited us all in for a rest. "Come on in and have a look at our new house."

Ying Za was sorting vegetable seeds into a bag on the *kang* bed. A woman's photo hung above her on the wall — probably her mother. The child looked up as we entered. "Uncle, uncle!" When she saw Li she stopped her work immediately and ran into his outstretched arms.

Granny and I sat on the edge of the *kang* and chatted while Li played with the little girl. "We'll sow these when spring comes," granny said indicating the vegetable seeds. "If you come to my house again in June I'll give you a feast of fresh greens — vegetables grown under enemy fire!" Then she laughed heartily, but Ying Za kept quiet, her face serious.

"Uncle, can you help me find my mother?" she asked Li, her eyes looking at us wistfully.

Granny took the little girl's hands in hers and quietly told her, "Uncle has his own work to do, so does your mother. They must stick to their posts."

"She'll be back soon," added Li to console her. "But right now she's busy working for the fatherland."



“Yes, she must stick to her post — but it would be so nice if mother could come back for the New Year.” She sighed, her dark eyes blinking.

When we were ready to leave granny drew us aside and said in a low voice so that her grand-daughter would not hear: “Ying Za’s mother Hong Sun hasn’t been home since the war started. If ever you happen to meet her, tell her that the child and I are well and that she needs not worry about us. But if she can I hope she’ll come and see us during the New Year.”

We shook hands warmly and promised to do our best. As we drove off, Li shouted back, “The U.S. invaders’ll soon be driven out. We’ll certainly come back in June to eat some of your vegetables!”

At dusk that afternoon we reached the coal yard. Snow covered the coal dump as well as the small makeshift shelter at the end of the yard. We could not see a single person until finally we noticed a woman working at the dump. She was sorting coal with a shovel, piling up the larger pieces in a separate heap.

“Is the manager in, Comrade?”

“No. He’s gone to the front. I’m taking his place for a while.” Pointing to the heap she had just made she went on, “If you’ve come for coal, take that.”

“Keep it for yourself,” I said, making for another heap together with Li.

“Don’t talk of ‘yours’ or ‘ours’, we’re comrades,” she said warmly.

“But we don’t want to take the best coal.”

“Nonsense. Come and load your truck,” she ordered and began to shovel up the coal herself. Li and I had no alternative but to obey. As we were leaving she waved to us and said emphatically: “Make your fire fiercer and deal the aggressors heavier blows!”

All the way back I thought about this woman. She was so kind and worked so energetically out in the snow, selecting the best coal for us Chinese People’s Volunteers.

We made several trips in succession, each time returning fully loaded with the best coal which the woman selected for us. On our seventh trip she took us into the shelter to warm up. Actually, the place was not very warm since the window paper had been split open by the wind. The small fire was not burning well either. She hurriedly poked it, squatting beside the stove. The acrid smoke made her eyes water. When I tried to help her I found the only fuel she was using was coal dust.

“Coal dust doesn’t make a good fire,” I said. “Let me get you some real coal.”

She looked quite angry. “No, Comrade. I’d rather be a little cold than waste good coal. The front needs it badly. All the coal in the dump is for the battle, for the needs of the revolution.” Meanwhile she removed the cap she wore and flicked off the snow that had stuck to it.

Now I could see her face more clearly. It seemed familiar. Suddenly I remembered the picture on granny's wall. Before I could speak Li asked her:

"Aren't you Comrade Hong Sun — Ying Za's mother?"

Li's question surprised her. "Do you know Ying Za?" she asked eagerly.

Li told her briefly how we had met her family.

"How are they both getting along?" she inquired excitedly.

"Very well," I put in. "That's what granny asked us to tell you if ever we met. They miss you very much. Why don't you come along with us in the truck and see them?"

"Yes, I will, when you come back for the last load," she agreed.

As our truck started rolling I felt happy for Hong Sun, for on our next trip we would take her to see her family.

We made our last trip at night, the headlights of our truck piercing the darkness. We were only half way back to the coal depot, however, when enemy planes appeared dropping bombs at random. Our driver flicked off the headlights and pulled us off the road till they had gone. To avoid the new craters all along the road, we had to make a detour.

When we reached the coal yard the lamp was still burning in the shelter but we could not find Hong Sun. It was deathly quiet. I shouted several times, but there was no response. We looked around. At last we found her, but in a terrible condition. She was lying unconscious on a coal heap, her face covered with frozen blood. Beside her was evidence of a bomb blast not far away.

"Comrade Hong Sun!" Li called out, cradling her in his arms. "Comrade Hong Sun!"

She was as silent as the night. We carried her to the truck and started for the army hospital. We had been driving for a long while before she gradually came to. Though still very weak she managed to whisper: "The front needs coal... It's for the battle... for the revolution."

We left her in the care of the hospital.

Long past midnight on our way back with our last load we pulled up at granny's door. She was still up and ran out to greet us. She chattered gaily as she filled the radiator.

"Don't forget to give that message to my daughter-in-law," she reminded us.

None of us spoke.

"Is there anything wrong?" she asked when she noticed our silence.

We told her what had happened and her face flushed with anger as she listened to the ghastly sad story that had become so common since the U.S. forces had invaded Korea. She didn't say much.

We parted that night with heavy hearts, but we were all the more determined to fight on till victory. Li, as usual, kept his eyes closed, but I knew he was not dozing...

Not long afterwards the heroic Korean people finally defeated the U.S. aggressors. Before the unbreakable wall formed by the Korean and Chinese peoples, the invaders were halted. The arrogant enemy was so badly beaten that they were forced to sit down and negotiate a ceasefire.



After I returned from Korea I missed granny and Ying Za. Every victory the Korean people won under the fine leadership of Comrade Kim Il Sung made me think of them even more. Something quite unexpected happened however. On our National Day last year when I was watching the celebrations a group of people passed close by me and among them I heard someone shouting the name Ying Za. I turned to look. A young girl was running in my direction to join the group. She looked rather like Hong Sun.

"Aren't you Ying Za, Hong Sun's daughter?" I called out as I went up to her. I was afraid that after such a long interval she wouldn't recognize me. But as soon as I spoke she cried out in surprise: "Uncle! Volunteer uncle!" A delightful smile spread across her face. "Yes, I'm Ying Za. How splendid to meet you again!"

We were so eager to catch up on news of each other that we both started chatting at the same time. She told me she had graduated from university and recently been sent to China to gain more experience in Chinese hospitals.

"How's your granny?"

"She's fine! She thinks of you often too — especially when she gathers in the vegetables," she added with a broad smile.

"And your mother?" I asked anxiously.

"She's working in a People's Army hospital." The girl smiled, as she added, "Sticking to her post..."

I told her that Li and I were also sticking to our posts—in the army, with guns firmly in hand. She said she would write to her mother and grandmother about us and remember us to them.

Heroic Korea and its people instantly flashed before my eyes again. It was heart-warming. The militant friendship cemented by the Chinese and Korean peoples was based on proletarian internationalism and our bonds were sealed in blood during our united resistance to the common enemy.

*Illustrated by Chou Chien-fu*

## The Route

It was a sultry afternoon. The weeping willows were absolutely still, and swallows flew so low that their breasts skimmed the ground.

I had just returned from a job. The rush of air through the cab window stopped as soon as I pulled up, and in no time it was stifling inside and I was sweating. I picked up an old rag and jumped out to clean off the bonnet and cool myself. But outside it was not much better.

"Young Chin, Young Chin!" Someone called and I heard footsteps behind me. It was the dispatcher. From his good-humoured smile I knew he had something else for me to do.

"Anything urgent?" I asked, jumping off the bumper to meet him.

"Work Site 108 needs a truck-load of materials by tomorrow noon," he told me.

"Tomorrow noon?"

"Right. The time's short. You're to start with Comrade Kao this evening. Any problem?"

"No. We'll make it all right." I assured him confidently. This urgent job thrilled me and I was glad to know Comrade Kao would go with me on this long trip. The heat and my tiredness were completely forgotten.

Comrade Kao was our Party branch secretary and one of the activists in the study of Chairman Mao's works in our transport team. Although not very husky he was extremely energetic. He seldom joked, but gave careful thought to all his assignments. Nothing ever prevented him from completing a job.

Knowing this I felt confident and set off immediately to load the truck at a nearby plant. I tied down the canvas over the materials and hurried back. Hardly had my truck entered the gate of our headquarters when someone shouted to me, "Turn round, Young Chin. Let's push off!"

Comrade Kao was standing by the gate. He had a long rod under one arm, a small block of wood in one hand and some tire-chains trailing from the other. I could not help laughing. "You must be out of your mind, Secretary Kao. Are you afraid there'll be a snowstorm in mid July? And what's that rod for? Think you'll need it to drive away wild dogs so they don't bite you, eh?" I joked.

"Well, you never know." He smiled calmly and throwing his gear into the back of the truck, climbed into the cab beside me.

We started out along a broad asphalt highway. The tall poplars and emerald willows on both sides flashed past us swiftly. It cooled down in the cab. Driving on such a smooth road was easy.

But in less than an hour this pleasant part of our journey ended. An unexpected high wind had piled up huge black storm-clouds. Then, following the fierce lightning and crash of thunder, came a downpour. Rain in sheets lashed at the windshield.

Through the darkness and murky rain curtain our two headlights traced the way. Craning forward, eyes staring, I drove on under great strain.

"Slow down, there's someone signalling," Comrade Kao warned me.

I peered ahead. Someone was waving a lantern. As we stopped a man leaped onto the footboard and shouted through the closed

window, "The road ahead's torn up by a torrent. We're repairing it now but it won't be finished for quite a while yet."

"Will it be done by tonight?" Comrade Kao asked anxiously.

"I don't think so. You'd better stay the night at our work site," the man invited cordially.

"What shall we do, Secretary Kao?" I asked, opening the cab door.

Comrade Kao remained in his seat. After a moment he said, "If we don't deliver our load in time, the whole project will be held up."

The rain still poured down incessantly. Water streamed off the signalman's raincoat. Since Comrade Kao seemed to have no intention of getting out, I pulled the cab door shut again.

"Go on, we'd better push ahead," Comrade Kao said.

"How?" I muttered doubtfully.

"We should always have an alternative route in mind in case of an emergency like this. Besides this road there's another pass through the mountains. I learned about it two or three years ago. We'll go that way. I don't think there'll be any obstacles. We'll have a better chance of getting through our destination on time going that way than if we wait here all night."

"You mean the old road leading through the 'Tiger's Mouth'?" I asked, remembering the steep and perilous way I'd heard other drivers talk about sometimes. Driving across it was risky even on a fine day. That was why the new highway had been built to bypass it. Besides, it had not been kept in repair.

Comrade Kao seemed to know what I was thinking. "Young Chin, we're carrying urgently-needed materials. Our only alternative now is to try and deliver them without delay."

His determination was obvious, so I started up the motor again.

After a dozen miles or so we reached the old unused road. Gloomy mountains loomed on either side; it was very narrow and its surface went from bad to worse. My heart began to beat a tattoo.

Suddenly shouting "Stop!" Comrade Kao clutched the hand brake. Instantly I jammed my foot hard on the brake too and the truck jerked to a stop.

"Let's get out and see what's up," Comrade Kao said coolly.

We jumped down and looked around. The off front wheel was on the edge of a precipice. With Comrade Kao directing me I was able to back up a bit and then we continued on our way.

I was more nervous now. We drove along this rugged mountain trail, around sharp corners and up steep gradients. The truck bumped up and down because of the boulders and drifted sand washed down the mountain side by cloud-bursts. My eyes were sore and my mind was numb. "This wretched weather is really making trouble for us," I grumbled.

"Young Chin," said Comrade Kao, wiping the inside of the windshield, "as long as we keep the revolution in mind and are determined to carry out any job, there's no difficulty we can't overcome."

I plucked up courage when I thought of this and drove steadily on.

We mounted a hill and skirted a peak. Twenty minutes later muddy water rushing down a gully about a hundred yards wide blocked our way. Without the slightest hesitation, Comrade Kao grabbed the rod and said, "I'll sound it out to find where the road is solid." He plunged into the water, not even bothering to roll up his trouser-legs.

I tried to stop him. "I'll do it..."

"No. You get ready to drive," he shouted.

I knew him well — once he had made a decision, he always stuck to it.

Believe it or not it was freezing cold that stormy night in the mountains. The headlights lit up Comrade Kao as he moved slowly forward through the waist-high water. He felt for the hard bottom with the rod, now to the left, then to the right, as though sounding for something. Finally he reached the opposite side, climbed a low bank and signalled to me.

I gripped the wheel, pressed my foot firmly on the accelerator and followed his directions. The truck zigzagged through the rushing water, finally crossing it safely. Comrade Kao insisted on relieving me at the wheel.

At dawn, the rain ceased. Behind the wheel, Comrade Kao stared ahead intently and under his skilful control the truck proceeded rapidly.

"Look, there's the Tiger's Mouth." Comrade Kao nudged me lightly with his elbow.

Peering ahead I saw a steep incline where overhanging rocks jutted out like tiger's teeth on one side and a sheer cliff dropped away from the other. The narrow road, about only a foot wider than the body of the truck, lay between the lips of the Tiger's Mouth. Comrade Kao drove through without a hitch.

But we faced yet another test — ahead of us was a hairpin bend on another sharp gradient. Comrade Kao suddenly stepped on the brake. "Young Chin, you drive now for a change."

"But Secretary Kao, I..."

"Come on, there's nothing to be afraid of. You'll only gain experience through practice."

"All right!" I changed seats with him.

We were part way up when the rear wheels began to skid, letting the truck slip backwards. Comrade Kao swiftly jumped out, snatched up his block of wood and wedged it under a tire.

"It's too steep," I said.

"It's all right. We have these." He lugged the heavy tire-chains down from the back of the truck. I helped him to fix them on. "The greater the hardship, the better you can temper yourself," he said. Like a flame burning inside me, my confidence increased. I took the wheel again.

"That's the spirit. Now charge!" Comrade Kao waved his hand.

The motor purred. Small stones, dislodged from the slopes by the vibration of the truck, bounced under our wheels. Comrade Kao, ever alert, gave me advice from time to time till we came out onto the new highway again. We had survived the ordeal. I brought the truck to a halt and gaily gripped the secretary's strong hand. He put an arm around my shoulder and pointed ahead, saying, "See, that's Work Site 108 over there." The two of us smiled triumphantly.

By now the sun was up. The whole scene around us was green and beautiful. Our truck rolled on along the broad highway.

*Ah Jung*

## Art Recreated

— *The Wood Block Prints of the Jung Pao Chai Studio*

In the south-centre of Peking, on an old street named Liu Li Chang, there are a number of art shops. They sell paintings, books for the copy of calligraphy, and rubbings of inscriptions on ancient monuments. Of these shops, the Jung Pao Chai Studio is the best known. It specializes in the wood block reproductions of Chinese paintings. It also sells artists' supplies, such as brushes for traditional Chinese painting, ink slabs, special paper and concave ink stones on which black, the essential colour used in traditional Chinese painting, is produced by rubbing the ink slab in water against the stone. Paintings in the traditional style by modern Chinese artists are displayed on the walls of the shop, mostly of landscapes, figures, flowers, animals and birds. Galloping horses full of vitality and strength painted by the late Hsu Pei-hung, are popular and attract the attention of visitors.

Artists of traditional Chinese painting use a thick, absorbent hand-made rice paper, brushes of various thickness and ink or other water colours. These materials and Chinese style of painting produce a

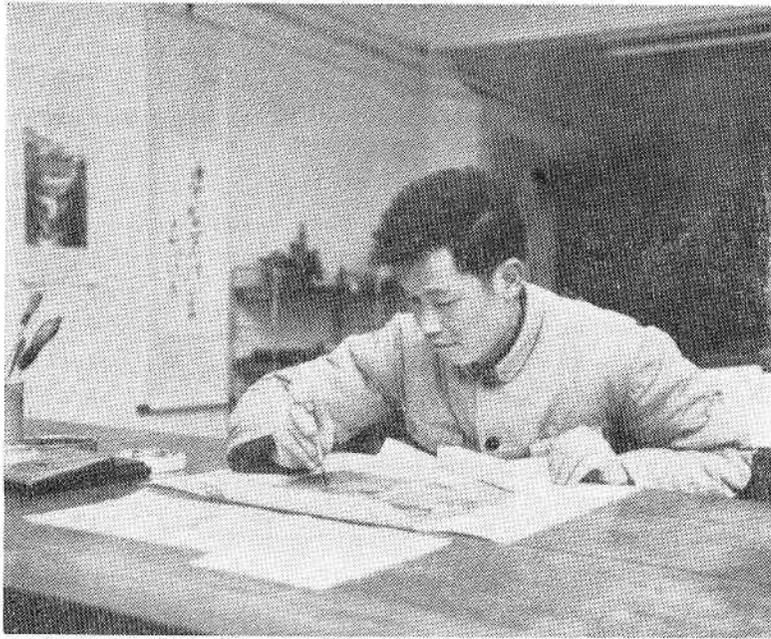
unique effect. When the ink and water colours are absorbed to varying degrees by the paper, they shade out in nuances, which, apart from bringing out the picture in relief, integrate the blank space into a harmonious entity in the composition, giving the traditional Chinese painting its special quality.

Besides quite a number of originals, the paintings displayed in the shop are all reproductions made on wood blocks by the craftsmen who work at the studio. Copies and originals are so exactly similar that only experts can differentiate between them. The movement of lines, the exactitude of colour and shading, the minutest detail, even a casual smudge on the original, are reproduced. The atmosphere and harmony of the composition is also faithfully adhered to. This is why reproductions are just as captivating as originals.

Thanks to this method many fine paintings, both classical and modern, are now available to the general public. They can be seen in many public buildings where they are on display. The Jung Pao Chai Studio which opens onto the street exhibits and sells pictures. But behind it there are four workshops. Each of these is used for a separate process in the reproduction of a print. Each process is completed by a single craftsman.

In the first process, a careful study is made of the line, mass, space and colour gradations in the original which is to be reproduced. The picture is then divided into sections. A tracing is made of each one, on very transparent hand-made rice paper with fine brushes and black ink, by one craftsman. This needs the most exact and meticulous work so that every brush stroke of the original is faithfully reproduced. These several tracings of the one picture are taken to the second workshop.

Here the second process begins by pasting each tracing on a slab of wood about two inches thick, large or small in size and irregular in shape to fit each tracing. These slabs, or blocks as they are called, are of pear wood, chosen for its hardness, fine grain and lack of yearly growth-rings. When pasted to the wood the paper is quite invisible and only the black ink shows, but it is strong enough to be peeled off if necessary. The wood is carved to leave certain areas in high relief and to incise the lines. A variety of small knives, about twelve



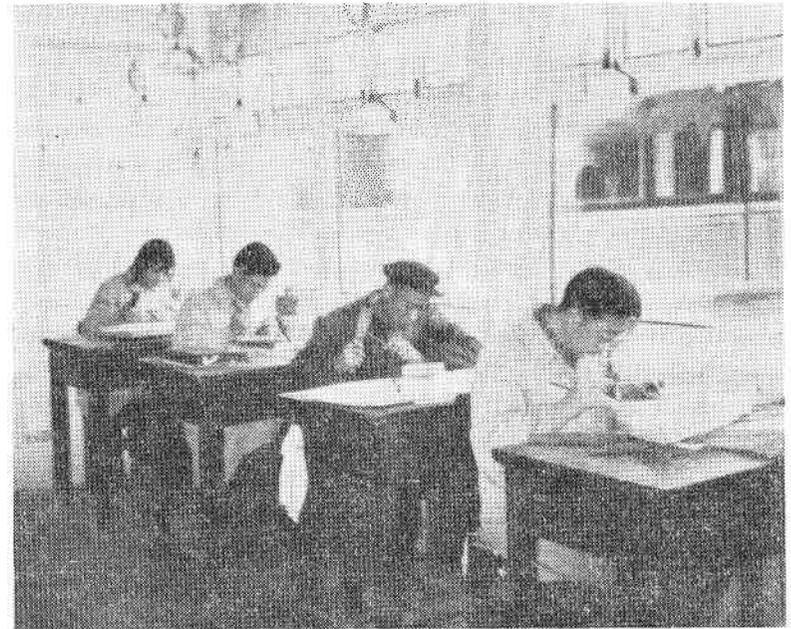
altogether, which vary in shape, size, thickness and sharpness are used, and tapped with a small bar of light wood. It takes about three years for an apprentice to become fairly proficient in this art.

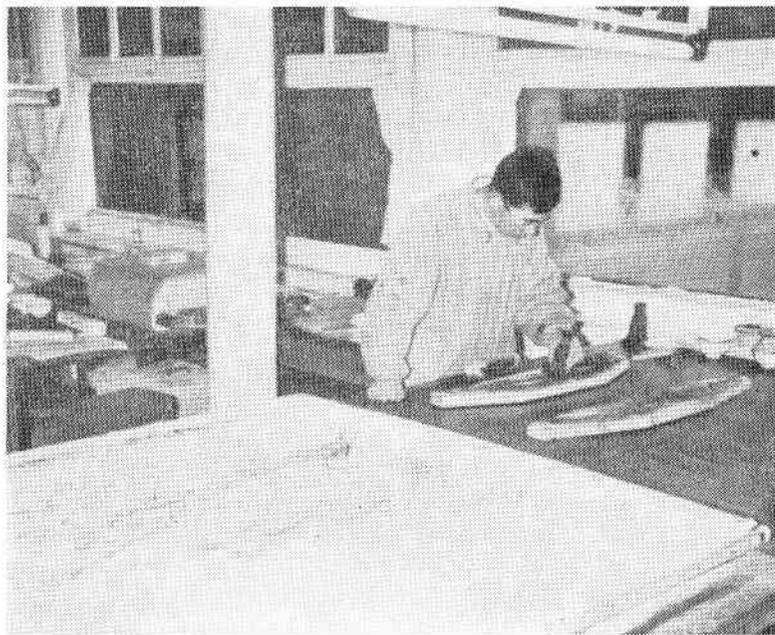
The actual work of printing is done in the third process. In this room both temperature and humidity are kept constant so that there will be no shrinking or stretching of the paper when the water colour is applied. The humidity is quite high. Long training, experience and artistry is needed by the craftsmen who grind, mix and prepare the water-colour paints, often from the same minerals that were used by artists four or five centuries ago. Not only must each colour be faithful to the original, but each gradation of colour.

Sheets of rather absorbent rice paper, the size of the whole picture, are placed in a pile on a bench, according to the number of reproductions to be made. They are clamped along one side in a large metal vice to prevent them moving out of alignment. They are not removed from this until the whole process is completed. Using a tracing of

the whole picture to guide them the craftsmen select certain blocks upon which the same colour or shade will be applied. These are stuck in place with a very strong adhesive onto an adjoining bench, separated from the pile of paper by about a foot. Then the craftsman applies the paint to the surface of the blocks. This is done swiftly and immediately and needs great precision and exactness. As the paper lies there, the craftsman lightly rubs it over the blocks with a soft pad, so that the paint from them is transferred to the somewhat absorbent paper. Then the sheet is folded back and allowed to hang between the two benches to dry, still clamped in the vice of course. Once again the paint is applied to the blocks and another sheet printed. This process is repeated with all the paper.

But only one colour has been applied. The paper is lifted back in a pile, the used blocks are removed and others stuck to the bench for another colour. This is repeated until the whole picture has been printed. Even for a simple picture some twenty or thirty processes are involved, but in reproducing some ancient coloured scrolls as many





as two or three thousand may be needed. In the process the craftsman must exert the appropriate amount of pressure on each particular block, for this counts very much for the effectiveness of the nuances and tones of the painting that must go in harmony with the opaque rice paper. This sensitive technique is developed out of long years of experience.

The sheets of printed rice paper are flimsy. The last process is to mount them on heavy paper either to hang or to be rolled in a scroll. This is the end of the process. In the Jung Pao Chai Studio many craftsmen work simultaneously on several paintings so that production is speeded up.

The reproduction of a Chinese painting is in itself an art combining painting, wood carving and printing. The craftsmen, both men and women, are connoisseurs of art and artists themselves. The particular effect achieved by this wood-block method cannot be obtained by any other kind of printing.

Wood carving in China has a history of over one thousand years. The earliest wood block prints were made in ink only. The

sole existing specimen is the woodcut entitled *The Grove of Jeta* on the frontispiece of *The Diamond Sutra*. It was made in A.D. 868. In the middle of the 14th century coloured prints began to make their appearance. In the 17th century letter paper impressed with coloured wood carvings became quite the fashion among the literati. The sheets were generally seven or eight inches by three or four inches in size. Literary men often wrote poems on them in their own hand and sent them to their friends as gifts. *Designs for Letter Paper from the Studio of Ten Bamboos*, in four volumes, is the first collection of such prints in China. They were printed in a process called "mosaic" or "fitting in", because many different blocks are needed to make up a finished print.

Such prints are usually of landscapes, flowers, birds, story pictures or mere decorative designs. They were executed with so much artistry that they have occupied a particular place in Chinese wood carving. The great writer Lu Hsun and the literary historian Cheng Chen-to collected them. When their collection was complete, it was given to the Jung Pao Chai Studio to be reproduced for the benefit of the public.

In olden days the delicate coloured prints of this type were called "embroidery on wood". The job requires the most exquisite skill comparable almost to silk embroidery. The art of reproducing paintings developed by Jung Pao Chai Studio is based on this skill.

The Jung Pao Chai Studio was founded in 1894. In old China it was a very small establishment, having a staff of about a dozen people, printing for the most part coloured letter paper. It was enlarged after the Liberation and following Chairman Mao's directive, "**Let a hundred flowers blossom; weed through the old to bring forth the new**", it reproduced 36 paintings from copies of the frescoes at the famous Tunhuang Grottoes. Later on the *Collection of Tunbuang Frescoes* was published on this basis. The frescoes it includes consist of works of different dynasties up to the seventh century, and decorative designs and sketches of figures found in the grottoes.

The art has developed by leaps and bounds so that now even the most highly complicated paintings can be reproduced. That is why we can see wood block prints in the studio of impressionist paint-

ings in free-hand style as well as fine, delicate drawings by classical artists.

During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution another big stride was made in the art with the successful reproduction of the well-known oil painting *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan*. The painting was first copied in the traditional style on paper and then carved on the wood blocks in the usual way. The studio also succeeded in making a print of the poem *Long March* written by Chairman Mao himself on a manuscript. The scroll over fifteen feet wide and more than three feet in length, is thirty times the size of the original. The characters were written in a vigorous, free, running hand. The craftsman devoted a separate block for each one. In addition other blocks were carved to show the delicate brushwork so that a duplicate had to be printed on more than two hundred blocks for as many times. The successful reproduction of this type of calligraphy raises the art to a new stage.

By constantly making innovations and improving the art, during the past twenty years or so, the Jung Pao Chai Studio has reproduced more than one thousand different paintings, both classical and modern. All of them are well received not only in the country but also abroad.

In recent years painters in the traditional style have gone to live among the masses, learning from them, taking an active part in their daily life and participating in their struggle. Following Chairman Mao's directive, "**Make the past serve the present**", they use the traditional style in painting to represent revolutionary history as well as the new face of our country. Many fine works have come from them such as *Spring on the Great Wall*, *Yenan*, *Shaoshan* and *The Chingkang Mountains*. Working in close collaboration with these artists, the Jung Pao Chai Studio has made it a primary task to bring these new works, in which revolutionary content is integrated with consummate art, within the reach of the public through wood block reproduction.



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)



(10)

Ten wood blocks were used in reproducing the painting above (print 10). Blocks eight and nine, cut with the inscription in the artist's handwriting and a seal with his name, have been omitted.

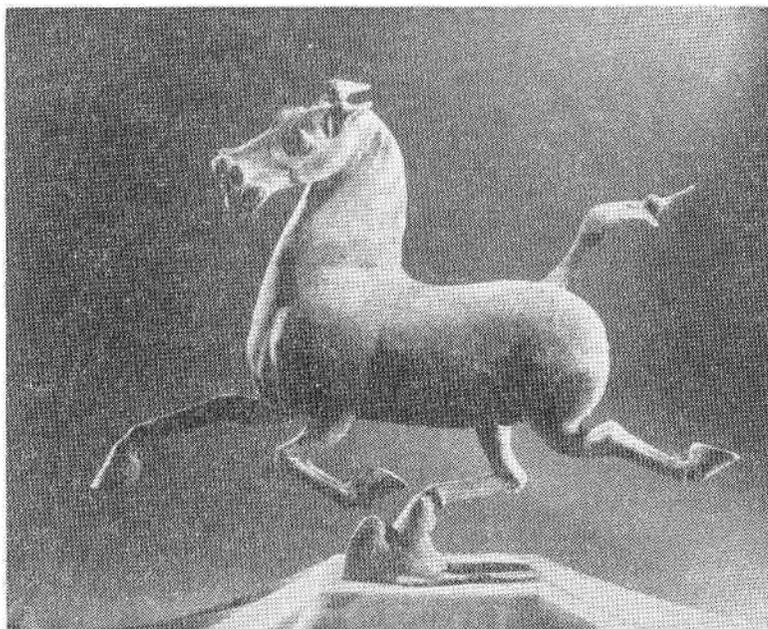
**Valuable Relics Unearthed in Kansu Province**

During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution a number of precious relics, some pre-historic, were excavated in Kansu Province, north-west China. They provide plentiful data for the study of Chinese history in fields such as politics, economics, culture, art and contacts with other countries in ancient times.

In September 1967, 340 bronzes of the early Western Chou dynasty period (approximately 11th century to 770 B.C.) were unearthed. They are well-preserved, simple but superb in form and bear legible inscriptions. Among these relics was a fine quality jade spade exquisitely carved in the form of a slave. It is a very rare specimen.

Seventeen bronzes of the Chin dynasty (221-207 B.C.) were discovered in 1967. Among them is a bronze weight (used with a steelyard) with incised inscriptions of the imperial edicts of the first emperor Chin and his successor. The inscriptions indicate clearly that during the Chin dynasty China was united and had a centralized government.

Among this collection there is a bronze lamp of a particularly novel and unusual type showing the high level of craftsmanship at that period. It has a revolving shaft. When turned it can show the light either through one opening or through three. When the lid is replaced, it forms the handle and the lamp can then be carried.



In 1969, an Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) tomb was found. Inside there were gold objects, bronzes, iron ware, jade and bone objects, lacquer ware and stone vessels, amounting to 220 items. These included 14 bronze chariots, 17 bronze warriors on horseback and 45 bronze men and women slaves. This Han tomb is an "underground museum". Among the objects found in it was a galloping horse sculptured in bronze — a masterpiece of ancient art. The horse is holding its head high, obviously neighing as it gallops. The boldly imaginative sculptor, to portray the horse at full gallop, has shown it with a flying swallow under one hind hoof while the other three are lifted in the air. The fine romantic touch of this sculpture illustrates the creative ability of the labouring people.

A number of pre-historic relics have also been unearthed. One of these, a vessel lid in the shape of a human face is typical of the late neolithic period, 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. Other items including painted pottery vases, bowls and jars unearthed in 1966 date back

4,000 or 5,000 years. All these objects are hard and fine in texture, baked at a fairly high temperature, with symmetrical patterns of lines and concentric circles mainly in black. They are regular in shape and brilliantly coloured. They reflect the skill of the potters and artists at that time.

### Two Albanian Feature Films on Show

On the occasion of the 27th anniversary of Albania's liberation, two Albanian feature films *Footprints* and *Brave Young Pioneers* were recently shown in Peking, Shanghai and other major Chinese cities.

*Footprints* is the story of Artan, an intellectual who, with the help and concern of his comrades and the Party, becomes a good doctor of the people. The zigzag course of Artan's development is shown by means of vivid flash-backs. The film depicts the progress of revolutionary intellectuals, and their revolutionization when educated by and shown the deep concern of the Albanian Party of Labour headed by Enver Hoxha.





*Brave Young Pioneers* describes a boy named Yilier who led a sheltered life in the family. Encouraged by his teacher and Young Pioneers, Yilier joins in a cross-country hike to climb the Young Pioneer Peak two thousand metres above sea level. He learns much from the experience and gradually becomes a resolute, brave boy. Through the portrayal of several Albanian Young Pioneers, the film shows the revolutionary spirit of the new Albanian generation who are dauntless and brave.

### Performances in Snow-Clad Mountains

In the snow-clad mountains and gullies of the Lisu Autonomous *Chou*, Yunnan Province, in the southwest border region of China, a literature and art propaganda team gives performances all the year round to the people of the national minorities who live there. Their selections, taken from revolutionary model Peking operas *The Red Lantern*, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* and *Shachiapang*, have won warm applause from their audiences.

This is an area of steep mountains and changeable climate: villages are scattered and travel difficult. Since it is impossible for the members of the team to carry heavy wooden stage properties and fragile painted scenery, they have made light, handy sets and folding scenery to ensure the scenes necessary for the performances.

The propaganda team consists of some twenty young people from local peasant families. Between performances, to enhance their political awareness of the need to continue revolution, they study Chairman Mao's directives on literature and art, which they incorporate in their work so as to serve the people better.

### New Documentary Film on Acupuncture

A colour documentary film, showing a PLA medical propaganda team treating deaf-mutes with acupuncture needles, was recently released in Peking and throughout the country.

The documentary film *Break into the Formidable Realm of Deaf-mute Under the Guidance of Mao Tsetung Thought* records the work of the medical propaganda team which treat the pupils at the deaf-mute school in Liaoyuan, Kirin Province.

Deaf-mutes were long considered incurable by bourgeois medical "authorities" and no cure was thought possible for them. The film shows that, though they could neither speak nor hear, these pupils gave the medical team a warm welcome. The soldiers of this team were determined to break into this "formidable realm" to save thousands of deaf-mute children. They visited patients' parents, studied the details of each case-history and made a thorough investigation.

They began by making repeated experiments with the acupuncture needles on themselves. The old regulations were that the insertion of a needle more than three to five *fen*\* deep is forbidden at the *ya*

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\*In acupuncture, the depth to which the needle is inserted varies according to patient. *Cun* and *fen* are measurements used to denote this. When the patient forms a ring by joining his middle finger to his thumb, the inside length between the two joints of the middle finger is one *cun*. One *cun* equals ten *fen*.

*men*\* point; going beyond a depth of one *cun* may cause a normal person to lose his ability to speak; an insertion of 1.5 *cun* may cause death. After experimenting on themselves they successfully refuted these old regulations and broke through the so-called "formidable realm". Out of 168 deaf-mute students, 150 of them can now hear and 149 can speak.

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\*A crucial acupuncture point for treating mutes. Situated in the back of the neck it was a point generally regarded as a "formidable realm".

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