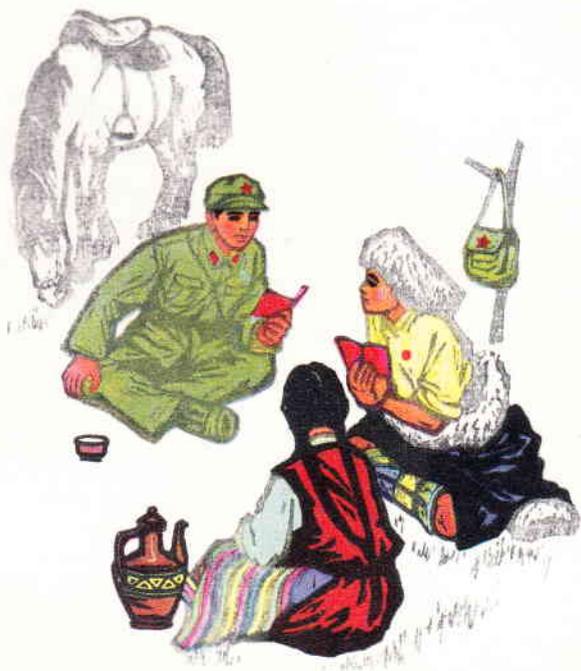


CHINESE LITERATURE



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The Stockman

EDITORS' NOTE: The following excerpt is taken from the novel *The Sun Shines Bright* published in 1964 and 1966 in three volumes. The novel graphically describes class struggle in Tungshanwu, a village on the outskirts of Peking, in 1957.

The plot centres around Hsiao, the Party secretary of the Tungshanwu Agricultural Producers' Co-operative, Ma Lao-szu, a poor-peasant member and other poor and lower-middle peasants who work strenuously to build up their co-operative and adhere to the socialist road of agricultural co-operation. Chih-yuch, who has succeeded in becoming vice-chairman of the co-op, is a hidden class enemy. The Chinese working people have overthrown the landlords and rich peasants, but Chih-yuch aids and abets these class enemies when they attempt to undermine the agricultural co-operatives. In 1957, about the time of the wheat harvesting, these ruffians take advantage of the bourgeois Rightists' attack on the Party in the cities and try to stir up trouble in the villages. In their efforts to sabotage the wheat harvesting, they force Lien-fu, Ma Lao-szu's son, to be their spokesman and demand payment of dividends on land shares. They also encourage a landlord to murder Hsiao's son, Little Pebble. When the harvesting goes on successfully in spite of these devils, they resort to robbery and try to seize the co-op's grain and livestock. Hsiao and Ma display courage and steadfastness in this struggle. They rely on the masses and are victorious. Chih-yuch and his gang who want to turn the wheels of history backwards meet with ignominious defeat.

Hao Jan, the author, who specializes in portraying Chinese village life, is well known to Chinese readers for his short stories about the new type of people and new life in people's China. *The Sun Shines Bright* is his first novel; a second will soon be in print.

Noon. A drowsy tranquillity reigned over Tungshanwu Village.

Hsiao Chang-chun, secretary of the Party branch, was the last to leave the co-op office where a hectic meeting had taken place. On his way home, he planned the next steps in the work. A few paces up the hillside brought him face to face with Ma Lao-szu, the stockman, formerly a poor peasant, now in his sixties. Although his clothes showed signs of hard wear they were quite clean. In his hand he clutched the stick he used to mix fodder. He was obviously angry but his expression changed to one of apology when he caught sight of Hsiao. He stared grimly at the young man. Ma's smouldering anger stemmed from what he had heard about the insolent conduct of his son Lien-fu. At the meeting of leading comrades, Lien-fu, who led one of the two production teams forming their co-op, had slandered both the agricultural co-op and their Party secretary. When the news reached the barn-yard, Ma hurriedly inspected the animals to see that everything was all right, then closed the door on them and rushed off to the co-op office.

"Hey there, uncle," Hsiao hailed him. "Where're you going?"

Ma, still looking apologetic, seemed unable to speak. A few seconds elapsed before he blurted out, "Lien-fu has been provoking you, Hsiao!"

Hsiao smiled pleasantly. "No!"

"I heard about it."

"It's all over now. There's nothing to it."

"I couldn't find anyone to keep an eye on the animals just now, otherwise..."

"Don't fret about this too much, uncle." But the old man's eyes were still riveted on Hsiao. "Go on home, uncle, it's hot out

here." His lips quivering, the old man shook his head. Hsiao continued, "Uncle, you'd better get back to the livestock." But the old man still shook his head, his lips trembling even more.

Hsiao was baffled. He took the old stockman by the arm. "Come, uncle, let's go back together. I haven't seen that new-born mule yet."

"Tell me, Hsiao, is it against the law to thrash someone?" The words seemed to have forced their way between the old man's tightly compressed lips.

"I'll say it is!" Hsiao nodded emphatically. "It's against the law. Have you forgotten the three rules of discipline and eight points for attention,* uncle?"

"I'm his dad, surely, I may give him a hiding. He's forgotten where he came from."

"May be so, but you mustn't use force. You can only criticize and try to help him."

The old man wiped his brow. "Let's go," he said at last.

"Good," Hsiao smiled. "Come on. We'll have a real chat. When I've some spare time I want to learn more about animal husbandry from you." The tension eased somewhat. Shoulder to shoulder, the old man and the younger one walked on together.

"Let's go this way, uncle, it's nearer."

"No. I want to find that brat Lien-fu."

Hsiao began to pull the old man his way but Ma would not budge. They were both taut.

"I understand how you feel, uncle," Hsiao admitted. "But you mustn't act in haste. Let's wait until we've all calmed down a bit, then the two of us will go to see him together. We'll get at the root of the trouble and have a heart-to-heart talk with Lien-fu..."

"Later! Later!" snapped the old man. "Right now, you come with me. I know, you Communists don't abuse people or slander them. I won't ask you to lift a finger. You won't have to say a word, I shan't even ask you to come into the room."

"What... what are you driving at?" Hsiao asked, puzzled.

*See page 51 for the three rules of discipline.

The old man's eyes blazed. "Why did he demand that the co-op distribute the harvest with dividends on the basis of land shares?*" How dared he say our co-operative is worse than individual farming? I'm going to give that good-for-nothing son of mine a proper tanning. You can stand outside and watch me. I'm going to teach him a lesson."

Hsiao was quite concerned. "But, uncle, haven't we just talked this over and agreed? It's not right to flog anyone...no...no...no, you mustn't..."

Hsiao put his arm around the old man's shoulder to hold him back. He felt the quiver that shook the old man's slight frame. It was just as if a dynamo were throbbing inside him. "Uncle, let me finish what I have to say first," Hsiao pleaded.

Ma glanced at Hsiao's face and loosened his grip. "All right, go ahead. Have your say. I'll listen."

"To tell you the truth," said Hsiao, "when it all started, my temper flared up too..."

"Good. You should have given him a sound whacking," Ma prompted.

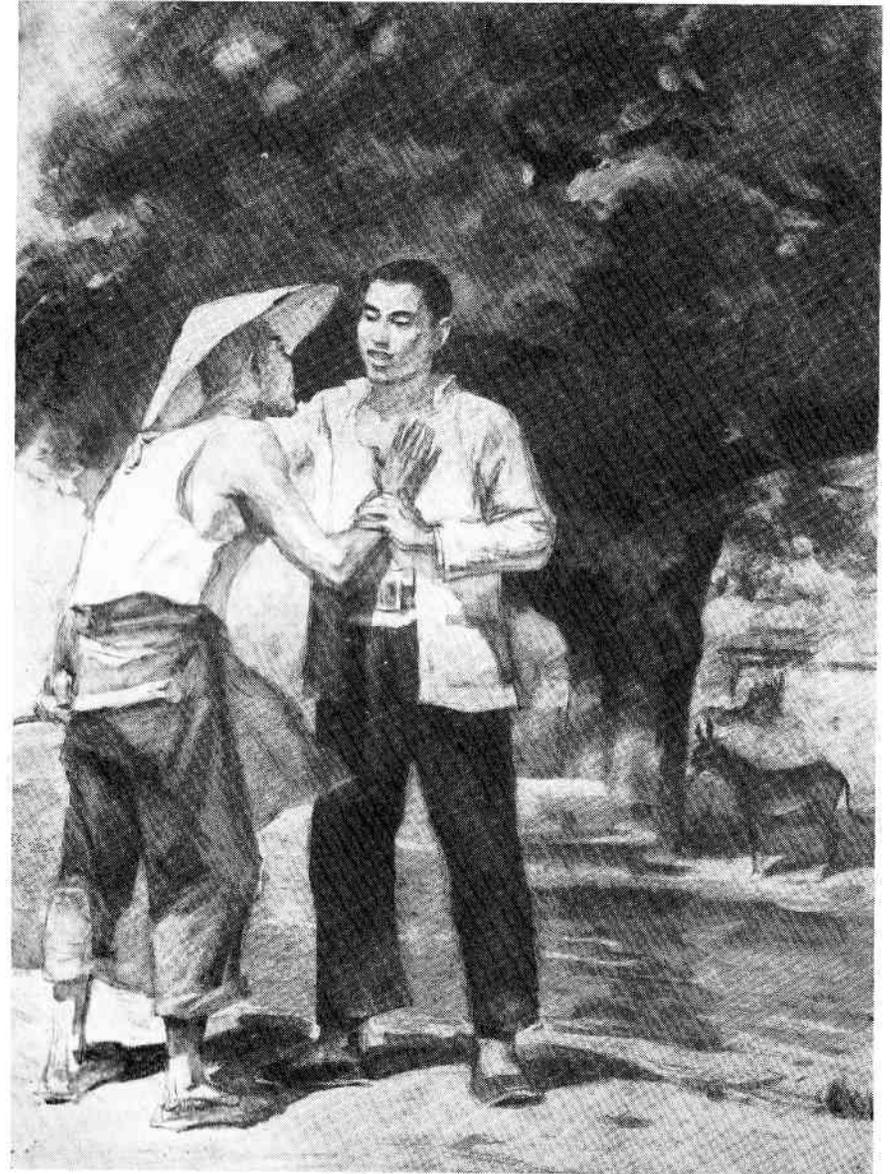
"But then I thought, we used to be like brothers. We've both been victims of the old society."

The old man shook his head. "Yes, but he's forgotten that."

Hsiao went on, "It's true. He led some of them in slandering our co-op and demanding dividends and harvest distribution according to land shares. But it's because he's been taken in by our class enemies. They used him as a tool to attack us. Since he's been fooled by them, I mustn't fall into their trap too. On my way back just now, I remembered also that although Lien-fu has sunk so low because he has certain faults, yet in a way I am responsible too..."

"You? What d'you mean? You're responsible too?"

*A dividend on land shares implied private ownership of land. Members of the co-op were entitled to receive dividends on the amount of land they pooled to form the co-op. This was a transitional form adopted in the early stage of agricultural co-operation, but by 1956, the higher stage of agricultural producers' co-operative with collective ownership by the peasants prevailed in most of China's countryside and dividends were no longer given for land shares.



"Yes, I'm responsible. When he started going around with those rotters, I knew about it. But I didn't do anything to pull him back. I didn't help him when I should have done."

"He's just a heap of filth, a pile of dung. He's beyond help now. You couldn't have pulled him back anyway."

"When I came back from the irrigation project, people told me that Lien-fu was one of those making trouble in the village and that he was going around as thick as thieves with a few particularly backward middle peasants. I should have gone to have it out with him right away. We should have had a frank talk. Instead, I put other business first and neglected him." Hsiao was swamped with emotion, so that it almost choked him.

But the old man had calmed down by then. "I'm afraid," he acknowledged, looking up at the younger man, "I've a share in the responsibility too. I noticed that he was changing and going to the dogs. All I did was to separate from him. I even stopped living with him. And all this did was to push him further away from me. It was like handing him over to those scoundrels..."

"That's why," said Hsiao, "starting from today we must do our best to help him without getting mad. It isn't a simple matter any more. But we mustn't come to blows."

Both men had calmed down. "Yes," Ma muttered regretfully. "I helped to bring him into the world but I didn't rear him well. He grew up with a stomach to be filled, a pair of hands to grasp things but I failed to give him the stiff backbone we poor people have. He's not the same true colours as us poor peasants..."

The last sentence struck a chord in Hsiao's mind. The old man had hit the nail on the head. This son of his, Ma Lien-fu, was always in trouble not because he was a muddle-headed fool, but because he had lost his class stand. He did things he shouldn't have because he'd accepted bourgeois ideas. The important thing was to help this son of a poor peasant to change his stand and join his own class again.

Warmed and bucked up by the Party secretary's words, the old stockman went to his son's house but only to give him a lecture.

Lien-fu was not at home. Ma squatted down by the door to wait for him. His thoughts wandered back into the past.

Thirty-three years ago, it was snowing on the eve of the lunar New Year. In the inner compound of Pigtail Ma, the landlord, in whose house Ma Lao-szu and his young wife were hired hands, there was laughter and carousing as the family gathered for New-Year's Eve dinner. In agony, Ma's wife served the last rich dish of the many courses she had cooked. Unable to bear her pangs much longer, she made her way home, holding onto the wall with one hand for support. Finally she reached their small hut beside the threshing floor in the outer courtyard. At first when Ma saw her face, drained of all colour, he was afraid. Then realizing the cause he was glad the hour had come. First he helped her onto the *kang* bed, then rushed out and brought back a midwife. While she rolled up the sleeping mat, replacing it with a thick layer of straw, the young husband set water to boil. He wanted to have things ready to welcome their first child into this world. Poor as he was, the birth of a baby was still a joyful event and he was pleased beyond words. It was just then that Pigtail Ma's steward sent by his master arrived at the small house. He stood outside, tapped on the window frame and shouted through the thin paper, "Lao-szu, haven't you any sense? What a time to have a baby on New-Year's Eve! Why, this'll scatter the wealth from our master's household. But there's nothing you can do about it. So get out now and find another lair where your brat can be born." Ma hurried out to beg for just a little time and followed the steward all the way back to the gate of the inner court. The steward slammed it in his face and shot the bolt with a clang.

The young couple had to leave their poor home and find some other shelter. It was still snowing. The woman was already far gone in labour. Where could they go? With the help of the midwife, Ma Lao-szu and his wife left the dark hut and went out of the landlord's yard which was decorated with coloured streamers and gay lanterns. Slowly they inched their way down the deserted street, not knowing where to turn. Snowflakes and wind made them bow their heads. There were no lights to help them as they stum-

bled along. It seemed there was no help on earth or in heaven. Finally they came to a ramshackled old temple, which they believed, housed ghosts and spirits. The entrance hall with dilapidated walls offered them but scant shelter yet it had taken them a long time to get that far. No sooner had they found a sheltered corner and sat down, breathing a sigh of relief than the monk in charge of the temple rushed out, carrying a lantern. He held it up and saw immediately that the woman was in labour. "Are you crazy?" he shrieked. "Don't you laymen know that you're inside Buddha's sacred temple grounds? How dare you come here like this! Have you no eyes? Can't see where you are? Get out! Get out before I go for the law." Ma begged for mercy, but the old monk closed his eyes, held his hands before his breast, palms together, and piously chanted a sutra to Buddha. Without another glance at the sorry-looking trio, he stalked back to his own quarters.

Again they must leave. But where could they go? At the very western end of the village there was an abandoned vegetable plot. Beside it was a mat shelter formerly used by gardeners when they guarded their melons during the summer nights. They staggered along. The pitch-black night was like an inverted cauldron overhead, smothering them underneath it. The wind howled; flying snowflakes blinded them. Braving the blizzard they finally reached an old grindstone in the gutter. The woman could go no farther. Removing his own tattered padded coat, Ma spread it around his wife to shelter her from the snow....

And there Ma Lao-szu's son, Lien-fu, was born out in the open on that stormy night.

In a lonely mat shelter that was falling apart the family managed to spend the next month. After those first weeks, the danger of the baby dying grew less and the couple felt a little easier. Ma Lao-szu swore to himself that, however hard he had to work, he would bring up his son and try to buy him a piece of land so that when the third generation came it would not suffer the fate of having no place to be born.

Ma Lao-szu worked like a slave to carry out his resolution. His back was bent with toil and before long he became consumptive.

After twenty years of unending labour, what did he have for himself? Nothing but tears and calloused hands. It was beyond his wildest dreams that his first grandson should be born here in this fine brick house with a tiled roof. It was the Communist Party that had made it possible. The Party shared out land to the poor; it gave them houses. It was the Communist Party which gave the children of the poor the right to be born.

Heart-breaking! Yes, it was really heart-breaking for Ma to think that his son Lien-fu should have forgotten all this and turned away from the Party. He had forgotten his class origin and where he was born.

After leaving Hsiao the old man's thoughts had rambled on and on as he went to his son's house. The young man was away, so he waited there. There was so much he wanted to say to his boy. A few minutes later Lien-fu returned. But, one look at his son's face with his weak, listless expression, and the kindly thoughts of the old man turned into fury. Fortunately Hsiao's words still rang in his ears, so once again biting his lip, Ma swallowed his anger.

When Lien-fu saw his father he looked up anxiously at the deep lines on the old man's face. He did not know what to say. His father's sudden appearance, the fact that he had squatted down by the door to wait for him was enough for Lien-fu to guess why his father was there.

There used to be a deep bond between father and son. They had shared all difficulties in the old society, each living for the sake of the other. Together they had worked with equal devotion in the mutual-aid team, sharing each other's thoughts during those heart-warming days of early struggle. When the first agricultural co-ops were formed, they began to differ and sometimes quarrelled. The previous year, when a drought struck the district they became estranged. Lien-fu wanted to leave the village and seek a better living in the big city. In this he set a very bad example for other villagers. This was the last straw and was the cause of the final split between father and son. They set up separate households. For the past six months, they had seldom sat down together for a meal or made any

attempt to settle their differences. They never opened their hearts to each other, but became more or less like strangers.

Lien-fu was bitter too. "Suppose I do make a few mistakes," he thought, "you're my father. Don't you have any fatherly feeling for your own son? Why do you think that your own son is always wrong and other people are always right?"

"Lien-fu," Ma finally said, "I haven't come to quarrel with you. Can't we have a real heart-to-heart talk?"

Lien-fu frowned.

"Don't look annoyed," said his father. "I won't take long. I've come to tell you that I only expect one thing of you. I don't want you to forget your roots, your past and your class origin. Don't forget that the landlord wouldn't even give us a roof over our heads when you were born. Don't forget, when you were nearly dying of smallpox, how I roamed the streets and had a hard time finding someone who would lend me a little money. Don't forget that you had to herd the landlord's pigs when you were only seven and that was how you broke your leg but still had to hobble about as best you could. Especially, don't forget how you were press-ganged into the Kuomintang army, or how you were rescued from that pit of hell. Don't forget how the Communist Party gave me free treatment and cured my tuberculosis, dragging me back from the jaws of death. Don't forget the Communist Party gave you the house you're living in and land to till. Don't forget that because the Communist Party leads us we can lift up our heads and rule our own lives — that we have our own co-op which provides us with a decent living, as good as an unbreakable rice bowl. In short, without the Communist Party, you'd have become cannon fodder long ago, a wandering spirit far from home and your father's old bones would have rotted by the roadside. . . . Oh, my son. . . ."

It all poured out in one breath, all the bitterness they'd suffered in the past and the happiness they'd found in the new society. As he talked the words flowed more easily and his voice became stronger. Tears rolled down his cheeks, betraying the heaviness of his heart.

Lien-fu listened in silence. He too was very upset, his mind full of conflicting thoughts.

The setting sun shone on the quiet village streets and the tiled roof top; the breeze did not stir a leaf or ripple the luxuriant wheat in the fields outside the village.

Noticing the lengthening shadows, the old man went on, "Lien-fu, you should do some thinking. Who were those people who made trouble at the meeting today? Do they want to take the same road as poor peasants like us? Do they think like us? We're marching along a bright socialist road, but they want to linger a while. They long for the old days to return. Never, never forget you're the son of a poor peasant...."

At last Ma had unburdened his heart to his son. Now he had done what the Party secretary had suggested, he was content to go back to the barn-yard, and get on with his work. He'd done what he could and he left with high hopes for his son.

One afternoon Hsiao went to the barn-yard.

The gate of neatly-tied sorghum stalks was wide open. The branches of two young trees beside it formed a green archway. Inside, he could hear the animals champing their fodder. The long barn was built along the northern wall, with its neatly plastered earthen feed trough facing the sun. Mules, horses, asses and cows were feeding together side by side. The barn and yard were both scrupulously clean. There were no heaps of refuse or dung anywhere to be seen.

A young calf stopped sucking the brindled cow and raised its head when it heard footsteps, then went over to nuzzle Hsiao's feet with its wet black nose. A pink tongue slobbered over Hsiao's hand. When the Party secretary stroked it, the calf rubbed against his legs like a faithful dog. Behind it, a young mule, rather timid at first, kept at a distance to watch what was going on. But as if unable to resist the temptation to show off, the foal tossed its head and began to prance around the visitor.

As Hsiao stretched out his hand towards them he smiled with pleasure at their bright eyes and glossy coats, remembering how the old stockman had toiled and sweated to care for each animal. Many events of the past flashed through his mind's eye.

In 1953 something unprecedented occurred in Tungshanwu. When the old Party secretary Han Pai-chung returned from a meeting in the county town, he declared that it had been decided to start an agricultural producers' co-operative south of the gully. An ox and a cow, by no means young, and three very lean asses collected from the small, low sheds of their individual owners were tethered together to be used collectively.

Ma Lao-szu had just recovered from tuberculosis. Still having to lean on a stick, he walked slowly across the gully to the small house where Secretary Han lived. Ma looked over the animals tethered in the yard, circling them more than once before he went in to see Han. Before long, however, he was out inspecting the animals again. "Let me be responsible for the livestock, Han," he finally proposed.

Han eyed him from head to toe. "You can't manage them. A stockman can't leave the place day or night. It'll be too much for you."

"I don't mind guarding them day and night. I'm not like you. I've no family to tie me down," Ma insisted.

"With that T.B.-ravaged body of yours, you can't possibly manage them."

"Let me try for as long as I can. When I'm dead and gone, you can find someone else. If I'm allowed to care for the animals just a couple of days, at least I'll have done something for socialism. I'll have done a little for the collective." Ma was so sincere in his desire to serve, so firm in refusing to take "No" for an answer that at last Han gave his grudging consent.

The new co-op was very poor in those days; it could not afford to build a stock barn. The animals were tethered to stakes out in the open. When the summer rains came and the animals suffered, without a word to anyone, Ma led them into his own small cottage. To make enough space he had to dismantle his big earthen *kang* bed. But there was still no room for him to put up even a small bed. He slept on some hay he piled up beside the manger. When the co-op's supply of fodder was exhausted, after carefully locking his door, he went out and cut grass in the ditches. He filled a large basket time and again and emptied it into the trough. This went on until

the autumn harvest when the co-op had fresh straw from the crops for the barn. Ma saved the co-op from spending a cent on fodder.

By the time the co-op entered the new stage of collective ownership, he had increased the livestock by three calves, two horses bought on the market, and four foals bred from them. When Ma led out his charges from the new barn, there was quite a string of them.

For five long years, Ma tended the animals as carefully as on the day when he first took on the job. He never spent a single night away from the barn.

Hsiao often told himself: We've so many devoted poor and lower-middle peasants who have given everything they have to build up the co-op. There's no problem now we can't overcome. No! And there's no goal out of our reach.

Ma now lived in a small mud-walled cottage near the stable. Steam was puffing through the open doorway and curling up to the roof before disappearing into the air. As Hsiao went into the cottage, there was the old man, bending over the stove, lifting the lid off a big cooking pot.

"So you're going to eat soon, uncle," Hsiao said by way of greeting.

Ma turned round to see who his visitor was. When he saw it was the Party secretary, he let the lid drop back on the pot with a plop. He gave Hsiao a welcoming smile.

Hsiao walked into the inner room but he did not notice the old man's expression which was odd, almost furtive, as if he were hiding something. Since it was too early in the afternoon for an evening meal, Hsiao asked, "Why are you still having only two meals a day now that it's summer?"

"Two meals make life simpler. I'm getting on in years. I don't get as hungry as you young people."

"Go ahead with your meal. We can chat as you eat." Hsiao suggested. "What are you having today?"

"The usual coarse grain, of course," Ma answered casually. "What else is there before the wheat's harvested."

Suddenly remembering something important, Ma continued, "Old Han was here just now. He told me you had another intimate talk with Lien-fu and my son admitted his mistakes. Now, that's fine!" His old face wrinkled in a happy smile. It was happiness that came straight from the heart of an honest father.

Hsiao understood the old man and said reassuringly, "Yes. Lien-fu criticized himself before the Party branch. Don't worry, uncle, we'll help him to correct his ideas as quickly as possible. Then he'll be a good son of the poor peasants again. In a few days he'll be going off to work on the irrigation project."

"Good! If only he changes and goes steadily along the socialist road without wavering or turning back, I'll die content," said Ma.

"Remember what you told me yesterday by the river?" Hsiao asked. "You said that in this wonderful society of ours people can and do change. Lien-fu has solid roots. Straightening him out should be easier than some others."

Ma edged closer to Hsiao and lowered his voice: "My dear Hsiao, I can't keep this to myself any longer. My son Lien-fu turned bad all because Ma Chih-yueh kept at him. I hate to butt in between you leading comrades, but honestly, you must be careful of our co-op's vice-chairman. You see, I watched him grow up. He said and did everything, except the most tricky things, which I couldn't always fathom, right under my nose. I tell you, he doesn't act like a Communist. He's poisonous. He's so cunning, I wonder if there isn't a wheel turning in his head. He often smiles at you, but there's a knife behind the smile."

Hsiao listened attentively, nodding now and then, knowing the old man was giving him a warning.

Lowering his voice to a whisper, Ma continued: "I've kept this to myself for quite some time. I didn't want to say anything. But think about this man. He not only married the landlord's daughter, but even today, he's never severed connections with Pigtail Ma and rich peasant Ma Tsai. He goes around with them both openly and secretly. Is this right for a Communist? How does he treat you? He's not open and frank with you, is he? He may talk smoothly enough to you, but underneath, he's setting up hurdles for you to

trip over. I hear at that meeting when some tried to make trouble, he just sat there without a word."

"Uncle, what you've just said is true," Hsiao admitted sincerely. "I'll keep it in mind. The struggle here at Tungshanwu is far from simple. Now the reactionaries' scheme to distribute grain with dividends based on land shares has been thwarted, who knows what other tricks they'll be up to. We must keep on our toes and be alert."

"That's true, that's true," the old man agreed.

The Party secretary mulled over the old man's words. He was impressed by the old poor peasant's insight and the way he went straight to the root of the problem. His advice was an important lesson for the younger man. As they talked, Hsiao had gone right into the inner room where a small *kang* bed was covered with an old faded grey blanket. The quilts were rolled up tidily at one end. The only other furniture in the room was a table with three legs. It was propped up with a stack of unbaked bricks which served as a fourth leg. There was an oil lamp on the table beside a few books on cattle breeding. A shabby spectacle case lay on top of them. Bright red paper with inscriptions of Spring Festival couplets and several posters advertising new films hung on the walls beside some halters and ropes. Although this was the room of a lone old man, Hsiao always felt it reflected the unusual vitality of its owner.

Hsiao rolled himself a cigarette and asked about the livestock, a subject which Ma could never resist. He talked, as always, about the fine shape his animals were in. At last Hsiao broached the real subject which had brought him there.

"We're having a meeting of the poor and lower-middle peasants' representatives tonight," he said. "It's to discuss a grain subsidy for households which are short. After land reform, we still farmed individually for several years, that's why our conditions vary quite a bit. Then because of the very poor harvest last year our members didn't receive much grain. Some families may still have enough, others are having a hard time to make do. The township government has sent us some relief grain to help out those in difficulties. We'll soon be harvesting the wheat, but in the mean time it's not easy

for some to get by. We must distribute this grain to needy families as quickly as possible. Will you come to the meeting tonight?"

"Just drop in on your way back and tell me what decisions are made. I don't mind one way or another. I can't think of any particularly good way of distributing the grain. You know how it is. After dark, the animals are back from work. I can't leave them."

"Yes, but you're one of the representatives. You must come to the meeting. What's more, you can give us good advice. I'll get my father to come in and relieve you at the barn tonight."

Hsiao's cigarette smoke started the old man coughing. Hsiao quickly stubbed it out. "By my reckoning we'll finish threshing the first of our wheat by the fifteenth or so of the next month. It'll be distributed immediately. Now, how much grain will you need till we can supply you with new wheat?"

Ma waved his hand. "I'm not short of grain. No. Not at all."

"You may fool others," said Hsiao smiling. "You can't fool me, uncle."

"If I say I'm not short, then I'm not. Don't count me in on this extra grain. I lan was here not long ago talking about the same thing. I shooed him off. When was I ever short of grain? Really!" The old man sounded indignant.

Hsiao had a pretty good idea of Ma's situation for he was always the one who carried Ma's sacks of grain home for him or took him his share of cash when the co-op distributed it. Ma had no family to support and worked well, so the grain and cash he received from the co-op was more than enough for himself. But his grain had a way of disappearing. When a cow was with calf, a mare foaling or one of the animals was off its feed, he gave them some grain from his own pot. In this way, little by little, his grain supply leaked away, the total amounted to more than what an able-bodied person consumed. Though Ma's grain would have been ample for himself, it was not always enough to supply this outlet.

"Now uncle," Hsiao pursued the subject. "If you're short of grain, admit it. Why suffer? You should be honest about it."

"My dear Hsiao," Ma said solemnly. "People like us don't fuss because they're a few measures of grain short. No, never! True,

the harvest was poor last year, our village harvested less grain than others. But no one's to blame for this except ourselves. You can't deny that. In the first place, I still have enough to eat. Even if I'm a little short of grain, I'll manage. The co-op's livestock will be properly fed too. After all, we're not working for others, are we? We're running the co-op for our own benefit."

"How right you are," Hsiao admitted. "Nevertheless, the Party organization can't stand by and let you go short."

Ma eyed the Party secretary, obviously thinking about something. He blinked and then suddenly grinned. Waving his toil-worn hands at Hsiao, he said glibly, "All right. I'll tell you the truth then. I've just about enough grain to last another month. No more."

"Really?" Hsiao was not quite convinced.

"Of course." The old man seemed earnest enough. "You know I live frugally. I've been very careful with my grain."

This was likely the truth. Hsiao knew that Ma was usually very frugal. Perhaps he had scrimped so much he still had a good supply left. Hsiao felt reassured. "If you really can manage, that'll be fine. Let's wait and see what they decide at the meeting."

"I won't take any extra grain, whatever is decided." Ma was emphatic.

Before Hsiao could reply the raucous braying of an ass diverted Ma's attention. "Come on out, Hsiao. Come and see our new calf."

The young calf romped over to them. Though shy, the little mule kicked up its heels and dashed to Ma's side too. Ma was so closely hemmed in by the two young animals, he could scarcely move as he fondled the rough young mule and rubbed the little calf's neck. Pushing them aside he took Hsiao to the manger where all the animals stretched their necks towards him, each welcoming him in its own way.

Hsiao smiled and nodded to everything the old man said. It was the same every time he went. The old man would take him to the manger, pointing out the good points of this one and that one and saying how well they worked, as if each and every one of these dumb creatures was a child of his and he was boasting of how well it danced and sang.

Ma finally shooed the calf and young mule back into the stable. Shaking his hands to free them of dust, he looked up at the sun.

"It's hot out here, uncle," Hsiao suggested. "Go back and have your meal."

"Fine," replied Ma. "You're a busy chap yourself. Run along now and attend to your own business." Hsiao noticed that the old man was not eager to invite him into the house again. Perhaps he was tired and needed a meal. "You'll come to the meeting then tonight, uncle. I'll send father down to look after the barn for you. We'll not only decide about the grain subsidy, we must discuss the harvesting and distribution of the wheat too. If there's only a few of us there we can't cover all the important points. We need your advice."

"I haven't much to give," said Ma, smiling. "But I'll come to the meeting and listen in. I'll help see that nothing's left out of your plans."

"I've made myself clear, haven't I, Hsiao?" Ma shouted before the secretary went out of the gateway. "I'm not short of grain. Not a bit. Never mind how much extra grain you're giving others, don't count me in on it at all. Leave me out, eh?"

The sun was slowly moving westward. Hsiao thought he might go home for his hoe. He could still put in a bit of time hoeing before dark. As he walked up the slope, it occurred to him that he had forgotten to tell Ma where the meeting would be held. He did not want the old man to walk around the village in the dark looking for them. He'd better go back right now and tell him.

In the barn-yard, the animals had finished their fodder. The mules and horses stood resting. The cows and oxen chewed the cud. The asses had settled down by the manger; one of them twisting its neck to nibble at an itch. Outside, on the soft loose soil under the shady trees, the calf and little mule were napping. It was a tranquil scene.

The cottage door was closed. Hsiao pushed it open and walked straight in. Seated on a little stool before the stove, Ma was eating from a large bowl. Hsiao's unexpected return startled the old man. Then, quick as lightning, he slipped the bowl under the flap of his jacket. "Why are you back again?" he asked, a little flustered.

"I forgot to tell you where the meeting is. It's in the big temple," said Hsiao, wondering what the old man was trying to hide. Hsiao was puzzled. In all the years they'd known each other, Ma had never kept anything from him. The more the secretary thought about it, the more peculiar the whole thing seemed until at last the reason for the old man's furtive expression dawned on him. In one stride he was standing beside the old man. He lifted the flap of Ma's jacket. The bowl had some wild herbs in it, boiled in water, thickened with a little corn flour.

Hsiao was heartsick. "Why, uncle..."

Ma realized that he had been found out. He was upset and annoyed. Then, an idea struck him. As if there were nothing unusual about his meal, he took up his bowl and began eating again smacking his lips. Eating heartily, he said with a chuckle, "Don't worry about me, Hsiao. You see, I'm fond of a dish of fresh greens now and then."

Hsiao was moved. He took the bowl away and set it down, looked at its contents and then glanced at Ma's wrinkled old face. Taking the old man's hands in his own, he shook his head slowly. "No, uncle. I feel I've let you down. I did such a poor job last year for our co-op and farming... I..." Hsiao spoke with some difficulty.

"It wasn't your fault," Ma cut in, "that we made a mess of our farming last year. Nor is it our co-op's fault. It was due to the drought and also because Vice-chairman Chih-yueh, our former Party secretary, neglected farming altogether in an attempt to make money by speculation. It was he who ruined us."

"Drought struck our whole county, but no other co-ops had such poor crops. The others managed to salvage a little from their fields. If we'd thought clearly and prevented Chih-yueh from doing what he did, if I had accepted responsibility sooner, we could have stopped him from bringing us to this. Our people wouldn't have suffered and you... you wouldn't be eating this stuff. It is my fault..."

"But we've survived," said Ma cheerfully.

Hsiao sighed. "Uncle, I can't bear to see you eating such food..."

"My dear Hsiao, this isn't such poor food. In the old society, we'd have thought ourselves pretty lucky to have a bowl of wild

greens cooked with corn flour. Maybe it's considered poor fare these days, but it'll only be for a short while. Come on, now. Don't go on talking like this and apologizing for 'your fault', or you'll make me feel like an outsider. I still remember what you told us last autumn: 'We have the Party, the agricultural co-op and over eight hundred pairs of willing hands. No difficulties can stop us. We'll change Tungshanwu!' You also said, 'We must all have a strong backbone, keep a stiff upper lip and work hard for one, two, or maybe more years. But one day we Tungshanwu villagers will make it.' Your words showed me the future. I cheered up when I saw the picture you painted. I couldn't put what I felt into words, but you did it for me. I believed everything you said and I've never forgotten it. All I'm doing now is what you told us to do. I'm keeping a stiff upper lip. Listen, if people like me don't follow your lead, who will?"

The old man's kindly expression and what he said so impressed Hsiao that he could only nod.

"Tell the others, Hsiao, that Ma Lao-szu's not short of grain," Ma continued. "Whatever I gather is good to eat and it's enough to keep me going so that I can work for socialism."

The two men, one old the other young, continued chatting. In the late afternoon sun the cattle went on eating contentedly.

II

At the busiest time of wheat harvesting, the big mule took sick. Ma was frantic.

Over the stall, a small oil lamp swayed crazily, buffeted by the wind and rain which tore its yellow glow into fragments of light. Ma stood under it, beside the mule's head, while he rubbed its neck gently. Water, washed down from the eaves, dropped like broken strings of pearls on to the old man's shoulder jutting out of the shed and scattered in the swirling water at his feet.

Through the pouring rain, Hsiao hurried to the barn-yard, jumping across the puddles in his way. He carried a shovel and some extra oil for the lamp. As he noticed the sick animal's dull eyes he also

saw the worry written all over the old stockman's face. "It's chilly, uncle. Don't stay out here too long," he urged.

"I'm not cold," said Ma, turning to look at Hsiao. "I can't leave it."

Hsiao tried to shove him gently aside. "Go in the house and warm up a bit. Let me take over. Eh?"

The old man did not budge. Instead he answered back, "You've been soaked in the rain long enough yourself. You probably haven't had a breather. Go and have a rest yourself. Tomorrow, as soon as the weather clears you'll have your hands full again."

Hsiao threw down his shovel and put the bottle of oil in the manger. He took off his raincoat and wrapped it around Ma's shoulders, but the old man quickly shook it off. Pushing it back into Hsiao's hands, he said, "Hey, put it on yourself. If the wind gets at you when you're wet you'll catch cold. I'm wet anyway. But I'll go and change into dry clothes later."

"You're wet and so am I. Put it on. Waterproof or not, it'll help to keep off the chill," Hsiao insisted.

Ma left the raincoat on. He shook his head, sighing bitterly. "What a time. Oh! What a time for the mule to be ill. It's all my fault."

"Even people are ill sometimes; animals too. However well you take care of them, you can't guarantee they won't be ill," Hsiao said to comfort the old man.

Ma waved his hand. "Don't try to shift the responsibility off my shoulders, Hsiao. I don't think you should. When an animal's ill at a time like this it's a sign of neglect on my part. As soon as the weather clears, there's loads of work to be done. Wheat has to be hauled, fields ploughed and fertilizer spread. You'll be needing all the draught animals. Since we don't have tractors yet, we have to use animals. They're guns too in our battle for more and better crops. If something goes wrong with our weapons, who's to blame but me? I'm the man in charge. It's up to me to find a way to cure this mule quickly."

Hsiao realized at once that a few comforting words could not ease the mind of such a conscientious old peasant, so he said no more.

Glancing at the ailing animal again, he began to worry too. The mule was one of the best draught animals the co-op had. It was excellent hitched either to a cart or a plough or when turning the mill. And this was the time they needed it most. The mule sick in the barn for three days meant one cart out of action. . . .

Ma was thinking along the same lines: "If the mule had been well and hitched to that cart, how much more wheat could have been hauled."

"Uncle, did they bring you the medicine?" Hsiao asked.

"Yes, they did. Good thing you're here, you can give me a hand."

Hsiao wasn't clear what the old man wanted him to do, but before he could ask, Ma had left the barn and darted through the rain to his own cottage.

A light inside showed through the white paper window-panes. Behind them Hsiao could see the stockman's huge shadow bob up and down. Also through the open door he could see puffs of white smoke and then flames spurting from the stove, and hear the kindling crackling. . . .

Hsiao inspected other stalls, turning his flashlight on the animals there on this night of summer storm. They were very quiet, either sleeping or still chewing the cud. He turned the flashlight up to the roof. There was no sign of a leak anywhere. At one end of the barn, a piece of matting had been hung to prevent the rain being blown in if the wind turned to that quarter. It was the same piece which Ma used to hang over one of his windows to keep out the hot summer sun. The flashlight also lit up a new window on the north wall. The edges had been neatly plastered so that it looked just like a window which had been made when the barn was built. Actually, the old stockman had made this window himself recently to let in more breeze in summer. As Hsiao looked around the barn, an important idea suddenly popped into his mind. The old stockman really needed an able assistant and right away too. It had to be someone clever, reliable and efficient who would learn from Ma all there was to know about caring for the animals and carry on with the same skill and all the knowledge he had accumulated from years of experience. The most important thing was that an assistant

would be able to relieve the old man of the heaviest work and so lighten his load.

Holding the raincoat over a big bowl, Ma returned. "Come on, Hsiao, let's string the mule up and get this medicine into it."

Hsiao sniffed at the medicine cautiously. "Wait, uncle, you can't give it this medicine now. Isn't this the kind which must only be given together with exercise? After taking the medicine, the animal must be walked around for some time for it to be effective."

Ma hung the raincoat over the end of the manger. "I know. I know. If the animal's not properly exercised the medicine may do more harm than good."

"That's just it. The rain's still pouring. How can you take it outside and walk it around?"

"It may rain for days, do we just wait? The mule'll get worse. Come on, help me and we'll give it the medicine right now. I'll walk it around as soon as the rain let up a little. We can't sit here doing nothing."

The old stockman had a point there, Hsiao agreed. If the rain kept on and they did nothing, most likely the mule would become worse. To delay would make the cure much more difficult. Hsiao hurriedly rolled up his sleeves, rubbed his hands, a little numb from the cold, and untied the mule. Springing on to the stone water trough, he threw the halter up and looped it over a rafter. As he tightened the rope, the mule's head was raised and held up. Hsiao jumped down and said, "Give me that bowl, I'll pour the medicine in."

"You aren't as used to this as I am. Just hold on to its head and don't let it move," Ma insisted. "That's all you have to do."

Hsiao did this with one hand, and with the other held the flashlight so that Ma could see what he was doing.

The old man was very methodical. Holding the bowl of medicine, with his other hand he gently stroked the mule's neck and nose. Suddenly, with two fingers he closed its nostrils. Unable to breathe, the mule opened its mouth, which gave Ma the opportunity to pour some medicine into its upturned mouth. The mule gulped and swallowed. After doing this three times, the bowl was empty and not a single drop had been wasted.

Hsiao untied the halter to release the mule, smiling like a child who had just seen someone do a new trick. "Uncle, that was really something. I thought we had to pry its mouth open with a stick." Ma just grinned as he rubbed his hands together to warm them.

"When harvesting's over and I'm not needed any longer to help keep watch over the threshing floor, may I move in here with you, uncle?" Hsiao asked.

"Why? What d'you want to do that for?" Ma asked as he began to massage the mule's belly.

"To keep you company."

"Company? No. That's not it. You probably want to look after the livestock for me, eh?"

"You're overworked."

"Even if all you leading comrades moved in here, d'you think I'd go to bed and sleep with an easy mind? Shut up! Stop worrying about me. You've enough to keep you busy anyway. You're always fussing about me. It makes me uneasy. If only I can keep all these animals in good shape, I don't mind tiring myself out a bit. It's nothing."

"At least we should find some young, able-bodied man to give you a hand."

"That'd be good. But mind you choose the right one."

Ma picked up a bunch of dry sticks and corncobs from the pile beside his stove. Carefully, he built them up into a pyramid in the centre of the room and put a match to it. Small curls of smoke spiraled up as the sticks caught fire. Tongues of flame began to flare up, dancing merrily until they turned the pyramid into a little red tree.

Ma noticed that Hsiao's eyelids were drooping with fatigue. The Party secretary badly needed some rest. "Take off that wet shirt, Hsiao, and your shoes too. Dry them by the fire. Don't go anywhere else tonight; stay here with me. Tomorrow there'll be mountains of work waiting for you. Sit down there and toast yourself. I shan't let you go, so don't even think of it."

Hsiao managed to pull off his soggy canvas shoes with much effort. The soles of his feet were sodden and his legs to the knee white from being so wet and cold. All his joints ached. By the time he had

taken off his shirt and wrung it out, he noticed that Ma had disappeared. "Uncle," he called out through the window. "Come and warm up, too."

Ma was back in the barn, putting the raincoat over the back of the sick mule. "I'll be in soon," he shouted back. "Dry yourself first."

Hsiao kept the fire burning till his shoes were dry. Having added another handful of wood to it, he went across to the barn again, to see how the mule was reacting and to send Ma back to dry off by the fire. The hanging lamp had been turned very low. "I say, uncle, does that lamp need more oil?"

No answer came from the mule's stall.

"Uncle, come and toast yourself by the fire. I'll do whatever has to be done here." Still no reply.

Hsiao turned up the lampwick. He saw that the sick mule had gone and so had the old stockman. He turned and shouted across the yard: "Uncle, uncle!"

The rain which had let up a little a few minutes before was pelting again.

Hsiao picked up his shovel, took his flashlight from the old man's house and ran out without bothering to put on his shirt, which by then was quite dry. The cold rain streamed onto his broad shoulders, down his back and trouser-legs and into his shoes again. He went out through the gate shouting to the old man, switching on his flashlight to search for him all around outside the yard. But in vain. Hsiao did this for some time until he saw the futility of it. How could he hope to find him by himself? He'd better get Han, he thought, and the two of them would search together. As he turned back and went in the direction of Han's house, Hsiao passed by the mill-shed, where he heard, although indistinctly, a tapping sound from somewhere close by. But when he stopped to listen, it was lost in the gurgling of water flowing along the ditch and the rain pouring from the eaves. There was no other sound. Yes! There it was again. Hsiao listened intently. It might be made by an animal. "Maybe Ma's bringing the mule back," he said to himself. "The rain's too much for both of them."

Hsiao still went on, hoping to meet them. Then the sound seemed to be behind him. Where were they? He went back and circled the mill-shed so that his flashlight shone through the door of the building. There they were in a nice dry place!

The old stockman, his hands behind his back holding the mule's halter, trudged slowly round and round, giving the sick animal the necessary exercise.

Hsiao stood rooted to the spot, inspired and warmed by what he saw.

III

Wheat harvesting was nearly over. The work had been strenuous but the peasants' pleasure at the sight of the rich crops reaped with their sweat knew no bounds. Of course, there were a few in Tung-shanwu Village who were losing their sleep, their dreams disturbed by hate and anguish. Chih-yueh, Pigtail Ma, the rich peasant Ma Tsai and their lot waited feverishly for the arrival of the so-called "big airing of views"* which they hoped would undermine the Chinese Communist Party. But events were not proceeding as they had hoped. Instead, they seemed to be going the other way. They decided to make a desperate bid....

Han's wife, Erh-chu, who had taken on herself the task of relaying information about the activities in the enemy camp, brought some news to the barn-yard: Pigtail Ma and Chih-yueh had stirred up a gang of scoundrels to try and seize the newly harvested wheat.

Angry and tired, Ma, the old stockman, fretted. He could neither go to help guard the wheat on the threshing floor, nor rush to the granary to help protect it there. Not for a single moment could he leave the barn. This was his battle position. Loudly cursing those "black-hearted wretches", Ma stamped into his small cottage. He stamped out again to pace the yard. Then he went to the gate and stood there looking down the street.

*In the summer of 1957, taking advantage of the Chinese Communist Party's rectification movement, the bourgeois Rightists stirred up trouble in an attempt to oppose Party leadership and the socialist system. The Party led the masses in an anti-Rightist struggle and defeated these trouble-makers.

Not a soul was in sight. In the distance he could hear a hubbub and indistinct sounds of shouting. There was a gust of wind. Dust swirled on the empty square. The noises gradually died down as the wind dropped. It was too quiet then.

The stockman tried to console himself: There's no need for me to get flustered. Nothing'll happen. There's nothing to worry about. The Communist Party's leading us; those devils won't be able to make any trouble. That's for certain. He told himself: You just see that the livestock's properly fed and cared for. In another day or two we'll be hitching up the carts and sending the state's quota of grain to town. We'll need the animals to plough up the wheat stubble before seeding the late corn.

Now that he was no longer so restless, he went back to the manger and had just begun mixing some fresh fodder when he was startled by the sound of hurried footsteps. Someone was coming to the barn. It was his son, Lien-fu. When the villagers working on the irrigation project learned that the co-op's new wheat was threshed, they decided to send Lien-fu back for some wheat flour which would be a pleasant change from their daily meal of corn bread. Quite by accident Lien-fu bumped right into Vice-chairman Chih-yueh the moment he returned. Chih-yueh grabbed him and began enticing him to head the gang that was going to seize the co-op's wheat. Lien-fu jerked himself free and ran off for all he was worth. Chih-yueh had a strangle-hold on Lien-fu for the young man, in a moment of weakness, had once embezzled some of the co-op's funds with the tacit approval of Chih-yueh, who later used this knowledge to blackmail him. Too cowardly to make a clean breast of this to the Party branch, Lien-fu lived in constant dread of Chih-yueh exposing him and dared not oppose the vice-chairman.

Lien-fu left his own house through the back door and made straight for the barn-yard. The best thing he could do was go to his father. Nobody would be there now, so he could hide out, learn what was going on and perhaps even manage to get a bite of something to eat.

Puffing and panting, he rushed into the barn-yard. The sight of his old father aroused a feeling of deep affection in him. "Pa," he cried, with a lump in his throat.

Ma was bewildered. "Why are you back?" he demanded, his eyes sternly questioning his son.

Lien-fu didn't stop but answered with feigned nonchalance, "Yes, yes, I'm back...."

The stockman dropped the mixing stick. In two strides he was beside his son, his eyes showing his anxiety. Ma pressed for an explanation: "Did Chih-yueh send for you?"

Lien-fu shook his head desperately, waving his arm for emphasis. "No. No, he didn't. I've been sent by the leaders at the work site to take some wheat flour back for our men."

While the stockman listened to his son's answer, he warned himself to be on guard. He must harden his heart and not be taken in by soft words. Lien-fu had been away for some time. Had he changed for the better during this period or was he still influenced by these scoundrels? It couldn't be just a coincidence that he happened to come back at the very moment when there was trouble brewing in the village. The old man decided to be cautious. "Are you telling the truth, Lien-fu? Be honest with me."

Crating his neck to see if he was pursued, Lien-fu answered quietly as he went towards the cottage, "I'm telling the truth, pa. Really."

"Wait," the old man blocked Lien-fu's way, refusing to let him in.

"Let me come in," Lien-fu pleaded. "We'll talk things over in your room."

"Why are you in such a panic? You're as white as a sheet. Don't try to fool me. Tell me the truth."

"Don't you know what's going on, pa? That bastard Twister and others are making trouble and going to steal the wheat. They're all out there now down in the gully, with sacks ready to seize it. As soon as I came, they asked me to lead their gang. Chih-yueh's a real scoundrel, he tried to force me to go with them."

Ma still wanted more information. This time he didn't sound so angry. "Tried to force you to steal the wheat? Then why are you here?"

"Because, pa," cried Lien-fu, "I can't go along with them. I won't let them use me any more. I'm going to steer clear of that filthy scoundrel Chih-yueh for the rest of my life."

The old man looked his son over carefully. After asking a few more questions and thinking things over he felt more or less convinced that Lien-fu was not lying this time. "Now you're talking sense," he said in a gentler tone. "We were poor people. We must follow the Party all our lives and never change heart."

Lien-fu sighed in relief. "That's right. That's what I think too. At the work site, many comrades explained things and helped me. They said exactly the same as you and Secretary Hsiao. They treated me like a lost sheep that had returned. Working out there with these people on such a project changes a man's ideas. You should see that canal we're making . . . a large section of it cuts right across the mountains. It's terrific. We'd never have been able to tackle anything like that without organized strength. That canal will be cut through soon and the water come this way. Good days are at our door. How can I go on as I have been! Why, I wouldn't even be fair to myself!" Glancing at the yard gate again, he edged nearer the cottage.

His father slipped ahead and blocked Lien-fu's way once more. "Don't be in such a hurry to poke your head in there. We haven't finished what we were saying."

At sight of his father's stern face, Lien-fu felt upset. "Pa, don't you trust me at all any more? Of course I've done wrong, but Secretary Hsiao has re-educated me. You talked to me and Commune Secretary Wang talked to me. I listened to you all . . ."

"You can't blame me for not trusting you," said the old man. "This is no ordinary time, and this isn't a simple disagreement between father and son. Everyone has a tongue, it's easy to flatter. Haven't we heard enough of that from Chih-yueh? He's slicker than poor beggars like us. So what? He's a double dealer. He doesn't practise what he preaches. What you've just told me, is it honest?"

"Yes of course, pa."

"It's always possible to tell truth from lies, because at a critical moment, it becomes quite clear. Lien-fu, I'll tell you something. Those who listen are wiser than those who talk and those who watch carefully are wiser than either. Whether what you've just said and

your enthusiasm for socialism is real or not, will be proved by your actions."

"Actions?"

"That's it. Your actions'll show whether you're sincere or lying. If you really support socialism, you must prove it in action."

"But how?"

"All the scoundrels have ganged up together to make trouble," Ma went on. "They want to put pressure on the Party secretary and sabotage our co-op. They're trying to seize our wheat and put an end to socialism. At this very moment, other co-op members are fighting them on the threshing floor, at the granary and out in the fields. You hurry out there too. Stand beside Hsiao and the others. Fight these scoundrels. That's what you must do."

"Who? Me?"

"Yes. You!"

"Oh, don't worry, pa. I'll never go near those scoundrels again. If I do you can cut off my head."

"But, Lien-fu, d'you mean to say you'll just steer clear of these scoundrels and that's all? One can't expect more of landlords and rich peasants than just to keep clear. But, we were poor peasants! This is a critical moment. We can't let them use us as a weapon to attack the co-op. This is a minimum yardstick. We must go farther, pick up a weapon and strike back at the enemy. You must fight to defend socialism. That's what we must all do. Go on, Lien-fu, it's time you redeemed yourself. Listen to me. You go out there and help Hsiao in our struggle against these scoundrels."

This was a father's call to his son, the call of his class, a revolutionary call to battle.

Lien-fu drew back, at a loss to know what he should do and what to say to his father. He saw clearly what his father expected him to do, and realized that his father's challenge was correct and that he should take it up. Every son should do his best to fulfil such a request as his father had made—a request not to be denied. But . . . but Lien-fu was on the horns of a dilemma . . .

Lien-fu's cowardice, his shrinking from the struggle, pierced the old stockman's heart.

They both heard loud voices on the street.

"This cart's mine. I'm taking it back."

"The mule belongs to me. High time it's returned."

"Come on. Let's lead our own animals back."

"This time, nobody's to back down. Hurry up."

After Lien-fu had run away from Chih-yueh, the attempt to seize the wheat ended like a puff of smoke. Of those whom the rich peasant Ma Tsai had gathered together in the gully, some had disappeared and the enthusiasm of others had simply wilted. Only seven or eight were still shouting with determination. This was a real blow to Chih-yueh. To stimulate the few whose intentions were not completely dampened, he tried another dodge. He told them that if only they would take back the animals each family had put into the co-op, it would mean the end of the co-op. When that happened, the wheat would naturally fall into their hands. He also promised them that this time when they went to seize their livestock, he, the vice-chairman, would be in the lead even if it meant giving his very last breath in the fight. In this way, he managed to collect remnants of an already scattered mob.

Those few remaining felt quite excited again. With strength and confidence returned, they yelled wildly as they raced towards the barn-yard. Their number was badly depleted, but they seemed to be making even more noise. Chih-yueh had come to the end of his tether. He was desperate. His wife Feng-lan and the rich peasant Ma Tsai also felt that since they had already shown their hands no retreat was possible. They must fight to the bitter end, and put in all they had.

"Hurry, let's go."

"Nobody must hang back."

As the shouting drew nearer, Lien-fu became more alarmed because he recognized the voice of Vice-chairman Chih-yueh.

"Pa, pa. Help me. They've come to get me."

The old stockman gave his son a look of utter contempt. "You wretch, they've already got you. They've had you a long time. What I'm looking at is only the empty shell of what used to be my son. His heart is out there with that scum."

Chih-yueh and Ma Tsai marched ahead of the Twister, Big Gun and several others, and reached the entrance to the yard first. With clenched fists, Ma Lao-szu, the stockman, ran to prevent them coming any farther. Meanwhile, Lien-fu, hiding his face behind his hands, scuttled into the cottage.

The mob tried to squeeze into the yard. They made a terrible racket, yelling to each other.

"Untie our stock!"

"Where's my horse?"

"I say, that ass is mine!"

The stockman spread out his arms to block the gateway and barred the handful of scoundrels mad with greed and lusting for revenge from entering. "Stop, you can't come in. What d'you want?" old Ma shouted.

"We want our livestock," the trouble-makers yelled back.

"Where's your order slip?" The stockman stretched out his large palm.

"What order slip?"

"The team leader's slip granting you special permission to use one of the animals."

"Humbug! The co-op's busted. It's gone to pieces. Fancy still talking about the team leader and his order slips!"

"We want our own animals back."

"Which one of them belongs to you?" the old man asked calmly.

"When you joined the co-op and put in your livestock as shares, the co-op paid you a price for each animal. Now they belong to the collective. You took your money, didn't you? Why do you still call the animals yours?"

None of the riff-raff wanted to listen to reason. Shouting, pushing, they tried to get past the old man.

Chih-yueh was anxious to find a way out and continue making trouble. The way might be through the barn-yard. "Quiet now, everybody," he shouted. "Lao-szu is a reasonable man and highly disciplined. He listens to his leaders. I'll talk to him." He then stepped right up to Ma. When the shouting stopped, he turned to the stockman. "You know there's trouble brewing in the village,

Ma? It's not only in Tungshanwu you know. It's not just between us either. Trouble's breaking out all over the whole country...."

"Give me a few facts, Chih-yueh. What do you mean by saying that trouble's breaking out all over?"

"I haven't invented this. It comes from our higher leaders. What it means is that the co-ops have made a mess of things. We'll have to begin all over again. In other words, the co-ops are no good. They must be dissolved!"

Ma smiled coldly. "Save your breath, Chih-yueh. You needn't make up such a tall story. Nothing has been announced by our higher leaders, nor have the masses started anything. It's nothing but the filthy rubbish you and your kind are spreading. Let me tell you, the future of the agricultural co-ops is as bright as the sun in the morning and their roots go down as deep as those of the largest trees. Anyone with eyes can see this. Even blind men can see it if their hearts are in the right place. You can spread your rotten rumours and slander the co-op, but don't think you can ever hide its success or destroy its roots among the people. You're just dreaming. Ask anyone with any sense. You won't find a single one who'll say the co-ops have made a mess. Haven't you done enough damage as it is? Neighbours," Ma began to say to those behind, "don't let Chih-yueh take you in. He's a traitor who's betrayed his country."

Chih-yueh had reached the stage when he was vicious enough and prepared for anything. The old man's strong appeal to the others made him flush with anger. He was furious. "Old fool, I was trying to reason with you, but you dare to insult me, eh?" he hissed through clenched teeth. He tightened his belt and rolled up his sleeves to intimidate the old man.

Ma was not scared. "Insult you?" he said, without turning a hair. "Do you dare to tell everyone about your dirty dealings and the wicked schemes you're trying to hatch?"

Feng-lan and Ma Tsai started yelling again: "Don't waste time with the old fool. Let's find our animals."

"Come on. We'll each take back our own."

"I'd like to see anyone touch a hair of our livestock," Ma announced coolly. "Let me tell you, as long as there's breath left

in me, nobody shall touch them. These animals are my life blood; my life is in them. If you dare touch them, watch out!"

Ma Tsai and Feng-lan shouted: "Let's push him out of the way."

"Let's get our animals."

Ma could see that the gang of scoundrels was now beyond reasoning. He must get tough with them. Loudly and emphatically, he said, "The Communist Party has entrusted these animals to me. If you dare to make trouble, I'll do my duty. Don't blame me if you get hurt." So saying, he picked up the heavy wooden bar used to bolt the yard gate at night. Standing astride for balance, the bar clenched in his hands, the old stockman glared at the mob. "Don't you dare to make a move!"

Their eyes were inflamed with greed. The scoundrels hadn't expected old Ma to take up a weapon. In fact, they hadn't even considered this poor, feeble old man as worth reckoning with. Desire flared up in the heart of each. They felt life would be meaningless unless they could satisfy their greed. The execution ground for traitors might be waiting for them just round the corner, nevertheless they still wanted to grab something for themselves. When the attempt to seize the wheat had failed, they imagined it would be very simple to claim the animals again, never expecting to meet such tough opposition from the stockman. Those among the mob who at first had been most reckless were not quite sure what they should do now. Each began to wonder what the outcome of this would be and what would happen to them.

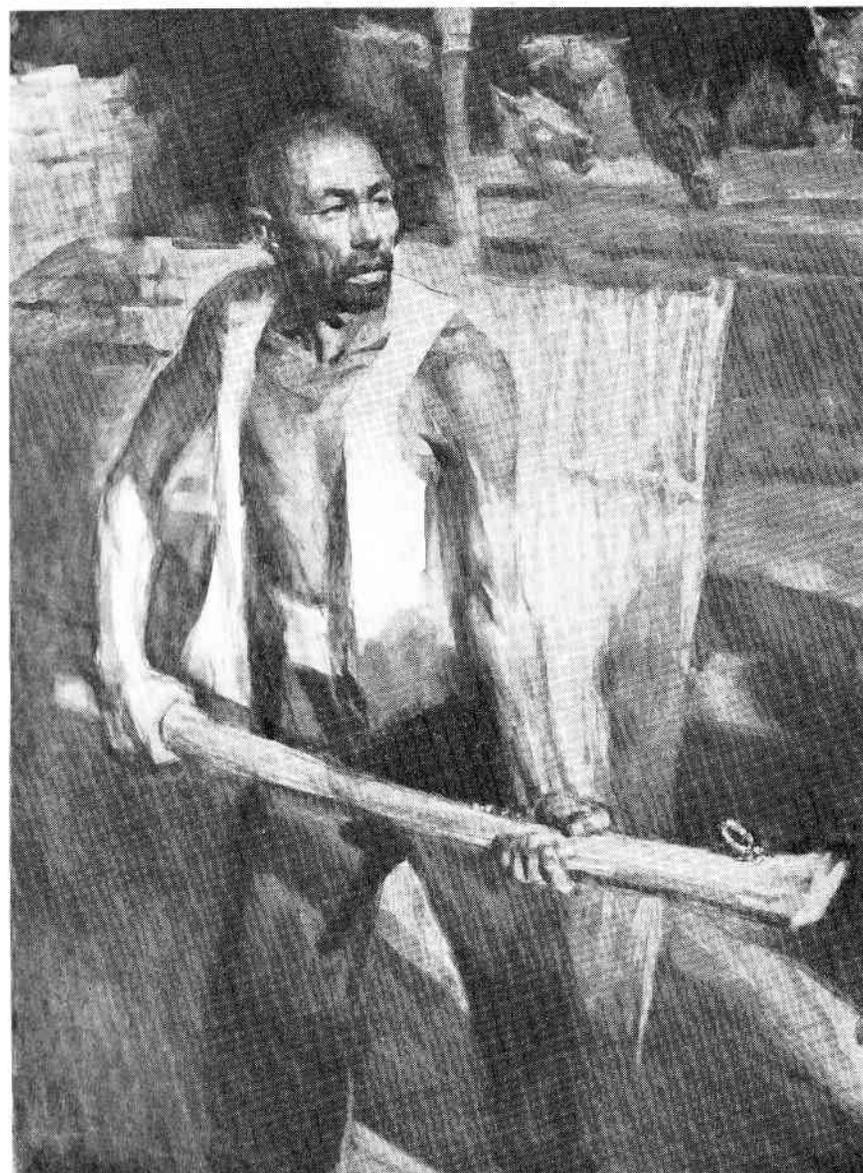
Chih-yueh was quite frantic. If nothing came of this and the little mob he'd got together was pushed back some would soon cool off. Unless he put a spurt on and made the disturbance appear to have a mass base, these remnants of the scattered mob would probably drift away too. He would be left holding the bay with no way of escape or means of sheltering and hiding himself. He must do something, otherwise the consequences would be unthinkable.

The rich peasant Ma Tsai shared his feeling, for he was in the same spot. He knew even better how the success or failure of this attempt would affect him. He longed to see the disturbance spread, then he'd be able to fish in troubled waters and give vent to his deep hatred of

the co-op. It would also mean a new future for him. Otherwise, after exposing himself as a rich peasant with a grievance, he could no longer pretend to be law-abiding. He didn't dare think of the consequences.

Big Gun was stubborn. His desire to get his animal back was by no means quenched by the obstacles in the way. On the contrary it was fanned to white heat by the unwelcome delay and made him quite reckless. The fact that he couldn't lead his animal home right away, or even enter the yard, made him stamp his feet with annoyance.

And what was the Twister thinking of? He, who could distort and misrepresent everything, naturally had a "unique" way of looking at things. As soon as the disturbances started, he was smart enough to notice that Chih-yueh's gang had neither a good opportunity, sound position nor any peasants' support. The Twister realized that he must keep a door open for himself. By the time their attempt to rob the granary had fizzled out like a damp squib, his enthusiasm petered out too. Then the gang went to the barn-yard. The problems as the Twister saw them were worth considering. First: Which side had right on its side and was the stronger? Second: Had they not gone too far, carrying on like this? Ma, the stockman, was right and he was brave too. Hsiao and his supporters were still threshing the wheat while reapers continued to work in the fields. Chiao, the carter, cracked his whip with the same energy as before when he brought the wheat to the threshing floor. All this showed that right was on their side and they were very strong. What about Chih-yueh and his gang? It had not been easy to persuade people to join them, in fact, some had to be literally dragged along. After a while most of them had lost their enthusiasm and run away. The only active ones left were Ma Tsai, a rich peasant, Feng-lan, the landlord's daughter and Chih-yueh, a vice-chairman of the co-op whose position was rather shaky, the Twister himself, Big Gun and their women. They were far from strong. That was why, after the Twister followed the gang to the gate of the barn-yard, he kept a little distance behind the others. When old Ma took up the heavy wooden bar, the Twister's heart missed a beat. If Chih-yueh meant to use violence in a last ditch struggle, he'd be going too far and it would



be no good following him. The Twister was afraid that instead of being able to snatch a bit of benefit for himself on the sly by going along, he would be dragged in too deep. He'd better take to his heels right away. He would not even go home, rather go straight back to work in the wheat fields....

Chih-yueh, however, had kept his eyes on the Twister. If this cunning trickster tried to wriggle his way out, then he, Chih-yueh, would have no scapegoat when he needed one. He must prevent this crafty fox from getting away and keep him as one of the crew. "Don't listen to Ma Lao-szu," he cried to focus their attention on the old man. "He's only bluffing. All of us here are in the same boat. If we want to stay afloat, we must row together. We must row now whether we want to or not. Don't think that any one of you can get away without it being known. I notice there're one or two who'd like to make a getaway instead of pulling with us. You're dreaming. You can't sneak off now, you'll only drown. But if you pull with us, it'll be worth your while. We still have good prospects."

Ma Tsai picked up his cue from Chih-yueh. "Now we've started, it's no use quitting. Come on, let's get it over with."

"He's only a doddering old fool. Why let him scare us?" asked Feng-lan.

After a momentary silence, the gang started pushing again, Big Gun in the lead.

Wooden bar firmly grasped to block the opening into the yard, the old stockman held the crowd back with all his strength. But he was too old and only one against many. The rioters, avaricious and full of hate, pushed him back little by little. Ma was frantic. He realized that if they managed to steal the livestock, it would mean the loss of half the co-op's property. It would be a stain on his reputation, a blemish on the good name of Tungshanwu; even a blot on socialism. No. He couldn't possibly let them take the animals, not even for a moment. It seemed that the time had come when he might have to give his life to protect the co-op. Suddenly, he remembered his son. "Lien-fu, Lien-fu," he yelled. "Come quick and give me a hand."

Lien-fu peered through the window. Both worried and afraid,

he was utterly confused. The sweat rolled down his face. With clammy hands he gripped the earthen window-sill so tightly that a big lump broke off. The outrageous conduct of the gang out there and his father's call for help bolstered his courage. He jumped off the *kang* bed and started for the door.

But the very mention of Lien-fu also encouraged Chih-yueh. "Ah, so you're here too, Lien-fu. You can't get away, so don't try. Even if you go into hiding, you'll be held responsible like the rest of us. Come on out and I won't ask much of you. Just pull your father back from behind. Get him out of our way, and I'll overlook your running away. You can redeem yourself."

All Lien-fu's new courage drained away. He slumped down again, his head in a whirl.

Suddenly someone yelled, "Look! There're people coming across the gully."

Ma Tsai turned to look. True enough, Chang-shan, the acting team leader who took Lien-fu's place when he left for the irrigation project and several other co-op members were running towards them. "Oh dear, what'll we do when they come," he whined.

Feng-lan shouted, "Chih-yueh, quick, do something."

Chih-yueh realized they were in a fix. He sprang up and tried to pounce on the stockman. Ma raised his wooden bar and cried, "Take this, you wicked scoundrel." But the younger Chih-yueh was quicker. He swung his foot and kicked the old stockman in the ribs.

Ma was knocked to the ground. It felt as though someone had plunged a sharp knife into his chest. A hot flood rose in his throat and, unable to hold it back, the red blood spurted from his lips.

It spattered all over Chih-yueh. Even Ma Tsai and Feng-lan were sprinkled with it.

A woman standing close by ran off screaming: "Oh my! Oh dear! How terrible!"

"This is murder," someone else cried.

Big Gun, horrified, backed away.

Ma was still conscious. His mind refused to accept defeat. His job was to guard the yard and protect his animals. Although in great

pain he managed to scramble to his feet again. He still gripped the wooden bar tightly and tried to press back the crowd. His eyes flamed with anger while blood trickled from the corner of his mouth and dripped on to the soil of Tungshanwu Village....

Even the animals were aware of the commotion. They listened with ears erect, pawing in their stalls, some horses neighing and an old ox bellowing.

Chih-yueh, Feng-lan and Ma Tsai jostled some who were backing away. "Don't be scared. Let's get our animals," they shouted but without much optimism. "Come on, we can't back out now."

"We can't possibly stop now."

Lien-fu who had been dazed by Chih-yueh's threats a moment before awoke from his nightmare. The sight of the bright red blood trickling down his father's chin made him shiver, yet he felt as though he were on fire. He completely forgot what might happen to himself. With a shout, he ran out of the house, "I'll have it out with you, Chih-yueh!" He glanced around the yard for a weapon of some sort. There was nothing except a little stool by the barn door. He picked it up, swung it forcefully and lunged at Chih-yueh.

Chih-yueh ducked and raised an arm to protect his head. The stool went beyond him, barely missed Feng-lan who was behind him and landed at the feet of the Twister who had sidled right back to the southern wall. The crafty fox's face was ashen, matching the grey bricks.

"Why you bastard Lien-fu...," Chih-yueh yelled cursing loudly.

Instantly, Lien-fu sprang on him and grabbed him by the scruff of the neck. Chih-yueh caught Lien-fu by the collar of his shirt. Lien-fu raised his other hand, then flailed his opponent's face, leaving five red weals on Chih-yueh's pallid cheek which immediately began to swell. Unable to retaliate in the same way, Chih-yueh lunged at the younger man. Lien-fu tried to back away, tripped and the two of them fell in a heap. Chih-yueh was on top at first, but Lien-fu soon gained the mastery and pinned his opponent to the ground.

Chih-yueh's wife, Feng-lan and the rich peasant Ma Tsai rushed over, eager to help. They tugged at Lien-fu and tried to pull him away. At this point, Chang-shan the acting team leader arrived with

Yu-chen, a woman co-op member. Chang-shan attacked the rich peasant while Yu-chen grappled with the landlord's daughter.

Big Gun felt obliged to join in the tussle too. But before he could do much, his wife Gate Tiger pulled him away. She dragged him to the quiet corner of the yard where the Twister had wisely retreated.

"We simply must challenge them now," cried Big Gun.

Twister, the cunning rogue, was eyeing the blood still flowing from old Ma's mouth and remembered the mysterious disappearance of Little Pebble, Secretary Hsiao's only son. His gaze went to Chih-yueh, wrestling with Lien-fu, and the conclusion he reached made him shudder. "Fool," he growled at Big Gun. "Are you still going to stand by Chih-yueh?"

Big Gun didn't catch on. "Why? What's the matter?"

"Chih-yueh's gone too far."

"Give up then?"

"Uh huh."

"But that'll mean we've made all this fuss for nothing?"

"D'you want to go behind bars?"

.....

When Secretary Hsiao arrived with a comrade from the County Security Bureau, he found the three pairs still wrestling.

"Hey, here comes Secretary Hsiao," an onlooker whispered.

"Who's that short stocky man with him?" asked another.

"Don't know, never saw him before."

Hearing this, Chih-yueh became desperate. He seized an opportunity when Lien-fu was pinned beneath him to steal a glance at the newcomers. Chih-yueh was stunned for he recognized Wang, the other man, as a section chief in the Security Bureau. Quickly he abandoned his opponent, and darted off, snarling as he ran, "I'll appeal to the district committee. I'll appeal."

As if a bomb had been dropped among them, pandemonium broke loose among the crowd. Some followed hot on Chih-yueh's heels, others fled helter-skelter away from the trouble and the rest slipped quietly out of view.

"Get that scoundrel!"

"Hey you there, catch him for us."

"Get that scoundrel Chih-yueh."

Yelling, the pursuers rushed together after the fleeing vice-chairman.

When the noise and commotion ended in the barn-yard, the word "Victory" flashed across Ma's consciousness.

We're victorious and the livestock's safe. Our co-op isn't in any danger, nor is socialism.

Looking up at the sun high in the sky, Ma even managed to chuckle. As his grip on the wooden bar relaxed, it dropped from his hand. At the same time, after a fit of coughing had brought fresh blood to his lips, the old man collapsed.

"Pa, pa," Lien-fu cried, rushing to his father's side and bursting into tears.

Hsiao had already left the yard doing his utmost to catch up with the crowd pursuing Chih-yueh. But when he heard Lien-fu's cry he turned and ran back. The sight of Ma lying unconscious on the ground drove everything else from his mind. Carefully Hsiao helped the old man to sit up and gently massaged his chest, saying, "Uncle, uncle."

But Ma remained unconscious. Lien-fu continued crying bitterly.

Hsiao, frowning slightly, nudged Lien-fu. "Stop that! Help me carry your father into the house."

Lien-fu controlled his sobbing. The two of them, supporting the old man on either side, slowly moved him into the cottage and laid him on his small *keang* bed. Hsiao cradled the old man's head in his arm, then snapped at Lien-fu, "Don't stand there in a trance. Quick, hand me a pillow." Then with his shirt sleeve, he gently wiped the blood from the old man's mouth. "Hey, now pour me a bowl of water."

Lien-fu was so jittery that he could hardly control himself. As he finally carried a bowl of water to his father's bedside from the table, he spilled half of it.

The old man's teeth were tightly clenched. While he was still in a coma it was impossible to open his mouth or give him water to drink. Lien-fu was in tears again. "What can we do, Hsiao. He's dying."

"Don't panic," Hsiao advised. "You watch him. I'll go and fetch a stretcher. We'll take him to the county hospital at once."

It was now very quiet in the barn-yard. Too quiet.

All by himself beside his unconscious father, Lien-fu sobbed uncontrollably. "Pa, pa," he cried. "How are you? Where's the pain? Oh, pa, speak to me."

The old man remained unconscious, saying nothing in reply. He did not even stir.

Lien-fu was stricken with remorse, fear and grief. He was full of regret, particularly over being so cowardly earlier that afternoon, when Chih-yueh and his trouble-makers first arrived. He hadn't acted like a man and gone out immediately to fight them. If he'd gone sooner, his father wouldn't have been kicked by that devil. . . . He hadn't gone out earlier, Lien-fu realized, because he was a coward and didn't dare. And the reason he didn't dare was that he feared Chih-yueh. But why should he, a strong able-bodied young man, fear that ruffian? Simply because he had fallen into the trap Chih-yueh had set for him. The devil had a hold over him. His own selfishness was the basis of it all. He became a prey to those scoundrels in his muddle-headed way, because he didn't know right from wrong, or enemy from friend. Later, instead of following the sincere advice of his comrades, he was too cowardly to admit his own errors but kept them hidden. And this was the result. He'd brought harm to his neighbours, to himself and to his dear old father. . . . Remorse nearly choked him. Suppose his father died from that kick? How could Lien-fu face the world? How could he go on living with such a crime on his conscience? If only his father recovered, he wouldn't feel such a criminal. . . . It was Chih-yueh who was responsible for all this. He must have it out with that bastard.

The longer Lien-fu sat there, the worse he felt. He wanted to be out there with the others trying to catch that scoundrel Chih-yueh. They mustn't let him get away.

After straightening the blanket covering his father, Lien-fu ran out of the house, across the barn-yard and headed straight towards the sound of shouting and yelling.

Ma slowly regained consciousness. The first thing he saw was the sunlight dancing on the window-panes. It seemed as if he had just woken from a light nap and that was nothing unusual. But yet, there was something on his mind. He tried to recall some little incident that had occurred. Had someone whipped one of the animals in the field too hard and had there been a quarrel because of this? Or was one of the animals sick and still needing some medicine? Had he just returned from cutting grass in the ditches? Had he finished cleaning the stalls? His mind skimmed over various things before he finally remembered the fierce fight with the rioters. Yes, that was it. He'd fought as he'd always intended to fight if he had to. He'd done the right thing. He'd not let the Party down, nor socialism. His son and grandson could be proud of him. That ruffian had kicked him in the ribs, perhaps fatally. But that was only to be expected. Maybe he wouldn't survive. He might not be able to tend the animals any more, or struggle together with the other poor peasants. He might have to leave his beloved co-op and his dear comrades, who were so close to his heart.

The thought of all this brought no sadness or pain to the old man. He felt easy in his mind, except for one or two small things which bothered him just a little. He was not concerned about the co-op. No calamity could overwhelm Tungshanwu Village now that Chih-yueh the hidden, evil vice-chairman had been exposed. This seed of danger was now eliminated. Old Ma was easy in his mind about Tungshanwu continuing along the road to socialism. He was sure all their plans would be realized. What fine leading Party comrades they had, men like Hsiao and Han and the many steady old poor and lower-middle peasants, men like Chiao and Hsi and the younger generation, so full of life. There was nothing to worry him at all in that respect. But he sighed when he thought of his animals. They were half the total assets of Tungshanwu Co-op. If he didn't pull through this time, who should he recommend to care for the livestock? He considered all the younger men of the village. Perhaps this one? No. Perhaps that one. . . . He couldn't make up his mind.

In the barn, the animals were still uneasy. Ma could hear them pawing the ground. Now and then one would snort or whinny.

Ma longed to go out to the barn and see them once more. It seemed a long time since he had seen them; he missed each one terribly. He made a great effort but could neither raise his arms nor move his legs. Gritting his teeth, he rolled over to the edge of the *kang* bed. With one hand gripping the edge of the bed, he let his legs hang down till they touched the ground. Pushing himself up with the other hand, he was able to stand.

The old stockman was on his feet again. But his head was reeling; specks danced before his eyes. The sharp pain in his chest brought him out in a cold sweat. Holding on to the *kang* bed and breathing laboriously, he edged slowly towards the door. He reached for the door panel. Slowly, tottering along he arrived at the stove in the outer room, then still clinging to the wall, he inched his way out into the yard....

The animals in the barn all welcomed him in their own way. The horses pricked up their ears, nodded their heads and neighed, the oxen lowed, a young ass brayed and every one voiced its affection, each so familiar and so dear to him. The young mule and calf bounded out: one, dressed in grey velvet, the other's coat a rich red in the sun. They gambolled round him, then rubbed against his legs. The calf licked the old man's big hand....

Ma looked around. A smile lit up his weather-beaten face, which glowed as golden sunflowers do in mid-summer. The sounds of life in the barn-yard gave him strength. He managed to reach the manger and pick up the mixing stick. Like a soldier in battle who once more holds his favourite machine-gun in his hands, a sudden feeling of energy flowed into his limbs.

He had no need to cling to anything then, as he stood firmly on his own feet. His calloused, work-roughened hands were busy mixing fresh fodder. He worked meticulously, picking out the tiniest stalk or feather from the grass and spotting every small stone or particle of mud among the beans. He mixed and stirred carefully until the pleasing scent of newly-cut fodder filled the air....

The livestock began eating.



That bay horse must have been rolling again. Just look at all that straw and dung clinging to his belly. What a sight he was! Ma unhooked a curry-comb from the post and made his way into the stall. With one hand on the flank of the horse to steady himself, he gently curried the fine glossy coat.

The mule which had just recovered was eating rather listlessly. It probably hadn't regained its appetite.

Ma took some salt from the hanging basket and sprinkled it on the mule's tongue, then rubbed its nose. The mule closed its eyes, enjoying and appreciating this special attention. The next moment it was head first in the manger, feeding hungrily.

Ma moved on to the accompaniment of the champing animals which was music to his ears. He reached the second manger and as meticulous as ever, began mixing fodder there.

Like any other day, the barn was filled with the sweet fragrance of fresh grass and the rustle of animals eating. . . .

At the cross-roads, Han met Lien-fu who had dashed out of the barn-yard.

"When did you come back?" Han asked, surprised to see him.

"Just now. Where's that bastard Chih-yueh. . . ."

"They've caught him and taken him to the big temple. You should go there for the meeting. I must find Hsiao."

"He's gone for a stretcher."

"A stretcher? What for?"

"That devil Chih-yueh kicked my father. He's hurt pa badly. . . ."

Han was shocked. He told Lien-fu to look for Hsiao while he himself made straight for the barn-yard.

When Han ran into the little mud cottage, it was empty. The blanket lay on the *kang* bed in a rumpled heap. He felt the bed and pillow but they were cold. He dashed outside, calling Ma by name. In the barn there was fresh fodder in the manger and the animals were clean and well-groomed. Han was an experienced peasant and could tell that someone had just attended to all this. He rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn't dreaming, then, laughing to himself,

muttered, "That plucky old chap. Nothing can harm him. He's pulled through again." He picked up some grass the animals had pushed out of the manger, and replaced it, rubbed his hands and turned round. "*Aiya*," was Han's startled cry. "So there he is!"

Ma was lying near a manger. His face was leaden. One hand still held his mixing stick, the other arm was around the wooden post. His ladle had fallen, scattering beans all over the floor. . . . Ma was still trying to heave himself up onto his feet, but kept falling back helplessly. He wheezed as he drew each breath and groaned softly.

Han rushed to his side. Putting his arms around the old man, he asked, "Old Ma, how are you? Where's the pain?"

Ma looked up at Han and wanted to smile but, as he shook his head slightly, the smile became a grimace.

"Oh, you," Han reproached him. "Why do you try to work when you've been badly injured."

Lying back in Han's arms, Ma panted as he looked with dull lustreless eyes at his long time workmate. "Han," he whispered, making a great effort, "Han, help me up please. Then I can finish mixing this fodder. . . ."

"Let me do it for you."

Again, Ma shook his head. "You can still do much for socialism. I won't be useful any more. This'll be my last time — my last time. I can't tend them any more. . . ."

Tears rolled silently down Han's cheeks. He hugged the feeble old man to him tightly as past events flashed before his mind's eye, each glowing with its own beauty.

One recollection was most deeply etched on his mind. It was not of the bitter days when they had lived together as young hired hands in the shed beside Pigtail Ma's threshing floor. Nor was it one of the memorable days during land reform when they stormed the despotic landlord's mansion to settle accounts with him. Nor was it one of the days of intense hard work when they started their co-op and were emulating the spirit of the poor paupers. It was simply a talk they had had on the river bank about a fortnight before when they opened their hearts to each other. In Han's mind, that

talk was the most memorable because Ma had warned him about the hidden enemy Chih-yueh, and told him to be careful of the vice-chairman. Casual words exchanged in chatter had become a fact, turning what was ordinary into something that glowed with light.

As Han thought of this he noticed the tidy barn-yard and the fine, healthy animals. Strong-willed and unemotional as he was, he could not refuse this request of his old comrade.

Ma managed to stand up with Han's help and mixed the last batch of fodder. The exertion was too much for him. He lost consciousness again.

After two more days of intense work, the members of the Tungshanwu Co-op finished reaping their bumper harvest. The weather stayed perfect for another five days, so that all the wheat was threshed. Only piles of left-over chaff and straw remained on the threshing floor.

Hsiao strode gaily to the barn-yard. At sight of the tightly closed gate, he opened his mouth to call, "Uncle, open up," but remembering in time, laughed at his own absent-mindedness. "Teh-ta," he shouted instead. "Open up."

The animals in the barn responded by shuffling in their stalls. But where was the stockman? After calling several times, Hsiao stretched a hand in through a crack to unhook the catch, shook the gate gently to loosen the wooden bar slightly and squeezed his way through.

Inside the cottage everything looked much the same, except for a pair of earphones and a home-made fiddle, belonging to Teh-ta, a young co-op member who was the new stockman. The room was both familiar and dear to the Party secretary. Every object, even a nail on the wall, or a rice bowl on the table, were enough to start him reminiscing.

He looked around. A white paper bag hanging on the wall, on which was written "To Party Secretary Hsiao, Tungshanwu Village," caught his attention. Hsiao opened it. Some crimson tassels for the horses' bridles fell out. There was a little note inside. Hsiao spread it out and read.

Dear Hsiao,

I'm fine here at the county hospital. It provides everything I need, so don't bother to send me any more money. I have no use for it even if you do. I've bought these tassels for the bridles of our horses and mules. Give them to the carters to put on when they take the state's grain quota to town....

Ma Lao-szu

As he read, Hsiao could feel warmth from the packet in his finger tips. The old poor peasant's kindly face marked by his strong character appeared again before Hsiao's eyes. Ma's warm voice rang in his ears....

Illustrated by Chen Yi-fei

A Newcomer (painting in the traditional style)
by Yang Chih-kuang ▶



Chou Li-yi

Ode to "The Internationale"

A song of revolution, a song of battle,
Every note on its score —
A bright flame.
It comes from the heart of the proletariat;
The pulse of our epoch.
Born in the Paris Commune's blood-bath,
Wafted on the wind of world revolution,
It calls on the "prisoners of starvation"
To lead the way and liberate mankind.

Song of solidarity, song of triumph,
Every word set to music
Shakes the very earth's foundations.
It is the bugle call to "Charge",
A torch to set the prairie grass on fire;

Gunfire in the palm grove — its rhythm,
Battle drums on the equator — its tempo,
The Atlantic billows — its accompaniment.
From Asia, Africa and Latin America
Comes its thundering echo.

Solemn, majestic,
It fills the people with inexhaustible strength,
While causing panic among the enemy.
Inspired by its call,
Prisoners of starvation by the million
Have smashed their old world's chains.
Countless revolutionary heroes,
Take the place
Of fallen martyrs,
To spread the glowing fire.
Volcanoes of wrath are erupting
Crushing the man-eating demons and vampires
Millions are already emancipated,
Their fiery red flags hoisted high.

“This is the final conflict”
Fight on, proletarians of the world.
“Let each stand in his place”,
“The golden sunlight still will stay.”

Tsao Yung-hua

Song of Discipline*

Along the highway our contingent marches,
Our songs rise through a cloud of dust;
“Revolutionary fighters must always remember...”**
Like bugle call and battle drum,
This song inspires us.

In it lies infinite strength,
And the deep affection cherished

*Referring to The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention laid down by Chairman Mao as rules of discipline for the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1937). The Three Main Rules of Discipline are: (1) Obey orders in all your actions; (2) Don't take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses; (3) Turn in everything captured. The Eight Points for Attention are: (1) Speak politely; (2) Pay fairly for what you buy; (3) Return everything you borrow; (4) Pay for anything you damage; (5) Don't hit or swear at people; (6) Don't damage crops; (7) Don't take liberties with women; (8) Don't ill-treat captives.

**This is the first line of the song.

By us armymen, for the people.
The song reminds us of the discipline,
Laid down by Chairman Mao.
In its familiar words
We hear our Chairman's voice.

In the years of war, we faced
Countless hardships and dangers,
But this song inspired us.
Uniting and fighting as one,
Under Chairman Mao's command
Steadily we advanced.

This song of ours we've sung
Ever since our Red Army was formed.
It has kept us company on the march
And in a thousand battles.
When we sing it again now
It revives in our hearts
The glorious traditions of our army.

Whatever storms the imperialists,
Revisionists and reactionaries
May unleash, we'll always stand fast.
Whatever plots the scheming
Careerists may engineer
We shall see through them clearly.
Like the waters of the Yangtse River
That never run dry, for generations
We'll carry on the traditions

Of Chairman Mao's fighters,
The worker-peasant soldiers of the people.

Along the highway our contingent marches,
Our songs rise through a cloud of dust;
In all our actions, obeying
Chairman Mao's commands,
We'll advance along the highway
Making revolution for ever and a day.



Yu Tsung-hsin

Fighters on Sleds

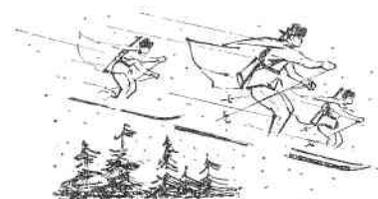
Across the rippled snow,
Through swirling flakes,
Fighters speed on sleds;
Helmets and uniforms
Reflecting the icy white.

Swiftly without rest
They reach the mountain top;
Then in one swoop, dive
To the valley below.
They are light as winged swallows,
Like meteors they flash past.

Through the snowy forests,
Amid pines, past hamlets,

Into the screaming wind they steer.
In their mind's eye they see,
The motherland's wide landscape.

Bayonets in hand, flash,
Red stars on caps, gleam,
Devoted, they patrol the frontier
For thousands of miles, protecting
Our land and homes.



Chu Feng

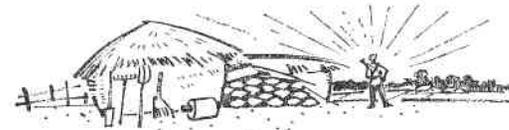
On Duty at Harvest Time

The hills are deep in slumber,
The whole earth lies silent;
The sleepless moon alone
Sails on her way.

But our patrols are alert.
With light steps and lively hearts,
They guard the threshing ground
Where fine new crops are piled.

Not even a shadow can glide
Behind the curtain of night,
But our fighters, guns ready,
Are aware of its movement.

When the first cock's crow
Puts the stars to flight,
Our fighters on patrol,
Welcome the new day.



Look Far, Fly Far

Fang Hsiao, a girl of medium height, ruddy-faced, her short hair tied in a knot, walked along vigorously in her father's old army coat, her eyes flashing. She stopped in front of the post office, pulled out a letter, contemplated it for a moment, then said to herself, "To Fang Chien-ming, S.S. *Chang Feng*, c/o Ocean Transport Company. All correct." She slipped it into the mailbox, and smiled. "Dad will be very pleased to know that I'm going to be one of the first women crane operators." And she was going to the job on an ocean-going ship right away. The thought infused new strength in her. She quickened her steps. Her destination was Shanghai's Red Flag Wharf where the boat was moored.

I

What made Hsiao become a crane operator? The story has to be told from the beginning.

This story was written by the Shanghai dockers' spare-time writing group.

Hsiao first came to work on a dock with her schoolmates last autumn, a busy season for both the peasants and dockers. The moment she stepped on the wharf she was struck by a huge slogan in red: "Fight for three months to overfulfil the target ahead of schedule!"

Battery-powered lift trucks laden with cargo shuttled to and fro. Cranes turned their arms in all directions. The hustle and bustle made an indelible impression on Hsiao and her schoolmates. She realized that this was a battlefield, a frontline.

Very active by nature, she was immediately astir. Taking the dockers unawares, she climbed into the cab of No. 308 crane. She fingered the switch. Crash! The thunderous noise scared her out of her wits. She slipped down without being observed and hid in a corner. A crane operator helping longshoremen unload rice in a barge jumped quickly ashore. After having inspected the crane, he was confused that no one was about. He took off his cap and fanned himself with it, the cowlick on his forehead fluttering.

"A woman!" Hsiao exclaimed.

The woman crane operator was called Yeh Chih-yin, and she and Hsiao soon became friends.

They often met by the Huangpu dock side, chatting to their hearts' content, their eyes fastened on the river and the hovering sea-gulls.

Like a sister Yeh told her a lot of new things. Cranes, for instance, were of different types and powered differently. No. 308, for example, was run by electricity. Nowadays women not only operated cranes, but loaded and unloaded cargo as well. "They're half of the population, you know." And they burst out laughing. But how was it that they did not teach girls in the past to work on the cranes? Yeh told her that there was such a plan, but under the influence of Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line, it never materialized. Of course that was before the cultural revolution.

Hsiao was firmly convinced that women could do just as well as men and that one day there would be as many women as men working on the cranes.

Not long after Hsiao told her father that she wanted to be a crane operator, he wrote: "Revolutionary work may be varied, but the goal is the same: to realize communist ideals. You ought to plunge

into the revolutionary movement and integrate yourself with the workers and peasants, learn from them so as to be re-educated by them and have your ideology remoulded. You mustn't choose your work merely from personal interest."

Her father urged her to study Chairman Mao's works on how to serve the people. Hsiao had great respect for her father, a Communist who had served well during the war and who stood on the side of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line during the cultural revolution. Now he worked as a political instructor on the *S.S. Chang Feng*.

Although she felt that her father was right, she could not help thinking that he did not understand her. It was not merely personal interest that made her want to be a crane operator. She wanted to prove that women were just as capable as men. In any case she must join the ranks of workers, by whom she would have herself re-educated ideologically.

Together with other young folk, Hsiao developed like a good seed set in fertile soil, sprouting and growing into a sturdy plant within the short space of one year.

Party branch secretary Wu and Communist worker Yeh, Chih-yin's father, all paid particular attention to this. They discussed the matter in the Party committee and decided to give Yeh the task of training the girl as a crane operator.

Hsiao was pleased at first, but soon she became pensive. The Party secretary found from the expression on her bronzed face that she was no longer the childish girl she had been a year before. Her sharp flashing eyes concentrated all the resoluteness and solemnity of her personality. Finally it came out that her father's advice had much to do with the shaping of her thought.

"What your father told you is right," Wu told her. "You can't do a revolutionary job merely from personal interest, and trying to prove that women are just as capable as men isn't correct either. We are marching towards the great goal of communism. What we ought to do is to bring credit to our socialist motherland."

Hsiao nodded. The Party secretary's words opened a new vista for her and new strength flowed in her. She wrote to her father the moment she came home, telling him how she longed to have

S.S. Chang Feng dock the very next day so that he could see her operating a crane on board.

II

Hsiao threaded her way quickly through the wharf. Her heart thumped with excitement as she stepped on board the *S.S. Combat* with Yeh and went towards the cranes.

But it was the most awkward day in her life. Yeh was loading the ship. How dexterously he lifted the cargo clear of the wharf and lowered it neatly into the hold! But she could only bungle. A bale of cotton turned a somersault and slipped onto the deck with a thud. It was Yeh who put it into the net again. She bit her lips, ashamed of herself.

"Never mind," Yeh said. "Take a rest before you operate the machine again."

The kind words stung her much more painfully than scolding.

Lashed by a strong wind the river began to heave. A flock of sea-gulls, braving the head wind, headed off in the distance, their wings outstretched.

Yeh took Hsiao by the hand and, pointing to the vanishing birds, said, "Only in a head wind can you exercise your wings." He tapped Hsiao's shoulder for emphasis and went on, pronouncing each word slowly, "We must advance in face of difficulties. This is the way revolutionary work is done."

With fresh courage Hsiao climbed into the cab and resumed her work. The wind abated into a light breeze as the evening set in. Glaring lights now covered the hustle and bustle. As her crane came around, Hsiao's nerves tightened. Sweat glittered on the tip of her nose, and her breath came hard. But Yeh directing the operation from below reassured her from time to time with encouraging glances.

Beginning the next day one could often see a young girl in a red sweater doing gymnastics on the parallel bars east of the basketball court, perspiring in spite of the cutting north wind. Hsiao was trying to build strength in her arms.

Judging by their appearance, Yeh, now approaching fifty, was a serious veteran worker while Hsiao, not quite twenty, was a lively girl. But they got along very well together. They did not speak much, but they studied together, thought the same way and worked as one person. Yeh's spirit of serving the people wholly and entirely seeped deep into Hsiao's mind. Unconsciously, Hsiao assimilated Yeh's ways. Whenever she saw a piece of cargo tilted on a flat car, she would put it right. She would pick up pieces of cast-off rope and keep it for future use. She even took on Yeh's habit of throwing his padded jacket casually over his shoulders.

As for the veteran worker, whenever Hsiao was mentioned, he would say in his Shantung accent, "Ah, my Little Hsiao," as though she were his own daughter.

III

One morning, after a night of drizzle, the weeping willow buds sprouted. Washed by the rain, the air smelt fresh and clean. The holly on both sides of the road leading to the wharf looked green and thriving. Hsiao felt equally fresh and buoyant. The *S.S. Chang Feng* had just docked after a long voyage. She had not seen her father for half a year. But what cheered her most was the assignment given her by Yeh to operate the crane on the *S.S. Chang Feng*.

Hsiao flushed with excitement, her heart almost jumping into her mouth. Yeh, however, frowned. "The *Chang Feng* has very big cargo hatches," he said. "You can be bold. But mind you, work with great concentration."

Acknowledging the advice with a "Yes", Hsiao proudly climbed into the operator's cab. She took a long breath to calm herself, then began to work. Huge aluminium slabs were lifted slowly out of the hold, moved over the deck and, guided by Yeh's signals, lowered exactly into the waiting truck on the wharf.

Hsiao heard someone say, "When we sailed, we didn't have any woman crane operator. Now half a year later we have a skilled one."

"She's excellent!" another added.

"I understand that our Political Instructor Fang's daughter is also a crane operator."

"You're always on the scent of everything, and this time you're right," said the dispatcher, but his voice was very low.

Hsiao's heart beat fast. She looked around. The wheel house was empty. Her eyes went back to Yeh and his signals. "We were hit by a hurricane on this voyage, but Political Instructor Fang kept calm throughout...", someone was commenting. "A heavy wave rose like a mountain, then it split, leaving a hole deep enough to swamp everything.... Comrades were confident ... peril.... The *Chang Feng* rode it out ... steaming ahead...."

Hsiao's heart was as stirred as the person describing the storming voyage. Her gaze turned again to the wheel house and she seemed to see her father there encouraging the crew.

"Stop! Stop!"

Hsiao frantically pushed the switch to "stop" but it was too late. She heard a crash like a landslide on the wharf. She jumped out of the cab, crossed the deck and looked over the railing. Two tons of aluminium slabs were dumped on the wharf in a shapeless heap. A young docker below growled, "What a crane operator! Doesn't know when to stop it? Look what a mess she had made! Now we have to straighten it out. What a waste of time!"

Hsiao was stunned as though she had been beaten on the head by a club.

"Fang Hsiao!" A grave voice. Yeh, face set, was looking at her. "Why didn't you listen to the command? Imagine what would have happened if there were people under your crane!" The veteran paused and then said, "You're controlling not only the movement of a crane but the property of the people."

It was the first time she had seen Yeh so upset. She wanted to explain but words failed her. Just then her father appeared on deck and walked over to her. Yeh, his face still set, was issuing her an order, "Stay away and think it over!"

"Stop working?" She felt as though icy water had been poured over her head. She was even more flustered that her father was

standing behind her. Now the icy water turned hot and her face flushed crimson.

She walked towards the dining room, head hanging, lips pursed. She was angry with herself. "What a bore I am!" She halted at the door, reluctant to go in. Taking her completely unawares two hands suddenly covered her eyes from behind. It must be Chih-yin, who was always playing pranks. "Away with you!" she said petulantly and wrested herself out of her clasp.

"Angry, eh? Who's offended you?" Chih-yin asked in a deliberately irritating voice.

"No one. I myself am to blame."

"You're the offender?" Chih-yin took Hsiao by the arm and pulled her into the dining room. "Tell me frankly what's the matter," she said with concern.

Hsiao could no longer contain herself. Tears brimming in her eyes, she said, "Your father was angry with me. He doesn't want me to handle the crane. And father..."

"My father or yours?" Chih-yin asked impatiently.

"Both..." Hsiao took a deep breath.

"In that case," Chih-yin said, pretending a deep sigh, "both fathers are angry with you, criticized you and won't allow you to operate the machine." She emphasized "fathers" as though there were many fathers who had exerted pressure on her, looking so comical that Hsiao giggled.

"Little Hsiao," Chih-yin said, assuming a serious face, "think over carefully why they did not allow you to go on working."

Yeh suddenly appeared in front of them. He flung a glance at both of them, then turned and walked away.

In a flash he brought back several pieces of steamed bread and bowls of soup from the dining room. Handing Hsiao a piece of bread, Chih-yin said, "Time for lunch."

"When a child learns to walk," Yeh said in a soft voice, "it often stumbles and falls. What is to be done?"

"Get on its feet and try again," said Chih-yin.

"What do you say to that, Hsiao?" Yeh asked the pensive girl.

"Well..." Hsiao nodded.

"There's a saying among us crane operators," Yeh said, "that in order to be able to regulate the machine we must first regulate our thinking."

Thoughts crowded into Hsiao's mind as she walked back home. Why didn't Yeh allow me to operate the machine? Why did I let something distract me from doing the job? Yeh was right. In order to be able to regulate my machine I must first regulate my thinking.

In the evening Political Instructor Fang had a heart-to-heart talk with his daughter. His grey hair and the deep lines on his forehead brought out by the lamplight intensified a facial expression both serious and affectionate. "What kind of attitude do you think you should take towards a revolutionary job? Comrade Norman Bethune was very conscientious in doing his work, so are our veteran workers. But you?" The political instructor paused, then said in a clear, low voice, "Any slip in your work will inevitably bring loss to the state. On the battlefield defeat always comes in the wake of negligence. Carelessness is a kind of irresponsibility towards the revolution and the people."

A tremor went through Hsiao's whole being. "I was wrong," she said painfully. "I didn't put strict demands on myself."

The political instructor stood up and paced up and down the room. "You're like a young bird just trying your wings. The moment you can lift yourself up in the air, you forget everything. That's why you nearly dropped into the Huangpu River." This plunged Hsiao into meditation. The political instructor continued, "A colt has to gallop a lot on the prairie before he becomes a steed. Sea-gulls must exercise in storms before they can have strong wings. You'll never acquire skill without practice and trials. Yeh stopped you working for a time only to make you gallop faster and fly higher."

Hsiao mulled over these words.

"Tell me what you think," the political instructor broke the silence.

Hsiao's eyes suddenly sparkled. She reached for Chairman Mao's essay *In Memory of Norman Bethune* that lay on the table, and began to read. The political instructor smiled and left the room.

Time ticked away, second by second. Although it was late at night, Hsiao's room was still alight, and so was her face. She was deeply engrossed in studying and meditating on what Chairman Mao said in the essay.

In the notebook which she always kept handy she jotted down these lines: "I like to sing. But I'll sing out of tune if I don't go by the score. That's what happened to me today in my work. My thoughts went astray, hence the accident."

She stood up and looked around the room for things to practise manipulating a crane.

A knock on the door. Political Instructor Fang opened it. It was Yeh. "Where is our Hsiao?" he asked, warmly grasping the instructor's hand.

"In her room. Come with me." The political instructor led the way. At the door of his daughter's room, the instructor stopped short in surprise. A matchbox loaded with buttons hung in the air suspended by two strings from a horizontal bar of the mosquito net frame on the bed. The girl was manipulating the matchbox by pulling or paying out the strings.

Neither man spoke. Nor did Hsiao discover them, so absorbed was she in her practice. Quite a few moments passed before she noticed the visitors.

"Oh, Yeh!" she exclaimed.

"Pay attention to your crane," Yeh exhorted.

"Yes," she said, quickly returning to her matchbox. Only when the "cargo" was safely unloaded into an ash-tray did she begin to speak.

This little scene made everything clear to the veteran docker. He had nothing to complain about in a girl who was so conscientious with her work. "You can work on the crane tomorrow, alone," he said.

Hsiao had not expected such a generous gesture. She gaped at Yeh — what a familiar and kind face! She recognized the scar on his forehead and the story behind it. It was where the foreman of the dock in the old days had hit him. He had led his fellow long-shoremen in a bitter struggle against the bastard, who was so scared in the end that he never dared to touch the workers again. The

scar on this bronzed face was a record of decades of hard life on the dock, but the generous, contented smile came to him only after liberation — how much trust and encouragement it expressed!

"Comrade Wu, the Party secretary, also wanted to have a chat with you," he said to her. "But I told him it was not necessary. Good iron can stand all sorts of tempering and trials. You must be prepared to go through these too. How can you become fine steel otherwise?" He burst into hearty laughter.

A series of ideas flashed across her mind: control, aluminium slabs, ash-tray, independent operation.... She realized that Yeh had been trying to teach her to fly like a sea-gull, with her wings outstretched, through the storms towards the sun.

IV

The huge ship towered alongside the third berth. The words *Chang Feng* stood out boldly on the bow setting off her august stature all the more. Now thoroughly cleaned, the ship looked more majestic and ready any time to set sail for another long voyage.

Crate after crate of cargo were being lowered into her hold. As the weight increased the ship settled deeper into the water, leaving her bow above in the air. The sun beat down, shafts dancing on her well-polished railings.

An hour before she took over her shift, Hsiao received instructions from Party Secretary Wu in the dispatcher's room. "In the cargo there is one piece weighing seven tons," he said. "But our cranes can lift only three and half tons at a time. So we've commissioned a floating crane, *S.S. Sunlight*, for the purpose. It will arrive at 4:30 p.m. Can you manage that?"

"Certainly," Hsiao said with confidence, her eyes shining with determination. Then she made for the door.

"Wait a minute!" The Party secretary stopped her. "You know, this is an assignment from Yeh, who told me yesterday that you can certainly handle the job."

"Yeh...." Her eyes suddenly became moist. Grasping the sec-

retary's hands, she said, "Party Secretary Wu, I can only prove it to you by doing it."

Hsiao stepped onto *S.S. Chang Feng* with big strides. She planted the red flag which she had brought with her on top of the second cargo hatch so that she could recognize it while working. Then she climbed into the cab of her crane.

She switched on the machine. The crane began to move. The hook went up and down obediently as she willed it. The cargo crates were deposited in neat piles in the hold. Because the workers of the first shift had overfulfilled their target, the seven-ton piece had to be loaded at 3 p.m. But the floating crane would not arrive until 4:30 p.m. To the dockers every minute counted.

Party Secretary Wu and Dispatcher Kao gathered the men together to try to find a way out. It was common sense that a crane could never lift twice what it was built for. True, there was a special device on the ship kept in reserve for raising excessively heavy cargo. But it had to be readjusted before it could be used, and that would take at least one hour. "Comrades, couldn't we speed up a bit?" Hsiao could not help asking, although she knew it was not so easy to solve the problem.

"We'll try our best to fix it in an hour," said a sailor.

An hour's halt in loading? No! Her thoughts began racing like the waves on the river. Everybody offered suggestions, but none of them was practical. And time was slipping by. Hsiao remained silent but her mind was active. She remembered that when she was moving something too heavy, other dockers would give her a hand. If a heavy object could be moved by two persons, why couldn't a piece of heavy cargo be lifted by two cranes?

She jumped to her feet and gave Chih-yin a punch. "I've got it! I've got it!" she exclaimed. Chih-yin stared at her, puzzled. Hsiao explained. Chih-yin nodded as she got the idea, then she took Hsiao by the hand. They went to see the Party Secretary Wu and Old Kao, the dispatcher. They both shouted, "We've got an ideal!" as they entered.

"Let me hear it," Wu said calmly.

"We can work two cranes simultaneously, can't we?"

"Of course. That's what the men have just suggested." The Party secretary turned to Old Kao and said. "This is what they call: great minds think alike."

Everyone discussed the possible difficulties and ways and means of overcoming them. In the end, Party Secretary Wu summed up, "Hsiao and Chih-yin, you must work in perfect co-ordination."

Chih-yin and Hsiao returned confidently to their posts.

Old Kao waved his hand to start. Two huge hooks descended slowly over the seven-ton piece, then remained suspended just above it. The dockers watched and commented, eyes full of trust and encouragement. The two hooks were put into the two loops of the lead cable on the piece. Hsiao's and Chih-yin's eyes met. Both nodded. They looked at Old Kao. The veteran worker gave the signal. The motors hummed, the lead cable tautened and the huge piece began to rise. Old Kao, standing by the cargo hatch, shot a glance of encouragement to the crane operators now and then. People's heart-strings tightened.

But no one was so stirred as the political instructor. The idea of using two cranes to lift such a big piece had not occurred to him. But the method worked. He glanced at Hsiao. The girl was all attention to Old Kao's signals, her lips pressed together. She seemed no different than before. What made her so clever today? Must have been Chairman Mao's works and Yeh's instruction....

Just then Yeh arrived. He clasped the political instructor's hand, their eyes communicating with one another. Then they turned simultaneously to watch Hsiao. "Let's go to the operators' cab," said Yeh.

The huge crate suddenly gave a jerk. Old Kao promptly signalled the operators to stop and the girls promptly obeyed. The crate remained suspended in mid-air.

The political instructor also experienced a sense of suspension in his heart. Could Hsiao stand the trial? He flung a questioning look at Old Kao. The veteran worker nodded.

Chih-yin's voice suddenly rang in the air, "my machine circuit has gone dead!" This was an accident, but not unexpected. In a few moments the circuit was on again. The crate began to

Storms in a Mountain Village

Autumn. The window-panes of Yang Shih-chung's house glowed in the evening sunset as he, a leader of the poor and lower-middle peasants' association, made tea by the window. Steam pushed from the kettle and the old man's heart was in a turmoil like the water.

The night before, his son Hsi-wa had not come home until the moon had climbed high over the mountains. As the mother hurried to bring out his meal she had grumbled, "In your twenties already, but still not enough sense to come home on time!"

"I've eaten, ma," Hsi-wa answered indifferently.

"Already? Where?"

"At Third Uncle's," the son answered with the same unconcern.

It seemed incredible to the old man that his son could be so careless. Frowning, he demanded, "Why did you eat at his place? Don't you know what sort of person he is?"

"He dragged me in when I was going by with the horses. Besides, he knows his place all right these days. What's wrong with having a meal at an uncle's home?"

"Knows his place, does he?" Old Yang snorted. "You can put dates and peanuts on the same plate, but one grows on a tree and the other under the ground. They're never the same."

"All right, I won't go again," the son answered obediently, smart enough to placate the old man's anger.

Old Yang wanted to say more but he had to go to a brigade meeting. He would talk to him some other time.

Old Yang sat sipping his tea, turning over in his mind what had happened the night before. He was suspicious that Old Wolf might be up to something as far as Hsi-wa was concerned.

Old Wolf was Yang Pao-yuan, whom Hsi-wa called Third Uncle. He was Old Yang's cousin all right, but in the old society he was the local landlord's lackey, and had been a ward chief in the village. Although he now put up a meek and docile appearance before people, he actually nursed viciousness in his heart. During the cultural revolution he thought things were favourable for him, so he stirred up a lot of trouble. Later, when the people were clearing bad elements out of the class ranks, they exposed him and criticized him severely. After that he had put up an even meeker front, giving everybody a big smile and accepting any work assigned to him with what seemed like great pleasure.

This deceived some of the inexperienced young people who believed that he had washed his hands of evil for ever. And Hsi-wa had begun to address him as Third Uncle. Old Yang remained suspicious — and downright certain when Old Wolf, his thin face wreathed in smiles, had come on the sly in the spring to see Mama Yang. "I have a relative who would be the right match for Hsi-wa," he told her. "The family doesn't want any presents, just a good match. They've had an eye on Hsi-wa for a long time. Besides, the marriage would bind our two families even closer."

Mama Yang had been careful. Inquiring from different sources, she found out that the girl's father was a landlord who carried on activities against the public even after liberation. Old Yang had brought this up in a meeting of the commune members. Pointing furiously at Old Wolf, he had said, "This man is plotting against us

day and night, even in his dreams, trying to find a break-through in the younger generation of poor and lower-middle peasants. But we won't let him have it his way."

His thoughts were interrupted as Mama Yang came in to set the table for supper. "Why isn't Hsi-wa home yet? It's late," she complained. Old Yang was more worried than his wife, though he didn't say so.

Hsi-wa was the brigade's stockman and a hard worker. The horses under his care were sturdy and strong, and were praised by everybody who saw them. The red mare was ready to foal and Old Yang had gone to the stable two days ago especially to check up on his son's work. Hsi-wa was preparing fodder, chopping finely and mixing thoroughly. And the horses were munching contentedly. The son turned to the father and asked with a smile, "Any criticisms, dad?" Very satisfied, the old man had kept it to himself, however. There was no fault in Hsi-wa's work, inexperienced though he was with class struggle. He had grown up in the new society and didn't know hardship or struggle. Something was lacking in him. Why had Old Wolf invited him to a meal? And would Hsi-wa be able to see through his evil designs, if he had any?

A whip cracked outside the door. Mama Yang hurried out. It was not Hsi-wa but Shuan-pao, the shepherd with his flock.

Old Yang had finished his supper and gone into the other room when Hsi-wa returned with a bundle of bamboo, putting it quietly in a corner of the courtyard and coming into the kitchen.

"How come that you've been cutting bamboo, Hsi-wa?" his mother asked.

"I cut some on my way back," he answered, shovelling noodles into his mouth. "But my mare has been well cared for too."

Mama Yang caught sight of the billhook Hsi-wa hung on the door. She took it down and examined it. "Whose is this?"

Hsi-wa helped himself to another bowl of noodles, sat down and said, "Third Uncle's. I grazed my mare at Haitzu Valley today where the grass was thicker. He was cutting bamboo there and told me that there was a lot of bamboo growing on the cliff. He loaned me his billhook and urged me to go and cut some. I didn't want to

go at first, but he offered to look after my mare for me. So I went. It really didn't take me long to get this bundle."

"Hsi-wa," Old Yang called from the other room. Hsi-wa had always been afraid of his father. He went in apprehensively. Would he be criticized for cutting bamboo?

His father took the pipe from his mouth and knocked it loudly against the bed, his face solemn, brows knitted, wrinkles etching deeper into his forehead. "You've been cutting bamboo, eh?" he asked, eyeing his son. "What about the mare?"

"Third Uncle drove her back. He was gone when I came down the slope. I tried to overtake him but I failed for he was too fast."

"Where's your class consciousness, Hsi-wa?" Old Yang stood up abruptly and said, "Let's go to the stable right away. Good thing you came straight here for your meal first. Hum!" Was he angry!

"I..." Hsi-wa wanted to explain, but the old man walked out, hands behind his back. Hsi-wa took the lantern from his mother and followed, his concern for the mare rising. Third Uncle had promised to look after her, but why should he take her back without letting him know?

Night had fallen and the village was draped in darkness. His father's pipe flickered in the dark, and though Hsi-wa walked with big strides he found it hard to catch up.

"Hsi-wa," the old man said without turning his head, "I want to tell you something."

"Certainly."

Hsi-wa quickened his steps.

"The land reform movement started when you were only three years old. I was busy with the work team visiting the peasant households."

Hsi-wa wondered why his father was repeating old tales.

"One day that Third Uncle of yours came and invited me to a meal. What was behind his invitation, I wondered, and decided to go and find out. As soon as I entered his house I was face to face with the local despotic landlord who was duly punished afterwards. The landlord offered me a cigarette, all smiles. They were trying to buy

me over, I thought. 'Don't trouble yourselves,' I told them. 'We paupers have stiff bones. You won't get anywhere with this.' I walked out on them. People of their kind are vicious, they have knives instead of hearts. We must be able to see through them and not fall for their bait."

Father and son entered the stable. Hsi-wa examined each horse carefully. The state of the red mare shook him badly. She looked uncomfortable, her hind legs shivering and her head lowering and reaching the ground again and again. Hsi-wa caressed the mare and looked at his father appealingly, "I didn't think that..."

His lips clamped tight, Old Yang made no comment. He examined the mare carefully, looked at her throat, pressed his ears to her stomach and tapped her. "She might foal too early," he announced. "Was she all right this afternoon?"

"Yes." Hsi-wa was on the verge of tears.

"Has she been carrying anything?"

"No."

"What does this mean?" the old man snapped. Hsi-wa brought his lantern closer and couldn't believe his eyes. A spot on the mare's stomach had been rubbed raw. Only heavy loads carried at a gallop could cause this.

"I'll have it out with him!" Hsi-wa was furious.

His father pulled him back and said, "Take the mare to the vet first. Then go home and get your mother to cook some porridge for the mare."

Old Yang came out of the stable and headed for Yang Pao-yuan's house. The evening breeze was cool. The sky over the mountains was brightening as the moon rose.

Yang Pao-yuan had retired early. He locked the door and put out the lamp soon after supper, very pleased with himself. "Old Yang, you've been finding fault with me all the time, criticizing and struggling against me. You'll find it tough to straighten out what I've done today. Hsi-wa had a meal at my place the day before and claimed me as his uncle. I made him go up the slope to cut bamboo this afternoon so that I could have the red mare to carry my two

heavy loads back. If something went wrong with her, of course the stockman will be blamed, leaving the mare behind to cut bamboo for himself, while I, Yang Pao-yuan, looked after the 'interest of the collective' and took the mare back to the stable. You're in for trouble now, Hsi-wa...."

The door banged. He sat up and asked, "Who is it?"

"Open up quickly!" several young men demanded.

Old Wolf's worry lifted a little. He opened the door to a group of militiamen. "What brings you here?" he smiled ingratiatingly. "Still busy at this hour?"

The young men were in a fury, having discovered that Old Wolf had secretly gone up on the mountain to cut bamboo. "You stay off the mountain!" they snapped, glaring.

Old Yang strode into the courtyard just in time to hear Old Wolf say, "But I thought I was different from landlords and rich peasants who were not allowed to go up the mountain!" He swallowed whatever he wanted to say as Old Yang stormed in.

Without a word the old man looked over the place until he found two bundles of bamboo and a bundle of wood on top of them. He threw the wood to the ground and lifted the bamboo bundles to try their weight. "What a vicious wolf you are!" His gaze pierced like an arrow.

"I shouldn't go up the mountain to cut bamboo," Old Wolf muttered quickly. "I admit my error."

"Did you bring the mare back today?" Old Yang charged.

"Yes, I helped Hsi-wa to drive it back." Old Wolf was flustered. He stole a glance at Old Yang to see what he could gain by this.

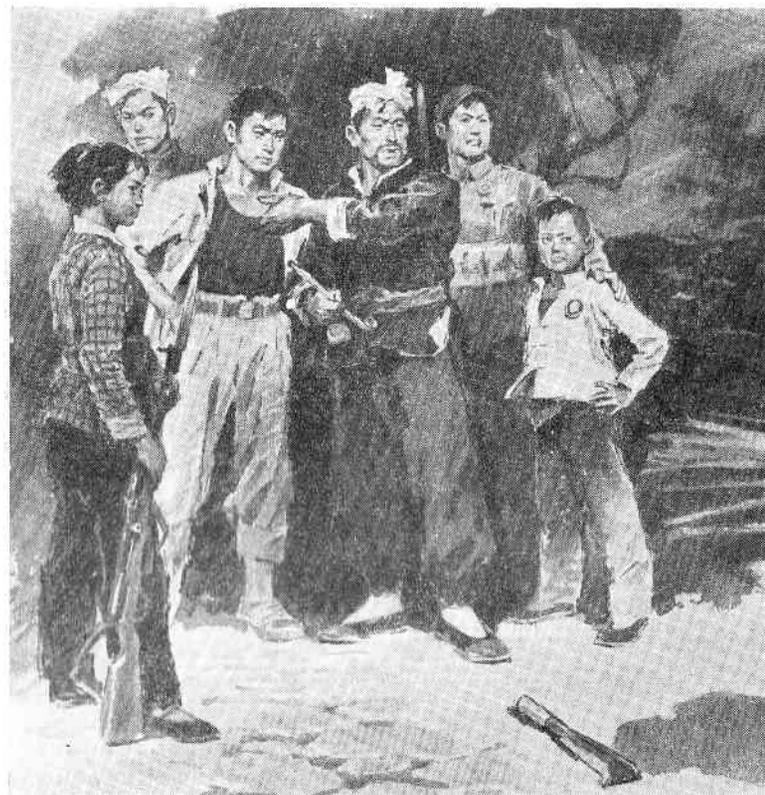
"You must be thanked then, I suppose?" Old Yang took out his pipe and filled it.

Old Wolf calmed down.

"How did you take your bamboo back?" Old Yang fired.

"I...I carried it back," Old Wolf stammered.

Hsi-wa hurried in at this moment and told his dad in a low voice that the red mare was taken to the veterinary station. She had been given an injection and medicine and looked much better.



Old Wolf overheard Hsi-wa. He looked up and greeted him. "You've come back, Hsi-wa?"

Hsi-wa was so disgusted that he burst out, "I know you for what you are now," and flung something at the landlord.

"A billhook!" Everybody was surprised.

"A vicious wolf, that's what he is! He invited me to a meal one day and the next he lent me this billhook, coaxing me to cut some bamboo. Our red mare nearly had a miscarriage!" he stopped and hit his thigh, unable to find the words for his anger.

Old Wolf stood up as if very wronged. "You mustn't blame me for my good will to you...."

The shepherd Shuan-pao tore in: "Stop lying! I saw you driv-

ing the red mare with the bundles of bamboo on her back. I tried to catch up with my flock but you walked so fast I couldn't."

The militiamen were furious. "Why did you make the mare carry such heavy loads? What were you up to? This is plain sabotage!"

The moon rode up, brightening the ground, the houses and trees. His head lowered, Old Wolf edged over into the shade of a corner.

"You failed to win over the poor and lower-middle peasants to your side, so you tried your hand on the younger generation. You think you can get anywhere with them?" said Old Yang, towering in the moonlight. Old Wolf glanced at him, his head still hanging.

"What happened today can be considered a good thing too," Old Yang continued. "It teaches us a lesson that people like you might pretend to be meek and obedient, but all the time you're plotting against us behind our backs." His clear voice rang out in the night.

Mama Yang came in and threw a padded coat over her husband's shoulders. She lifted the lantern in her hand and sneered, "Come out into the light, Old Wolf, the shade can't hide you!"

"Dad," Hsi-wa said, very stirred, "I've learned a lesson. I realize now that I should never forget the word 'class'. Tomorrow I'll take the bamboo I cut to the brigade to show everybody as a lesson on class struggle."

Old Yang nodded with approval. Hsi-wa turned to go. The old man took the lamp from his wife and gazed with satisfaction at his son.

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien



A New Day Begins (ivory)

NEW CARVINGS

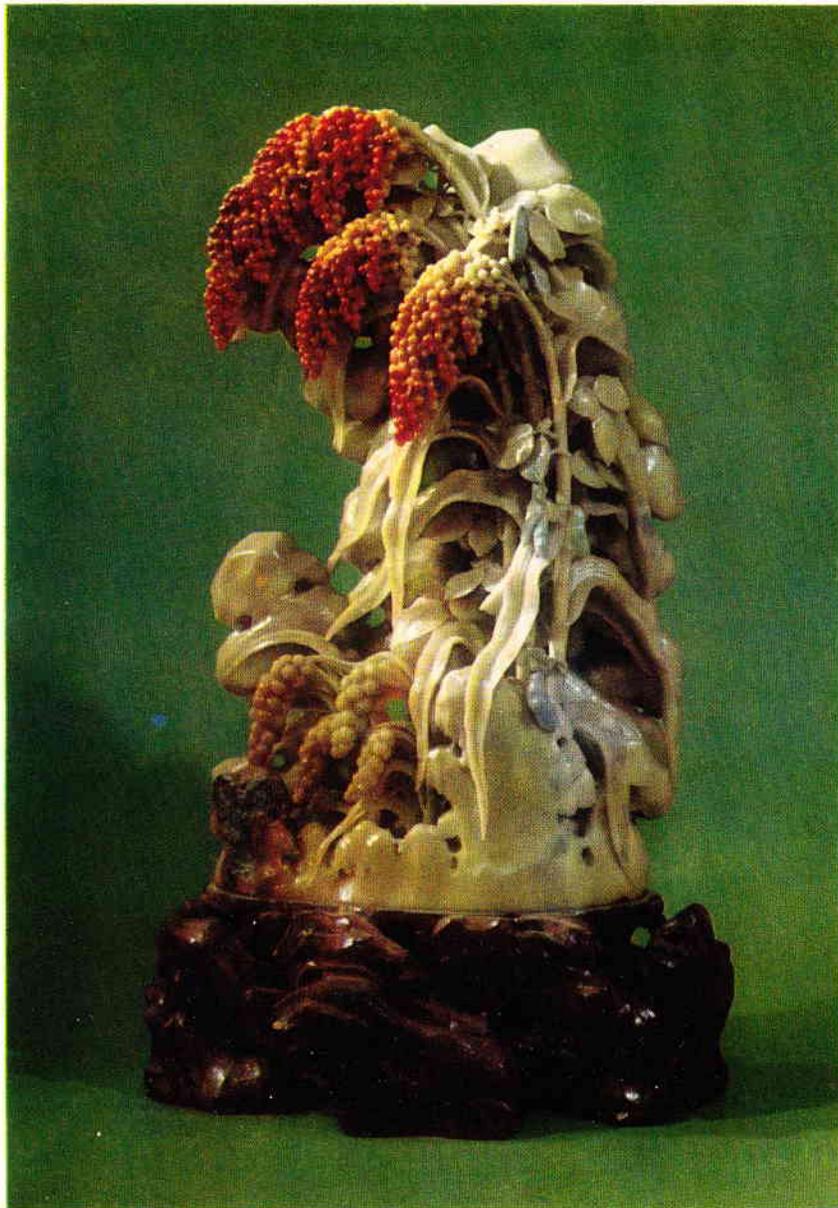


Look, Our Satellite! (ivory)

On the Watch for the Enemy (wood) ▶



*Chang Tao-yu and
Chang Cheng-yu*



Kaoliang and Millet (stone)

The New Captain

Close to Gold Hill Bay lies the headquarters of a fishing brigade. By studying the writings of Mao Tsetung and applying what they had learned to their job, the fishermen in the brigade have been able to revolutionize their thinking and consequently bring back fine catches, fulfilling their quota each season. The crews of the motorized fishing boat No. 715 and her auxiliary boat were the brigade's advanced unit. For several consecutive years they had managed to maintain this leading position and keep the special red banner fluttering from their main mast. But this autumn, much to everyone's surprise, No. 715's catch fell behind, being less than that of Ship No. 717. The red banner had to be transferred to No. 717's main mast.

To lose the red banner to another ship was not in itself such a big thing. More important by far was that their smaller catch meant contributing less to the state. The crew of No. 715 were quick to realize this. They went to No. 717 and other ships to learn from them. In a study class the crew summed up their experience and discussed the reason for their failure and agreed that it was because they had become smug and complacent. So many previous victories had made them

lax. After acknowledging this the crew were full of pep and determined to change their attitude and bring back a good catch that winter on the hair-tail fish run. But unfortunately, right then their old captain went off to the hospital to be treated for an attack of rheumatism.

The crew reported this to the leadership of the fishing fleet and asked for a new captain. They waited for several days, but no one turned up. It was aggravating!

Finally, at noon one day the new captain arrived, accompanied by Party Secretary Chou. The crew went on deck to welcome them. Seeing the captain was only a young fellow in his twenties, Ah-hsing, in charge of the net, felt rather uneasy. He drew the Party secretary aside and said, "Comrade Chou, in sailing a boat much depends on the captain. Now Ah-hai is a fine youngster, but don't you think he is a little young to be a captain?"

"Whether sailing ships or catching fish — it all depends on how you apply Mao Tsetung Thought to the collective work on your boat. Ah-hai is a Party member and has had plenty of experience as second-in-command on No. 717. The Party branch committee went into his qualifications thoroughly before deciding to send him to your ship." Chou paused for a moment, then went on jokingly, "Maybe you don't like this nephew of yours. All right, I'll send him back."

Ah-hsing knew young Captain Ah-hai well. He and Ah-hai's father had been distant cousins. Before liberation, the two of them had worked together on a ship for a tyrant, the owner of a fishing fleet. They had slaved all year round in all sorts of weather. One winter when they were far out at sea a fresh gale began to blow from the west. Enormous foam-crested waves bore down upon the boat like a herd of stampeding horses. Sea-gulls flew low, screaming before the approaching storm. The tyrant ordered the crew to continue fishing before the tide turned and would not allow them to return to port. The boat was driven into an area of submerged reefs known as the White Breaker Rocks, where she was rammed and sank with all hands including Ah-hai's father. Ah-hsing and one other fisherman escaped from the wreck and since then Ah-hsing had helped his sister-in-law to bring up Ah-hai, his cousin's child.

After liberation, Ah-hai went to school for several years and then became a fisherman. He grew into a fine lad who, with deep love for Chairman Mao, was an able hand and a clear thinker. Before long he was promoted to be the engineer on No. 717. During the cultural revolution, he fought in the front ranks defending Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. Everyone in the fishing brigade spoke highly of him as a promising lad. His uncle, Ah-hsing, was very pleased. But now Ah-hai was to be a captain, Ah-hsing could not quite conceal some fears he had about his nephew's ability. Party Secretary Chou's words helped him to overcome them. He went to the deck and looked the young man over from head to foot as if he were a stranger.

Ah-hai, a sturdy, sun-tanned young man, was not at all embarrassed. He spoke quite modestly, saying, "I've plenty to learn from your crew, uncle."

"Well, Ah-hai, get acquainted with the ship first," his uncle suggested. "We're leaving for the fishing-ground in a few days now."

When Ah-hsing started to introduce the new captain to the crew, Party Secretary Chou interrupted with a grin:

"They may have worked on different ships but all our crews meet at least several times a year. He doesn't need to be introduced. That'd be like cooking salted fish in soy sauce — quite unnecessary!"

Ah-chin, Ah-fa, Ah-jung, Little Chen and some other crew members caught Ah-hai by the arms and pulled him into the cabin. Their laughter flooded the whole vessel.

II

A few days after Ah-hai's arrival the brigade leadership called a general meeting to relay instructions from the fishery headquarters about the winter hair-tail fish run. After the meeting was over, Ah-hai led his crew in studying Chairman Mao's teaching that "**Political work is the life-blood of all economic work**" so that they all had a better understanding of the relationship between politics and production. Then they discussed the headquarters' instructions, plan-

ned their quota and agreed on some concrete methods of work to meet winter fishing conditions. Every member had either some advices or suggestions to make. They were determined to overfulfil their quota and catch more fish that season.

The sky was cloudless. At dawn a mist hung low over the sea like a gauze curtain until a morning breeze tore it to ribbons and scattered it far and wide.

The rising sun gilded the surface of the sea. The majestic strains of *The East Is Red* rang out on the fishing boats as they left the quay. A new battle had begun!

No. 715 led the motorized fishing fleet, cutting through the waves like a knife. In the wake of each was an ever-lengthening silver streamer that glistened in the sun.

As No. 715 and her auxiliary boat entered the fishing-ground Little Chen, the observer, watched the fluoroscreen of the fish detector constantly. Captain Ah-hai stood at the helm, calling now and then: "Port twenty-five", "Starboard thirteen..." The vessel answered obediently.

"Fish shoal ahead!" Little Chen reported.

"Good — continue your watch," was the new captain's calm reply.

"More shoals, large ones!" again Little Chen reported with some excitement.

All hands took up their positions ready for action. They expected the captain to give an immediate order to lower the net. The seine, about sixteen hundred feet long when lowered into the sea between the lead boat and its auxiliary, would soon fill with silvery hair-tail fish. How they would thrash about in a frenzy as the net was pulled in through the foaming water. But Captain Ah-hai did not give the order. He scanned the expanse of water ahead where an occasional hair-tail flashed over the surface of the water. He turned to glance at the rest of the fleet following closely enough that he could hear the engines and the laughter of the men aboard. The auxiliary boat had spotted the shoals too and signalled that they were ready to tow the seine out.

"Notify the command ship: Large shoals ahead," the captain gave his order.

Ah-fa jumped onto the platform, flagged the signal and resumed his post.

"Notify auxiliary boat to sail on," directed the captain.

"Auxiliary boat ... sail on," Ah-fa signalled.

"Net-chief, is the seine ready?" asked the new captain.

"All's well," Ah-hsing reported back. "All ready to spread the net."

"Good!" Ah-hai answered. As he spoke the crew took up the seine and gear, anticipating his order to lower it. But Captain Ah-hai, glancing again at the other vessels, gave his next order: "All sailors at ease. Full speed ahead!"

The boat plunged ahead at top speed, on the crest of a wave at one moment, then slipping down into the deep troughs. The sailors obeyed their new captain's order. But Ah-hsing, showing his concern, demanded doubtfully:

"What are you after, Ah-hai? Why not eat the meat before your eyes?"

"Uncle," the new captain replied earnestly, "although we work on No. 715, we must also think of the other boats and not only of our own quota. If we let down our net here we'll be in the way of all the others. If we move on, they can also reach this shoal and we'll all have a good haul."

"Captain's right," the sailors agreed readily. "Mao Tsetung Thought teaches us to be concerned about the whole fleet."

III

The sun set behind a screen of crimson clouds. When No. 715 lowered her seine, after cruising for a while over the fishing-ground the catch was fine. Each haul averaged about two tons of squirming fish.

The sailors were enthusiastic and worked with a will, trying to bring in as many hauls as possible before dark. Captain Ah-hai stood gazing over the sea deep in thought.

The crew brought in their last haul as the lanterns were lit. They twinkled across the dark water like stars. There were very few fish brought up in this last net. Obviously, it would be foolish to lower

it again. Captain Ah-hai ordered the auxiliary boat to come close and cast anchor for the night.

The day's work over, the men gathered in the cabin to relax and talk things over. But Captain Ah-hai stayed on deck still gazing thoughtfully over the moonlit water, his mind full of questions: Why can we catch fish only by day but not by night? Where do the shoals disappear after dark? Do they leave the fishing-ground at night and come back the next day?

Not knowing the answers he fished out a copy of *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tsetung* from his pocket and began to study beside one of the swinging lanterns. He thought to himself: "The wisdom of the masses is inexhaustible." He decided to take his questions to the crew.

In the cabin, feeling none of the day's fatigue, he sat down beside Ah-hsing. "I've been wondering, uncle," he said, "why do we never catch fish after nightfall?"

The net-chief smiled. "There's an old saying among fishermen that hair-tails have some magic power, because they swim away in the small hours."

"But where do they go?" persisted Ah-hai.

"Where? Hmmm... I've never thought about it. Fishing in the daytime and sleeping at night is an old habit. We've been doing it for hundreds of years."

Others who were listening became interested. Ah-jung went up to them, saying, "You're onto something there, captain. One thing I've noticed is that we can catch some fish on a very bright moonlit night but never when it's very dark — and we get better hauls when it's warm than when it's cold..."

"It's queer," Little Chen joined in. "There are actually the shadows of shoals on the fluoroscreen at night, but the nets come up empty. Why can't we catch them?"

"That's it!" the captain exclaimed. "If we can solve this riddle, these fishing-grounds will yield far more for the state."

"All right! Let's solve this riddle," the others agreed.

"Well, first we should discuss what we know about the ways the

fish move about at night. Only when we learn about their habits at night can we hope to catch them," suggested the new captain.

It was a lively discussion. Most of the fishermen came up with some information.

"So far we only know that hair-tail fish like warmth and light. In the daytime they swim near the surface where they have both. At night, when the surface of the water is colder and dark maybe they swim down deeper. We should experiment and see if we can catch them in deeper water."

"That's right," said Ah-chin, the engineer, as he took the floor. "I suggest that we drop the seine about sixty feet deeper at night. I believe we might have a good haul this way..."

"We shall have to weight the net to keep it down," the new captain cut in. "What about attaching some additional stones to it? I think we can drop it to the required depth then."

All thought it was a good idea. Ah-jung was the most impatient man in the crew. He was ready to go into action right then. But the old net-chief Ah-hsing raised an objection.

"Your ideas are all right, I think," he began. "But the sea bed is very irregular, you know. What if the net is torn on some hidden rocks? This is no way to go about it."

"Let's have a try, anyhow," insisted Ah-jung.

"Your sense of responsibility is fine, uncle," the new captain said patiently, "and we should learn from you. But according to the chart, the sea bed is over two hundred and eighty feet deep here and there are no sub-surface rocks except for White Breaker Rocks. If we lower the seine to about two hundred feet, I don't think there'll be any danger of it being torn."

Ah-hsing realized that the young captain had studied the charts of the sea bed as well as any veteran. "So long as there's no danger to the net, let's have a try then," he agreed.

After careful preparations, No. 715 and her auxiliary set out to attempt their first night catch. The seine bellied in a huge semi-circle between the two boats as they gathered speed. Everyone was keyed up when the ropes showed signs of strain. After about twenty minutes the boats began to slow down. Captain Ah-hai ordered them

to speed up. Although Ah-chin had kept the engine at full speed, the boat continued to slow down. The ropes of the seine became more and more taut.

Sweat broke out on Ah-hsing's forehead. If the ropes snapped the brand-new nylon seine would sink to the bottom of the sea and be lost; even worse, if the net fouled the propellor it would cause even greater damage. "What's wrong, Ah-hai?" he called out. "We've lost speed." The net-chief was very worried. "Suppose the net's caught on a snag? What a calamity!" he shouted in alarm.

The ropes slackened off a little. Suddenly the crew ran to the stern to see what was causing such a noise. The seine was bulging and writhing like a huge monster in the waves — full of struggling hair-tail fish! The crew all began to shout and laugh. The sailors were so beside themselves with joy that they made no attempt to haul in the catch. "Hurry! Haul them up!" the net-chief yelled. "D'you think you'll get them in the hold by laughing at them?"

The auxiliary boat neared and the men slowly hauled in their ropes. The excited crew plunged the flapping fish into the hold from the bulging net. It took them more than an hour to bring in that catch of more than five tons.

They went on working forgetting their fatigue. After the fourth haul, Ah-hsing was about to drop the net again when the captain ordered, "Take a rest. We'll go over to the command ship."

"Why not another haul, Ah-hai?" the net-chief asked. He was puzzled over the decision. "What's your big idea in going over to the command ship?"

"To report to the brigade leadership."

"You're like a child. Can't you keep anything to yourself?" Ah-hsing grumbled. "Why can't you report in the morning? If we stop to report now we'll lose several hauls."

"If one ship makes some good hauls that's good; but if the whole fleet does the same that's a great deal better," Ah-hai explained earnestly. "It's true we'll lose a few hauls. But if we recommend our methods to the others, the total haul will be in the thousands of tons."

IV

Information about No. 715's successful night catch was broadcast to the whole fishing fleet. Quite a number of men from other crews came aboard to hear more details. Captain Ah-hai and his crew spent two days explaining everything to them all.

After the last one had left Captain Ah-hai gathered his crew together and worked out a plan to make up for their lost time. Their decision to increase the ship's speed when spreading the net and to shorten the actual time to haul in each catch would help. But just when they were beginning to catch up the weather suddenly changed. The forecast said a cold wave was approaching accompanied by a fresh northwesterly gale and probably a snowfall. An order came from the fishery headquarters that the fleet was to return to port to escape the storm. This threw cold water on all the plans of No. 715.

"Damn the weather!" fumed Ah-jung. "Why does it change just when we're doing so well?"

"What do you say about taking a gamble with this wind?" Captain Ah-hai asked deliberately.

"I'm game!" Ah-jung shouted emphatically. "Let's try for a few more hauls before the storm breaks."

"A shoal always runs before a wind. I think we should seize this chance to make a big catch," said the captain. "We can reach port in time. There's a short cut we can take. It's through the White Breaker Rocks. If we go that way it'll only take about two hours, I think."

"What? Go through those White Breaker Rocks — at night?" Ah-hsing was shocked. "White Breaker Rocks are a natural barrier, Ah-hai. There're sub-surface rocks and sharp reefs over a wide area for many miles. There's a strong current too. The water's rough there even on a calm day. The old sailors used to say that nine out of ten boats cannot escape from being sunk passing there. In the evil old days when your father and I worked for that wicked old devil we drifted on to the White Breaker Rocks and struck a reef there. Your father died. Haven't you learned a lesson from what happened to your father?"

"Uncle, I'll never forget the cause of my father's death. It was that evil man-eating society," the young man replied firmly. "But isn't it true that there's a safe passage through those reefs?"

"Well, yes. But the channel's only about thirty feet wide. There's plenty of sharp turns too. It's very dangerous!"

"In the rotten old days some fishermen were forced to take that passage," the captain explained. "Sometimes by chance, they made it. It's different now. The Communist Party and Chairman Mao are concerned about us fishermen. Beacons have been set all round that area and there are buoys along the channel. So, if we're bold and careful we'll sail through quite safely." Captain Ah-hai glanced up at the sky, paused a moment and then told his crew, "It'll be difficult all right, but I'm sure we'll get through safely."

The captain's decision inspired his crew. They gathered around and supported his ideas.

"Comrades! We're full of confidence," he went on. "We must bear in mind Chairman Mao's teaching that **'strategically we should despise all our enemies, but tactically we should take them all seriously'**. I suggest that while we're pulling in our last hauls each work group should discuss what safety measures to take for our return to port tonight. Does everyone agree?"

All shouted approval. The men then resumed their work and while spreading the seine conscientiously discussed safety measures. Captain Ah-hai went over to Ah-hsing and explained:

"It will be difficult, uncle. But we're fishing for the revolution and we should be daring and take risks. We can face all difficulties if we pluck up our courage."

Ah-hsing hesitated for a moment, then said slowly, "Since the others are all determined, let's try to tackle the channel through the White Breaker Rocks."

In the calm preceding the wind the catch was a good one. The average haul was around five tons, the best being over ten tons. The men were so enthusiastic they seemed to have forgotten a storm was on its way.

Sea-gulls swooped down low over the waves, snatching at little fish swept up to the surface by the strong undercurrents. Dark clouds

from the northwest gathered overhead. When captain Ah-hai saw this and glanced at the great heaving waste of the sea, he knew the storm had reached them. The temperature dropped rapidly.

As the last haul was brought up, he ordered the return to port. The loaded fishing boat headed for the White Breaker Rocks at full speed, riding the wind and waves as steadily as a warship.

Weather changes quickly at sea. Dark clouds now covered the entire sky; the wind gathered in strength. Showers of spray flung onto the deck in torrents quickly froze. The next instant from the lurid, ochre-coloured blanket above snowflakes whirled down savagely like a myriad plucked goose feathers. Visibility was reduced to twenty or thirty feet. Captain Ah-hai calculated the distance they had covered and ordered Little Chen to check the course. According to the chart the signal lights on White Breaker Rocks should already be in sight but ahead there was nothing but the opaque whirling snow.

The gale grew in violence. Giant waves tossed the boat about like a chip. But No. 715 and her auxiliary went on into the teeth of the wind like a brace of stormy petrels.

Above the roar of wind and sea they could all hear the booming of waves dashing against rocks. The White Breaker Rocks were not far beyond. As they approached through the chaos of water a brilliant red beacon light appeared beside a narrow channel. It stood sentinel on a huge rock at the entrance.

"Watch out!" the captain shouted. At the same time he swung the wheel hard over and the ship nosed into the channel — the only passage through that rock-bound stormy sea. Ah-hsing smiled approvingly. He was proud of this brave young captain Ah-hai, and the sailors obeyed orders precisely.

"Port poles!"

Eight men on the port bow thrust their poles into the rock-strewn water and the boat swerved away swiftly.

"Starboard poles!"

Eight others poled on the starboard bow and the ship veered off from the reef.



A sharp turn. The captain ordered all sixteen men to thrust their poles against the rocks ahead while he himself swung the wheel. The ship followed the twisting channel successfully. So dangerous were the treacherous rocks on either side of this zigzag channel that speed had to be reduced. Yet in spite of this the swift current carried the boat along. Dangers were still lurking ahead.

Captain Ah-hai stood calmly at the wheel as though he were steering along a calm estuary. But his eyes never left the rushing water before the prow.

"Cast the anchors!" he directed. Two anchors, weighing more than 200 kilogrammes each, were lowered and the boat slowed down. Although tossed violently up and down, the men on deck stood fearlessly in the storm, quite confident of their new captain's orders.

A red light flashed directly ahead. It was a warning that the channel turned sharply southwest at a right angle. This was known as

Broadside Wave Turn, the last stage of the channel and the most critical point on the whole journey. A boat could only turn safely by seizing a chance and changing course quickly to avoid being hit broadside on by the waves.

The new captain didn't bat an eyelid. His order came immediately after one great wave rushed past: "Weigh anchor! Full speed ahead!" He swung the wheel over hard so that the boat turned and shot on through the narrow passage on her course.

No. 715 and her auxiliary steered past the last few rocks and headed for the port. The sailors looked back triumphantly at the White Breaker Rocks quickly lost in the flying spume and snowflakes. Captain Ah-hai remained calm and composed. Looking at this stalwart young man, Ah-hsing's heart swelled with pride. He walked to meet him.

The new captain, keeping one hand on the wheel, beckoned to Ah-hsing, and gripped his hand tightly....

Chen Erh

A Story About Swords

In 1963 in Linchu County, Shantung Province, Chinese archaeologists unearthed a bronze sword, about 58 cm. long. Its point is broken; the sturdy grip tapers off towards the pommel. There is no pattern on its blade or hilt, but close to the tang there is a two-line inscription: "Forged for Fu Cha, King of the State of Wu, for his own use." Obviously this sword belonged to the sovereign of the State of Wu in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-475 B.C.).

In December 1965 in Chiangling County, Hupeh Province, another bronze sword, about 55.5 cm. long, was found beside the remains of an aristocrat of the State of Chu in a mammoth tomb dating from the Warring States Period (476-221 B.C.). Sheathed in a lacquered wooden scabbard, it has a hollow round hilt, broad near the pommel and narrow at the tang, its point slightly curving upward. The hilt is protected by a silk cord wound around it, and has a protective guard inlaid with blue glass. The blade is chased with arabesque designs. A two-line inscription below the hilt reads: "Kou

Chien, King of the State of Yueh, had this sword forged for his personal use."

Both swords have sharp blades. At the time of their discovery the one belonging to Fu Cha, King of Wu, was partly rusty but that of Kou Chien, King of Yueh, was not. According to the ancient *Book of Yueh* Kou Chien had five swords. "They are as lovely as hibiscus, as bright as stars, as smooth as calm water, as hard as granite, and as glossy as ice." The unearthed sword testifies to the above description.

During the Spring and Autumn Period Chinese society changed from that of slavery to feudalism. Kings of various states expanded their frontiers and consolidated their kingdoms by annexing or grabbing neighbouring territories. They warred among themselves, one state against another, now and then forming alliances against common enemies. Diplomacy played an active role in these intrigues, in which swords were used as precious gifts to win goodwill and support.

According to ancient historical records the King of Chin fought a war against the State of Chu for the sole purpose of securing a well-known bronze sword belonging to the King of Chu. When the Kings of Tsin and Cheng were informed that the King of Chu had made three fine swords they sent special envoys to demand them. When this was refused, they made an alliance and laid siege to Chu, which they maintained for more than three years. All this shows the important place of bronze swords in the society of feudal aristocrats.

The Kings of Wu and Yueh, two states on the lower reaches of the Yangtse River whose capital cities were in present-day Soochow and Shaohsing respectively, frequently made war on each other. Kuang, the crown prince of Wu, waited impatiently for his father's throne. He hatched a plot to murder the old man, whom he invited to a banquet. During the feast, the cook, an assassin in disguise, served a large fish, in which a dagger was hidden. He drew out the weapon and killed the old king. The crown prince changed his name to Ho Lu and proclaimed himself King of Wu.

Ho Lu was at loggerheads with the old king of Yueh. When the old man died and was succeeded by Kou Chien, his son, Ho Lu invaded the State of Yueh, but was defeated by strategem. Ho Lu died from an arrow wound received in battle. When his son Fu Cha ascended the throne, he trained a crack army, hoping to avenge his father. But Kou Chien, King of Yueh, informed of this, took the initiative by launching a surprise attack on Wu.

The campaign, however, failed. Kou Chien offered to surrender, but Fu Cha rejected this. Kou Chien therefore decided to fight to the death. Only after his ministers had repeatedly counselled him to refrain from such a hopeless undertaking did he take another course. He bribed Fu Cha's favourite courtier with gold, treasures and the great beauty Hsi Shih, and through the good offices of this man, his surrender was accepted by Fu Cha, King of Wu.

When Kou Chien returned to his own country, he was determined to seek revenge. In order to maintain this resolution he slept on brambles and sipped gall. After the State of Yueh had been subdued, Wu became a great power. When attending a conference of kings at Fengchiu, in present-day Honan Province, Fu Cha was escorted by his best troops in a show of prowess, leaving only old and debilitated soldiers at home. This was a fine chance for Kou Chien. He seized the opportunity, invaded the country, killed Fu Cha's son and plundered the kingdom of Wu of all its riches. Then it was Fu Cha's turn to beg his conqueror to accept his surrender.

Four years later the kings of these two states fought again. Fu Cha was totally defeated. After another three years Kou Chien, King of Yueh, attacked Wu again. Fu Cha was besieged in his capital. This time Kou Chien rejected Fu Cha's offer of surrender. Fu Cha, King of Wu, had no choice but to commit suicide; his state was completely destroyed. The legend of "sleeping on brambles and sipping gall" originated in the conflict between these two states. It has come down to us as a lively and colourful story.

To ensure success in war the kings of various states constantly improved their weapons. These consisted of lances, spears and halberds, daggers, swords, bows and arrows, cross-bows, shields and

coats of mail. Swords of bronze had a special place in those days. The kings, particularly Kou Chien and Fu Cha, loved to carry and collect bronze swords. It is very likely that before the State of Wu was destroyed, Fu Cha had exchanged swords with the King of Chi. This accounts for the fact that his sword has now been found in the former State of Chi.

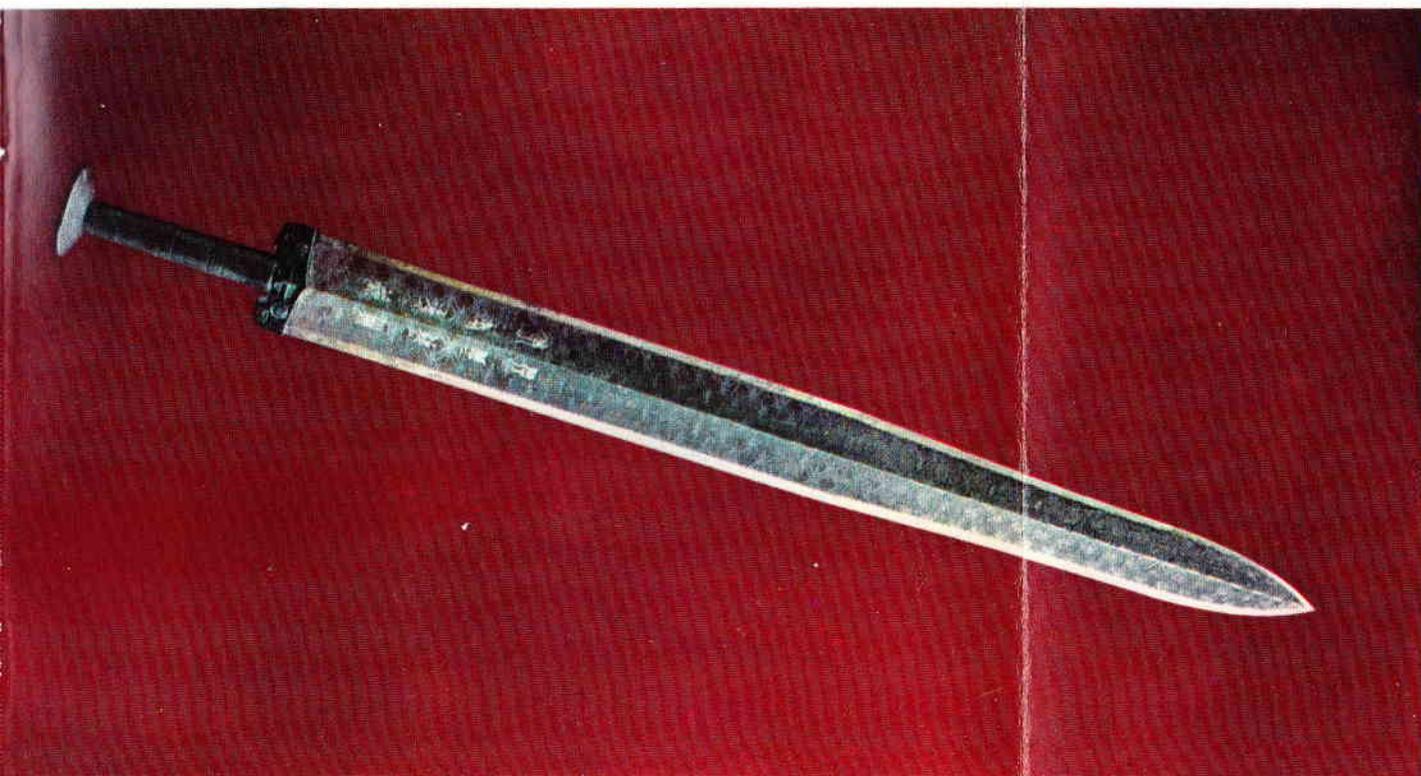
Another possibility, however, cannot be excluded. Kou Chien, King of Yueh, might have acquired the sword after the fall of Wu and exchanged it for another with the King of Chi, whose capital was situated in present-day Lintzu County close by Linchu County in Shantung Province where the sword was discovered. In 332 B.C., the State of Yueh was conquered by the King of Chu, and possibly Kou Chien's sword was captured by the Chu army and finally presented to a powerful minister, who had it placed in his tomb. Chiangling County in Hupeh Province was the site of the former capital of Chu and it is here Kou Chien's sword was recently unearthed.

The extensive use of bronze in the forging of swords also promoted its use in the manufacture of other articles. In the later years of the Spring and Autumn Period bronze wares were made in parts, which were then assembled and finished by welding them together with an alloy. Legend has it that when two swords belonging to Ho Lu were being made, three hundred young men and women participated in the work, drawing the bellows day and night. According to a chemical analysis made by the Hunan Provincial Museum, a good bronze sword contains copper, lead, tin, zinc, antimony, nickel and iron. Most of the swords of this period have resisted rust even to this day. This is probably due to the fact that the craftsmen of that time had already developed the technique of overlaying their finished articles with tin, silver, gold or mercury.

Chairman Mao teaches us that in feudal society "**the peasants and the handicraft workers were the basic classes which created the wealth and culture of this society**". The discovery of swords belonging to Kou Chien and Fu Cha provides another proof of the high level of metallurgical skill the Chinese labouring people

had attained at that time. It is also a testimony of the frequent wars waged by the ruling class which brought much sufferings to the people.

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, a willow-leaf-shaped sword of the 11th century B.C., a spinal-column-shaped sword of the 8th century B.C. and other types of bronze swords have been excavated in various parts of the country. Together with the two mentioned above they are evidence of the long history of the making of bronze weapons in China.



Sword of Kou Chien ▲

Inscription: "Kou Chien, king of the State of Yueh, had this sword forged for his personal use." (right above)

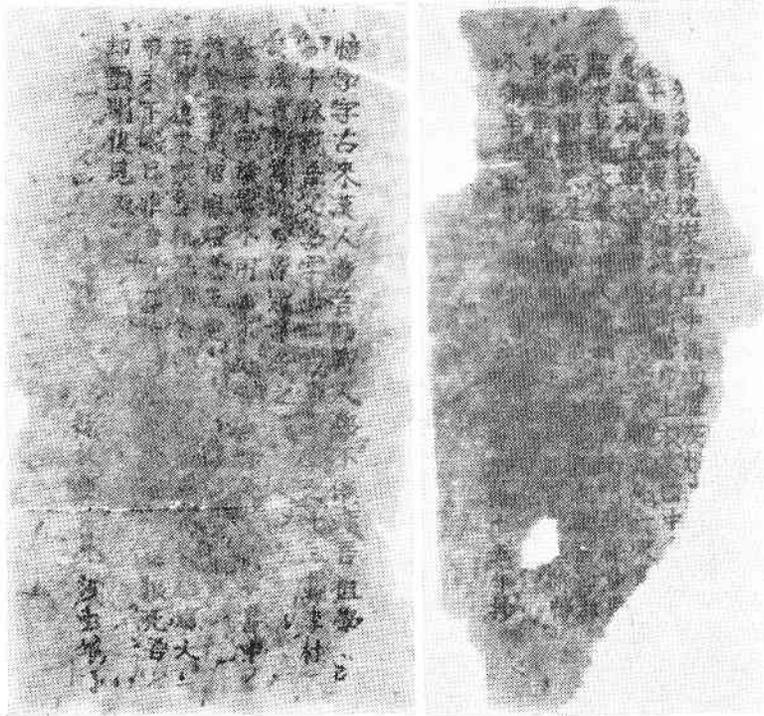
Sword of Fu Cha, king of the State of Wu ►



An Archaeological Find in Sinkiang

Recently an ancient manuscript *Poems in Kemal's Handwriting* was put on display in Peking. Written on two sheets of paper, it was discovered in October, 1959 in an ancient city in the southern part of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region. When first found, the two sheets were stuck together. Both sheets were inscribed with Arabic and ancient Uighur. In 1962, when the archaeological finds were being sorted, the two sheets were carefully separated and Chinese written in Kemal's handwriting were found on the sides which had been stuck together. The first sheet bears three poems by Kemal himself and the second the poem *The Old Charcoal Seller* by Pai Chuyi (772-847), a well-known Tang Dynasty poet. The former were written in the tenth year of Yuanho (815) of the Tang Dynasty and the latter was copied in the fifteenth year of Yuanho (820).

According to the verification of historian Kuo Mo-jo, the three poems on the first sheet were written by Kemal himself. The first poem *Recall Learning*, describing how Kemal, his father and grandfather had studied the Han language, reflects the friendship of the Han and Uighur nationalities. The second poem was entitled *Teach My Son*, in which Kemal advised his son to learn the Han language and culture. If we put the first poem and second poem together, we can see clearly that the four generations of the Kemals studied the Han



language. The third poem was called *Denounce Wolves*. Describing landlords and local despots as wolves that “eat my grain and suck my blood”, the poem rebuked the exploiters and oppressors sternly and pointed out that “the day will come when the sky will change, all wolves be killed, clouds disperse, and I see the blue sky again”. This poem is sharp and powerful.

The Old Charcoal Seller copied by Kemal on the second sheet portrayed an old man, “his face streaked with dust and ashes, grimed with smoke, his temples grizzled, his ten fingers blackened”, who was compelled to deliver charcoal to the palace in the snow. It sings of the poet’s sympathy for the poor. Kuo Mo-jo confirms that this copy of *The Old Charcoal Seller* in Kemal’s handwriting is the most ancient in existence.

Kuo Mo-jo says that the discovery of the *Poems in Kemal’s Handwriting* proves the identity of culture in Sinkiang with other parts of the country in the Tang Dynasty.

New Documentary Films

Five new documentaries were released on New Year’s Day, 1972, by the Central Newsreels and Documentary Film Studio. They were *Warmly Celebrate the Twenty-Second Anniversary of the People’s Republic of China*, *Prime Minister Penn Nouth and Special Envoy Ieng Sary Visit Northwest China*, *Taching — the Red Banner*, *The Working Class Creates Wonders* and *The Chinese Table Tennis Delegation Visits Japan*.

Warmly Celebrate the Twenty-Second Anniversary of the People’s Republic of China is a colour documentary of the gala National Day activities of the workers, peasants and soldiers in the capital at a time when China has won great victories in her socialist revolution, socialist construction and her relations with foreign countries. To the sound of drums and gongs, people flocked to the Peking Working People’s Palace of Culture, the Summer Palace, Temple of Heaven and other parks. Comrades and friends from many countries of the world





joined them in the celebrations. Praising Chairman Mao's revolutionary line which has wrested great victories in all fields, the film reflects the unity and struggle of the Chinese people, and the vitality of their mental approach to life.

Accompanied by Kuo Mo-jo, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Samdech Penn Nouth, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia and Chairman of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the National United Front of Cambodia, Ieng Sary, Special Envoy of the Interior Part of the R.G.N.U.C. and the N.U.F.C., and other distinguished Cambodian guests visited Urumchi, Lanchow and Yen-an in northwest China last September. The Chinese people of various nationalities gave a tumultuous welcome to these comrades-in-arms from the anti-U.S. imperialist front, indicating the militant friendship between the Chinese and Cambodian peoples. *Prime Minister Penn Nouth and Special Envoy Ieng Sary Visit Northwest China* is a colour documentary of this event.

Much historical material showing the building of the Taching Oilfield is screened in *Taching — the Red Banner*, a colour documentary. The film depicts the heroic deeds of the Chinese oil workers, as rep-

resented by Wang Chin-hsi, who followed Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and triumphed over the economic and technical blockade of China by the imperialists and revisionists. By working hard and relying on their own efforts, the workers built a big oilfield and a modern oil-processing industry at high speed and with good quality on a former wasteland.

Encouraged by the Taching oil workers, the miners and steel workers in another region built a new mining and iron base within a year through hard struggle. This is the story of the film *The Working Class Creates Wonders*.

The Chinese Table Tennis Delegation Visits Japan shows the visits of the Chinese Table Tennis Delegation to Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo and other Japanese cities in April 1971 after the 31st World Championships concluded. The Chinese players received a warm welcome everywhere.

Two Foreign Art Troupes Give Their Final Performances in China

The Japanese Matsuyama Ballet Troupe and the Pyongyang National Opera Troupe of Korea concluded highly successful tours of the country with final performances on November 28 in Kwangchow and December 4 in Peking. The Japanese artists presented the revolutionary ballets *The White-Haired Girl* and *Five Okinawan Girls*. The Korean art workers staged the revolutionary opera *The Sea of Blood*.

Coming to China in Septemebr last year, the two troupes toured Peking, Shenyang, Nanking, Yen-an, Shanghai, Kwangchow and Shaoshan for two months and were given a warm welcome by the Chinese audiences.

New Publications for Children

A number of children's books were recently published in Shanghai. Among them were *The Miners' Hate*, reminiscences of workers — a book which aims to give the younger generation a lesson on class

struggle by making a comparison between life in the new society and that in the old; *New Songs of the Good Eighth Company*, a collection of stories on the deeds of the good Eighth Company of the Chinese People's Liberation Army stationed on the Nanking Street in Shanghai; *Red Banner on the Docks*, a collection of essays describing the life of heroic dockers; and *We Are Little Red Soldiers of Chairman Mao*, a collection of stories showing how Chinese children, nurtured by Mao Tsetung Thought, grow healthily. Two picture-story books *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* and *Shachiapang*, edited on the basis of the model revolutionary Peking operas, are also on sale.

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Printed in the People's Republic of China

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