

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Chairman Mao in Yanan (1945)

by Wu Yin-hsien

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A QUOTATION FROM CHAIRMAN MAO

We should encourage comrades to take the interests of the whole into account. Every Party member, every branch of work, every statement and every action must proceed from the interests of the whole Party; it is absolutely impermissible to violate this principle.

SONG OF THE DRAGON RIVER

(January 1972 script)

Revised by the "Song of the Dragon River" Group of Shanghai

Characters

Chiang Shui-ying	<i>Secretary of the Communist Party branch of the Dragon River Brigade of a certain people's commune</i>
Uncle Ah-chien	<i>Leader of the brigade's Team Four, member of Party branch committee</i>
Ah-lien	<i>Secretary of brigade's Youth League</i>
Li Chih-tien	<i>Brigade leader, member of the Party branch committee</i>
Ah-keng	<i>Leader of the brigade's Team Eight</i>
Pao-cheng	<i>Member of the brigade</i>
Chang Fu	<i>Member of the brigade, a well-off middle peasant in the old society, Pao-cheng's father</i>

Men Brigade Members A, B and C

Women Brigade Members A and B

Other Brigade Members

Mother Water-Seeker *Member of Rear Mountain People's Commune, a poor peasant in the old society*

Little Hung *Her grand-daughter*

Rear Mountain Commune Member A

Other Members of Rear Mountain Commune

Members of the People's Liberation Army A and B

Other Members of the PLA

Grain Depot Manager

Huang Kuo-chung *A class enemy concealed within the brigade*

SCENE ONE

SHOULDERING A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY

(A spring morning in 1963.

Dragon River Brigade, a subdivision of a people's commune in China's southeast coastal region. A field on the riverside of a dyke, part of the brigade's land. In the distance the green swell of the water can be seen. On top of the dyke a big placard reads "People's Communes Are Fine". Lush rippling wheat in the foreground gives promise of a good harvest.)

Commune Members (*sing*):

*The glow of the General Line illumines Dragon River,
As the fighting song of the Great Leap Forward resounds.*

(The curtain rises. Ah-keng and other brigade members are hard at work.)

Woman Brigade Member (*sings*):

The people's communes are a rising sun,

Other Brigade Members (*sing*):

We battle in the fields for the revolution.

(They go off. Li Chih-ien, the brigade leader, enters.)

Li: Ah-keng!

Ah-keng: How do you like this wheat? Three hundred *mu** of it — green and sleek, nice thick stems, good broad leaves. Really beautiful!

Li: It certainly is. How much fertilizer has your team just given it?

Ah-keng: Five *jin*** per *mu*.

Li: Is that all? Uncle Ah-chien's team has put ten *jin* on theirs.

Ah-keng: Ten *jin*?

(Ab-lien enters.)

Li: If you have water you can get a harvest, but the size of the harvest depends on how much fertilizer you use. The brigade is trying to win the High Yield Red Pennant this year. What you two teams do on these three hundred *mu* is crucial.

Ah-keng: Right. We'll give them everything we've got. Another five *jin* for every *mu*. We'll win that pennant for sure.

Ah-lien: Have you forgotten what Sister Shui-ying said when she was leaving for the conference on combating the drought, brother?

Ah-keng: Get on with the spring ploughing.

Ah-lien: And help the area behind the mountain. They're short of water. There hasn't been any rain around here for over three months.

Ah-keng: So what? We're right next to the Dragon River. It's flooding we have to worry about, not drought. Even during the worst droughts, we get good harvests.

Ah-lien: What about the drought area?

Ah-keng: The biggest help we can give them is for us to use plenty of fertilizer and gather a lot of wheat.

Li: That's not enough. We've got to give them direct practical help.

(Uncle Ab-chien and Pao-cheng enter.)

*₁ *mu* = 0.16 acre or 0.67 hectare.

**₁ *jin* = 1.1 lb. or 0.5 kg.

Uncle: Li!

Li: Are the treadle water-raisers repaired?

Uncle: Every one of them.

Ah-keng: We've got regular engine pumps now. What do we need those old foot-pedal jobs for?

Uncle: You don't know Shui-ying's idea. (*Sings.*)

Combating the drought is a heavy task,

We must get on too with spring ploughing;

We repair and use the treadles ourselves —

Ah-keng: And the engine pumps?

Uncle (*sings*): *We give those to our drought-bit brothers.*

Ah-lien: Sister Shui-ying really thinks of everything.

Li: We can talk about helping them when she comes back. Right now we've got to spread more fertilizer.

All: Right.

(Li, Uncle, Ah-lien and Ah-keng depart. Pao-cheng starts to follow. Chang Fu hurries after him, takes his arm.)

Chang Fu: Let's put some fertilizer on our family plot.

Pao-cheng: I've got to do the team's land.

Chang Fu: Can't you do that after you do ours?

Pao-cheng (*irritated*): You should think more about the collective, pa.

(He leaves quickly. Two brigade members enter, toting sacks of fertilizer.)

Chang Fu (*sighs*): He doesn't act like any son of mine.

(The two brigade members laugh and depart. Chang Fu, embarrassed, also leaves.)

Shui-ying (*offstage, sings*): *On the East Wind's wings I hurry home, Shouldering a heavy responsibility.*

(She enters, poling a boat. Steps ashore, strikes a pose.)

With flowing water in this river,

No reason for crops to yellow and wither.

(Puts down the pole.)

The Party's decided to dam the river and divert

Its waters to the drought-stricken area.

Selfish interest and a sense of civic duty will contend,

In struggle, the land changes its garb,

And people's thinking changes without end.

(Ah-lien enters.)

Ah-lien: Sister Shui-ying!

Shui-ying: How are you, Ah-lien?

Ah-lien (*shouts towards the wings*): Hey, Sister Shui-ying is back!

(Li, Uncle, Pao-cheng and others enter.)

All: Shui-ying!

Uncle: Why did the conference last so long?

Li: Everyone's been waiting on pins and needles.

Shui-ying: The county Party committee took us for a look at the drought area after the conference ended.

Uncle: What's it like there? Tell us, quick.

Ah-lien: Let her have a drink of water first.

Shui-ying: I've got some here. You can taste it.

(She pours water from her canteen into several cups. Uncle takes a sip.)

Uncle: *Aiya!* It's really bitter!

Li (*takes a swallow, spits it out*): Bitter as gall! Is this —

Shui-ying: They're down to the bottom of their wells in the drought area.

All (*shocked*): Oh!

Uncle (*heavily*): As bad as that.

Shui-ying: The worst drought in a century.

All (*worried*): What's to be done?

Uncle and Ah-lien: We must rush help to them.

Shui-ying: How?

Uncle: Give them our pumps. They're ready to go.

Shui-ying: Their streams and ponds are dry. What will they pump?

Li: Help them dig wells.

Shui-ying: Little trickles don't solve big thirsts. It won't be enough.

All: How can we help them, then?

Shui-ying: With water.

All: What water?

Shui-ying (*sings*): *Dragon River can end the drought.*

Li: Shui-ying, (*lifts bucket of water to illustrate*) the Dragon River is low and the drought area is high. How can we get the water up there?

Shui-ying: By raising the water level.

All: Raise the level?

Shui-ying: Right.

Li: But how?

Shui-ying: Dam the river.

All: A good idea!

Li: Dam it where?

Shui-ying: Here.

Li: Here?

Shui-ying: That's right. We'll build a big dam right here.

All: A big dam?

Shui-ying: To block it off.

All: To block it off?

Shui-ying: Then we'll open the sluice-gate in the dyke, and send the water along the bed of the Nine Bends River (*takes up the bucket and tips it*) to the drought area. (*Sings.*)
We'll save ninety thousand mu of parched fields.

(Everyone considers the proposal in silence. Observing their mood, she turns to Li.)

Shui-ying: What do you think?

Li: It's possible. But won't that flood our three hundred *mu* of wheat?

Shui-ying: As the old saying goes: Only one end of a sugar-cane is sweet. It's up to us to make the necessary sacrifice.

Li: How are we going to convince the masses?

Shui-ying: We can do it if we cadres are convinced ourselves.

Uncle (*decisively*): If that's what the county committee has decided, that's the way we'll do it.

(Li does not comment.)

Shui-ying: Call a meeting of our Party branch committee and we'll study once again the Communique of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Party and reach a common understanding on principles.

Li (*with an effort*): Very well.

Ah-lien: Shouldn't our Youth League branch discuss it too?

Shui-ying: Yes. Let's start notifying people.

(Shui-ying, Uncle, Ah-lien and Pao-cheng go off. Li gazes at the three hundred mu. Walks over, plucks a stalk of green wheat, stares at it in troubled thought. Ah-keng enters, carrying sacks of fertilizer.)

Ah-keng (*in high spirits*): Hurry, hurry, hurry!

Li: Take that stuff away.

Ah-keng: What for?

Li: When I tell you to take it away, then take it away.

Ah-keng: A little while ago, you said to add five more *jīn*. Now, when I bring them —

Li: A little while ago was a little while ago. Now is now.

Ah-keng: What's going on here, anyhow?

Li: We're going to dam the river to save the drought area.

Ah-keng (*astonished*): Won't that ruin these three hundred *mu*?

Li: It certainly will.

Ah-keng: Then what's Team Eight supposed to do? This will affect our summer harvest, and our rice shoot transplanting after that, and we'll never win the team's red pennant —

Li: There's not even any guarantee that the brigade will be able to hang on to its own red pennant. Who can worry about the team competition?

Ah-keng: But we've got over a hundred thousand *jīn* of grain here, practically right in our hands. You're the brigade leader. You can't let them do that.

Li: Me? (*He sighs and goes.*)

Ah-keng (*calls after him*): Brigade leader, brigade leader!

Li (*turns*): Say no more. The county Party committee has made a decision. We'll carry it out.

(*Curtain*)

SCENE TWO

LOSE A PAWN TO SAVE A CASTLE

(That same evening. The door of Li's home. On either side of the door-frame slogans are pasted: "We shall never forget the Communist Party, now that we've risen to our feet" and "We rely for our good fortune on Chairman Mao". A small bamboo table stands in the front yard. On it are dishes of food. Beside the table are two bamboo chairs. As the curtain rises, Li is gazing at the wheat fields.)

Li (*sings*): *The crops by the riverside are lush and green,
My heart drops at sight of this rippling wheat.
Dam the flow, says our Party branch,
Flooding three hundred mu is really an awful pity.*

(*Chang Fu enters hastily.*)

Chang Fu: Brigade leader, they say we're going to dam the river here. Is that true?

Li (*roughly*): True as can be. There's going to be a big meeting to rally the masses very soon.

Chang Fu: And you agree?

Li: It's been decided by the county Party committee.

Chang Fu: Finished. My private plot on the riverside of the dyke is finished.

Li: *Aiya*, everyone is worried about the collective land, but all you can think of is your little private plot.

Chang Fu: I've got that whole plot planted with wheat.

Li: The brigade will reimburse you!

(*Huang Kuo-chung enters.*)

Chang Fu: That's high-yield soil I've got. You'll never be able to pay me enough!

Li: You....

Chang Fu (*to Huang*): What do you say, Huang? Don't you think....

Huang: Now, you mustn't bother the brigade leader. He has enough to worry about with damming the river.

(*He pushes Chang Fu away. Chang Fu leaves.*)

Huang: Selfish fellow. When do we start building the dam, brigade leader?

Li (*paying little attention*): The rally's tonight. We'll begin tomorrow.

Huang: Fine. Anything to help the drought area. Of course, it would be much better if Tiger-Head Cliff wasn't in the way.

Li (*attentively*): Tiger-Head Cliff?

(*Shui-ying enters.*)

Huang: It's part of the rear mountain. The local people have a saying: "Tiger-Head Cliff is steep and high, not a drop of water can ever get by." It will block any water we divert from the river.

Li: It will?

Huang: I'm afraid these three hundred *mu* of wheat will be flooded in vain.

(*Li is silent.*)

Shui-ying: You seem to know a lot about the rear mountain, kiln master.

Huang (*startled. Quickly covers up*): I've only heard about it from others. They do have a Tiger-Head Cliff.

Shui-ying: We discussed that question at the conference.

Li: What can be done about it?

Shui-ying: The county committee has a plan. We here will dam the river. The rear mountain people will blast through the cliff.

Huang: Fine, that's fine. Well, you must be busy. I'll go and get ready. I want to help with the damming tomorrow. (*Goes out.*)

Shui-ying (*to Li*): You still haven't eaten? Where's the wife?

Li: Gone to a meeting.

Shui-ying: Eat your supper.

Li: Who feels like eating at a time like this? (*Earnestly*) Shouldn't we tell the county committee our problems?

Shui-ying (*smiles*): Dragon River Brigade has never tried to pass its problems on to the higher authorities.

(*Li sits down.*)

Shui-ying: Usually, you're always shooting off your mouth. What made you so quiet at the Party branch committee meeting today?

Li: Well, I—

Shui-ying: I'm really concerned. If we don't see the thing clearly in our own minds, how are we going to be able to lead others?

Li: But don't you understand? If we dam the river, we'll be flooding three hundred *mu* of good wheat: Even though the county will compensate us, that won't make up for the high yield we're expecting, for the bigger share we'd get in the harvest, for the late crop we won't be able to plant, for our—

Shui-ying: The trouble is all you think of is "us", "us".

Li: I'm talking about the collective "us".

Shui-ying: True, it's collective land but it's a very small collective, a speck.

Li: A speck?

Shui-ying: On the chessboard of the fight against the drought it's only a pawn.

Li: A pretty big pawn! Three hundred *mu*, my dear Party branch secretary!

Shui-ying: We have to view the situation as a whole. Suppose you were playing chess. To gain the initiative, to win, sometimes you have to deliberately sacrifice a piece. "Lose a pawn to save a castle", isn't that what you often say?

Li: This is farming, not chess.

Shui-ying: How much land will be flooded, how much will be saved? That's the way you ought to figure.

Li: I'm no accountant.

Shui-ying: But surely you can see the point?

Li: All I know is that the wheat is going to be flooded and we won't be able to harvest it, that the fertilizer we've spread will be washed away, that the soil quality will be damaged and need a lot of work to restore it, that we will find it hard to plant any late crop there. Have you thought of that?

Shui-ying (*thoughtfully*): We opened up those fields ourselves and planted the wheat with our own hands. Why wouldn't I think of it? (*Sings.*)

Barren flats a few years ago

We converted them into fertile fields,

Bitter struggle in icy weather

Has won fine harvests and splendid yields.

Li (*sings*): *In summer's heat and winter's cold,*

We shed aplenty sweat and blood,

Each year we gather bumper crops,

How can you let them drown in flood?

Shui-ying (*sings*): *Three hundred mu's your sole concern,*

But ninety thousand are under drought.

For them how many sweated and toiled,

Were frozen in winter, by the summer sun broiled?

While drought spreads like fire across their land

Shall we let our river flow idly on?

A spot of red is a single flower,

Hundreds in blossom show spring's glorious power.

Yes, we sacrifice a plot of high-yielding land,

But we win irrigation for ninety thousand mu;

In the rear mountain we'll create waves of grain.

We'll turn a drought into a year of harvest gain.

Li (*moved*): I suppose we ought to take the loss.... (*Decides.*)
All right, then, we'll take it.

Shui-ying: No.

Li: What do you mean?

Shui-ying: On the one hand we'll give up a pawn to save a castle. On the other hand we'll be self-reliant and do our utmost to make up the loss.

Li: Make it up? How?

Shui-ying: I've thought a lot about this. Why can't we raise the yield of our three thousand *mu* of land on the inner side of the dyke? Make up the loss from the outer fields with the inner.

Li (*excitedly*): What? What's that? Say that again.

Shui-ying: Make up the loss from the outer land with the inner.

Li: Make up the loss with the inner fields?

Shui-ying: What's more, if we increase our side-line production, we'll —

Li: — make up the loss in crops with what we turn out in side-lines?

(*Shui-ying nods.*)

Li: You've got something there. In other words damming the river won't really create any problems.

Shui-ying: No problems? Our class enemies are going to be scared and enraged. They'll do everything they can to sabotage. We must act in accordance with what Chairman Mao has taught us: "**Never forget class struggle.**"

Li: Right. We'll keep an eye on the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and other bad elements.

Shui-ying: And watch out for hidden enemies as well.

Li: Right. (*Starts to leave.*)

Shui-ying: Where are you going?

Li: To give Ah-keng an assignment.

Shui-ying: You'd better finish this assignment first.

Li: Which assignment?

Shui-ying: Eat your supper!

Li: Ha, ha, ha!

Shui-ying (*feels the bowl*): This rice is cold. I'll warm it up for you. (*Takes the bowl into the house.*)

(*Ah-keng enters.*)

Ah-keng: Brigade leader, what's our Party branch committee decision?

Li: We're going to dam the river.

Ah-keng: What about the loss to my team?

Li: You'll be compensated.

Ah-keng: But ours is high-yield land.

Li: Hai! All you can think of is your little speck.

Ah-keng: A pretty big speck!

Li: On the chessboard of the fight against the drought it's only a pawn.

Ah-keng: A pawn?

Li: Yes. Suppose you were playing chess. Sometimes, in order to win, you have to deliberately sacrifice a piece. Know what that's called?

Ah-keng: What?

Li: "Losing a pawn to save a castle."

Ah-keng: Losing a pawn to save a castle?

Li: Get it?

Ah-keng: No.

Li: It's as clear as day. Why can't we make up the losses from the land on the outside of the dyke with the land on the inside?

Ah-keng: My team's land is all on the outside. We'd have nothing to do.

Li: You could increase your side-line production to make up for your loss in crops.

Ah-keng: Side-line? What side-line?

Li: Brick-making.

Ah-keng (*catching the idea*): Hey, that's a great idea! With one kilnful we can earn two thousand yuan. Give that job to us!

Li: All right. Take your team members up the mountainside and collect brushwood. Get ready to fire the kiln.

Ah-keng: Right. I guarantee we'll make up the loss. (*Leaves excitedly.*)

(*Uncle Ah-chien, Ah-lien, Pao-cheng, Man Brigade Member A and other brigade members enter, calling: "Shui-ying!"*)

(*Shui-ying comes out of the house.*)

Uncle: We former poor and lower-middle peasants have been studying the works of Chairman Mao. So we agree, if flooding three hundred *mu* will save ninety thousand —

All: — we'll do it!

Ah-lien: We Youth Leaguers have been studying Chairman Mao's writings. So we've formed a youth shock brigade —

All: — to rush to the front line of the battle!

Uncle: And we've thought of some ways to make up the loss.

Li: How?

Uncle: Have the yield on the inside land make up for the loss on the outside!

Ah-lien: Let side-line production make up for the loss in farming!

Man Brigade Member A: Let the late crop make up for the loss of the early!

Pao-cheng: Plant coarse grain to make up for the loss of the wheat!

All: We'll definitely make up the loss!

Shui-ying: Fine. People's communes have a lot of strength. We'll make the water in the lowlands —

All: — climb to the mountain heights!

(They strike a pose.)

(Curtain)

SCENE THREE

JOINED IN BATTLE AGAINST DRAGON RIVER

(Afternoon, a few days after damming the river has begun. A corner of the work site. Red pennants flutter in the breeze.

On a bulletin board are statements of determination. Men and women, carrying earth and stone in baskets and on wheel-barrows, move briskly.

Brigade Member A enters with cups and buckets of water.)

Brigade Member A *(calls)*: Hey, come and drink, everyone! *(To another brigade member)* Have some water.

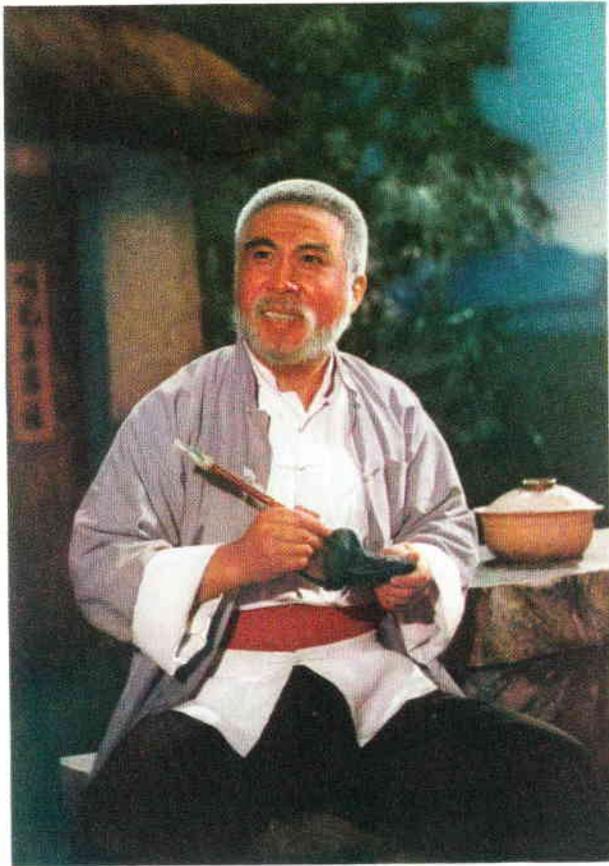


Chiang Shui-ying, Party secretary of the Dragon River Brigade.

Stage Photographs from "Song of the Dragon River"



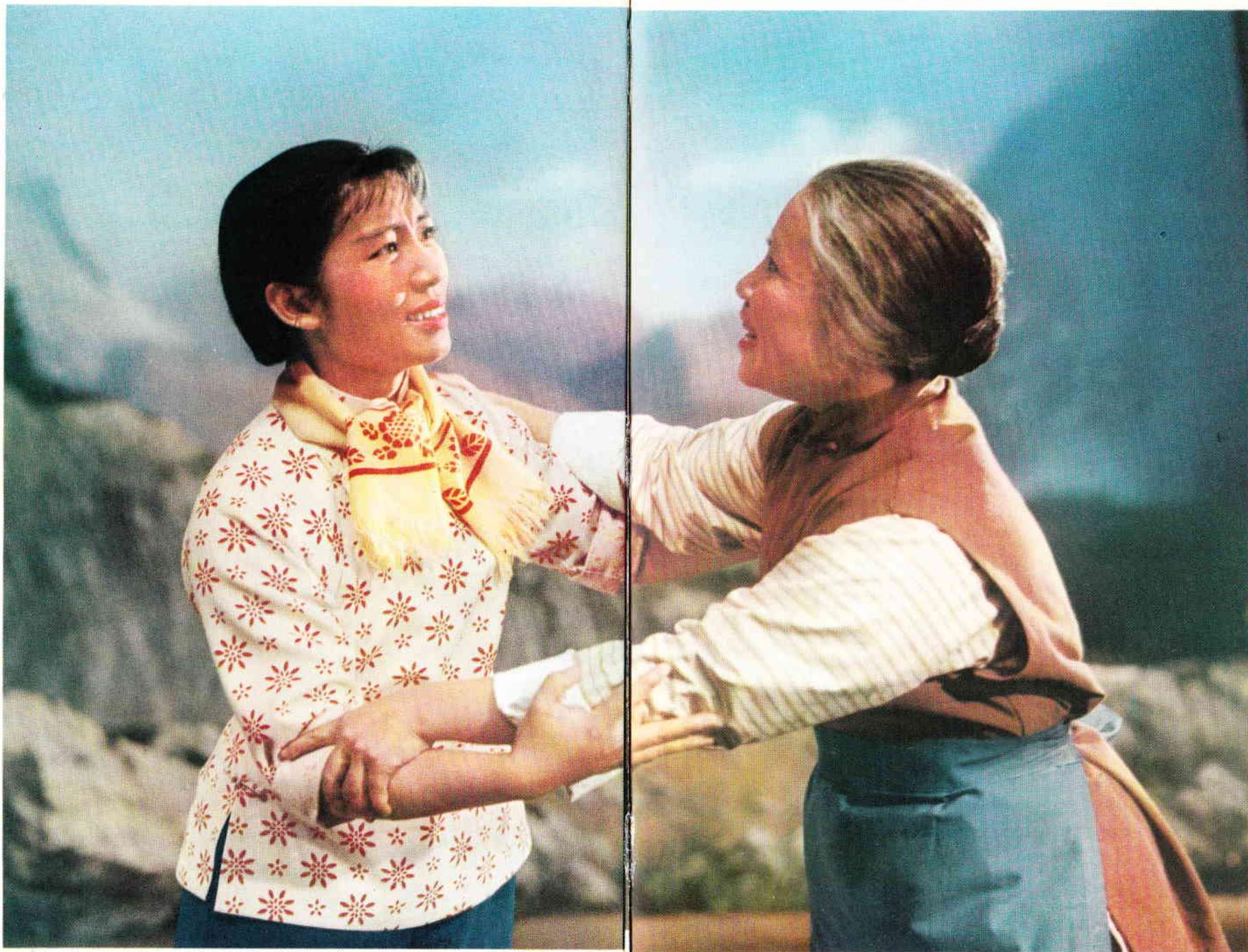
Shui-ying and the commune members study Chairman Mao's works together.



Uncle Ah-chien brings a pot of chicken soup for Shui-ying who has been overworking.

Little Hung remembers Mother Water-Seeker's words: "One bowl of water can revive several rice shoots." She hesitates to drink.





Shui-ying and Mother Water-Seeker.



Mother Water-Seeker calls the canteen of water sent her by Chiang Shui-ying communist-style water.

(Nobody wants to stop. They continue with their jobs and leave.)
(Ah-lien enters, pushing a wheel-barrow laden with rocks.)

Brigade Member A: Ah-lien, rest a while.

Ah-lien: We're filling in the last gap in the dam tonight. Who's got time to rest!

Brigade Member A *(grabs her arm):* You've got to rest sometime. As secretary of the Youth League branch, you ought to set an example. *(Shoves a cup of water into her hand.)*

(A Rear Mountain commune member also taking part in the dam building, enters.)

Ah-lien: Have some water, comrade.

Rear Mountain Man: No, thanks.

Ah-lien: You fellows have been working since early morning, but not a drop of water has passed your lips. We feel very badly about that.

Rear Mountain Man: Dragon River Brigade is flooding its fields to help us beat the drought. Comrade Shui-ying and you are all working like blazes from dawn to dusk. Yet you never forget about our comfort. We really don't know what to say.

(Two PLA men enter, carrying a big rock slung from a pole on their shoulders.)

Ah-lien: There's no need to say anything. Three years ago, when we were flooded here, I don't know how we would have managed if it weren't for the help your Rear Mountain Commune gave.

PLA Man A: Before the mountain, behind the mountain — poor and lower-middle peasants are of one heart.

Rear Mountain Man: Rest a while, PLA comrades.

Ah-lien: The PLA comrades are our models. When our commune was flooded, they helped us. Now your commune has a drought, and they're helping again.

Rear Mountain Man: Wherever there's trouble, they rush to the rescue.

PLA Man A: Our army and people are one family. We don't do nearly as much as we should.

(Two brigade members enter. Ab-lien gives them a wink and they steal away with the big rock the PLA soldiers have been carrying.)

PLA Man A *(quite upset, shouts after them):* Comrades, you shouldn't....

Ah-lien *(stops him, hands him a cup of water. Jestingly):* Our army and the people are one family!

(PLA Man B runs off with Ab-lien's wheel-barrow before she can stop him.)

Ah-lien *(equally upset, shouts):* Comrade, hey, comrade....

PLA Man A *(restrains her. Hands her a cup of water):* Our army and people are one family! Ha, ha, ha! *(Trots off.)*

(Rear Mountain Man departs in another direction. Brigade Member A leaves with the water buckets.)

Ah-lien *(much moved, sings):*

*A battlefield on the banks of the Dragon River,
Friendship growing in mutual help,
Upon the dyke, a full ten li long,
People work with a will, fearless and strong.
I shall learn from the heroes, and tote heavy loads,
My feet firmly planted, my heart warmed by the sun,
Breaking new paths with resolution,
I'll devote my youth to the revolution.*

(Uncle Ab-chien enters carrying tools for sealing the gap in the dam.)

Uncle: Hello, Ah-lien.

Ah-lien: All those tools repaired already? You're certainly fast.

Uncle: We're going to complete the dam tonight. The sooner we get ready, the better.

Ah-lien: Let me have them. I'll take them to the work site.

Uncle: No, no. I'll do it.

(Both struggle for possession of the tools. Li enters with a shoulder pole.)

Li: Uncle Ah-chien!

Uncle: Oh, hello.

(Ab-lien snatches the tools and runs off.)

Li: The dam is nearly finished. Has your team collected enough brushwood to fire the kiln?

Uncle: Yes, plenty.

Li: We're relying on your team and Ah-keng's to make up the loss of those three hundred *mu* of wheat with the bricks you turn out.

Uncle: Don't worry. We'll fire the kiln just as soon as the dam is completed.

Li *(smiling):* Fine!

(Offstage, Pao-cheng shouts: "Brigade Leader!" Enters hurriedly with Brigade Member B.)

Pao-cheng: Brigade leader, there's trouble at the dam!

(Huang and two other brigade members enter, hearing the shout.)

Li and Uncle: What's happened?

Pao-cheng: Part of it's collapsed.

Uncle: How big a section?

Pao-cheng: Several dozen metres.

Li: Does Shui-ying know?

Pao-cheng: She's at the dam now, organizing emergency repairs.

Uncle: What's the plan?

Pao-cheng: First block the flow with brushwood.

Li: That will take a huge amount!

Uncle: And we've got to find it, fast.

Pao-cheng: Headquarters command is doing everything possible. We've asked other brigades to lend us some of theirs.

Uncle: That will take too long.

Li: Then what's to be done?

Pao-cheng: Comrade Shui-ying wants to discuss it with you, brigade leader.

Li: Let's go!

(*Li, Pao-cheng and brigade members leave. Uncle Ab-chien, worried, stares towards the dam.*)

Huang (*with an evil grimace*): So they need a lot of brushwood?
(*Suddenly thinks of a scheme.*) Hah! (*Slips away.*)

Uncle (*very agitated*): If we don't repair that section immediately, we won't be able to link up the dam. What are we going to do?
(*Sings.*)

*What a time for the dam to break,
Just when it is nearly ready.
Brushwood we cannot do without
To repair the dam and end the drought.
Now that it's almost spanned the river,
We can't let it crumble and collapse,
At the kiln we've a pile — that's the solution,
We sacrifice gladly for the revolution.*

(*Ab-lien, Pao-cheng and other brigade members rush in.*)

Ah-lien: Uncle Ah-chien!

Uncle: What's happening at the dam?

Ah-lien: Shui-ying and the brigade leader have decided to ask our two teams to give our brushwood.

Uncle: Good. You get hold of Ah-keng at Team Eight. I'm going back to Team Four. We'll start moving brushwood immediately.

Ah-lien: Let's go, comrades!

(*All start to leave.*)

Pao-cheng (*notices smoke in the distance*): Hey, look at that. There's smoke coming out of the kiln.

Ah-lien: Why has Ah-keng fired the kiln ahead of time?

Pao-cheng: That's bad!

All: What shall we do?

Uncle: Ah-lien! (*Sings.*)

Repairs on the dam brook no delay,

Explain to Ab-keng right away.

The task is urgent, let no time be lost,

The dam must have the brushwood at all cost!

(*Uncle Ab-chien, Ab-lien and others strike a pose.*)

(*Quick curtain*)

SCENE FOUR

THE STRUGGLE AT THE KILN

(Immediately following the previous scene. Dusk.)

A kiln on a mountain slope. As the curtain rises, Huang approaches carrying two large bundles of brushwood.)

Huang (*shouts towards the kiln*): Hey, step it up. The hotter the fire the better. (*Snorts savagely.*) I left the Rear Mountain over a dozen years ago and came to Dragon River Village. It's been stifling me, concealing my real identity all this time. Dam the river and cure the drought, will they? I'll show them!

Ah-lien (*offstage*): Hurry, comrades!

(*Huang quickly goes into the kiln. Ab-lien enters.*)

Ah-lien: Take that brushwood, comrades, and rush it to the dam. I'll speak to Ah-keng.

(*The brigade members run across the yard. Chang Fu comes out of the kiln.*)

Chang Fu: What are you people doing here, with all that work to be done on the dam?

Ah-lien: Moving brushwood.

Chang Fu: We have enough men for that. So many of you extras joining in — that will mean less work-points for us!

(*Ab-keng and Huang emerge from the kiln.*)

Ah-lien: Who cares about work-points? The dam's collapsing!

Ah-keng: What! Collapsing! Why aren't you helping make repairs? What are you fellows doing here?

Ah-lien: We need brushwood to fill the gap.

Ah-keng: But the kiln has already been fired.

Ah-lien: Why did you start ahead of time?

Ah-keng: The sooner we start, the sooner we make up for the loss of wheat.

Ah-lien: Brother! *(Sings.)*

*By tonight the dam should be complete,
But the break will delay our plans,
Brushwood now is a vital aid,
Our team must speed help to our brigade.*

Ah-keng: Impossible! *(Sings.)*

*We flooded our wheat fields to help the drought,
We cannot give our brushwood out.*

Ah-lien: We must! *(Sings.)*

Can't you see that the need at the dam is great?

Ah-keng: We can't! *(Sings.)*

Can't you see that the kiln has already been fired?

Huang *(sings):* *Stopping the fire will ruin the bricks!*

Ah-lien *(sings):* *We should give up our brushwood and sticks!*

Ah-keng *(sings):* *No. The loss to our team will only get worse,*

Huang *(sings):* *Who'll be responsible and reimburse?*

Ah-lien *(sings):* *We must boldly stand when danger's in spate,*

Rescue is urgent, we cannot wait.

Let's go!

(She picks up some brushwood. Ah-keng snatches it out of her hands, gives it to Chang Fu, who goes into the kiln. Other brigade members enter removing brushwood.)

Ah-keng *(stops them):* Put that down!

(Shui-ying enters. She halts on the slope and watches what is going on.)

Huang *(to Ah-keng):* The bricks in this batch should bring us two thousand yuan, team leader.

Ah-keng: Keep that fire going.

Huang: Right. *(Shouts towards the kiln.)* More fuel! *(Goes towards kiln entrance.)*

Shui-ying: Stop!

Huang *(startled):* What!

(Shui-ying walks down the slope, her face stern. Li enters. Several brigade members come out of the kiln.)

Huang *(provocatively):* If we stop, every brick in the kiln will be spoiled.

Shui-ying: Every bundle of brushwood burned increases the danger to the dam.

Li *(to Ah-keng):* Of all the times to fire the kiln, you had to pick now!

Ah-keng: Who knew the dam would pick this time to collapse!

Shui-ying: You said you wouldn't fire the kiln until after the dam was finished. Why did you begin ahead of schedule?

Ah-keng: Some of the masses suggested it. I agreed.

Shui-ying: Who made the suggestion?

Ah-keng: Why... *(He glances at Huang.)*

Huang *(quickly):* All of us.

(Shui-ying gazes at him speculatively.)

Huang *(trying to cover up):* We thought since the wheat loss was so big, the sooner we earned some extra money the better.

Ah-keng: The kiln is already fired, Shui-ying. We can't stop now.

Huang: That's right.

Shui-ying *(firmly):* That's wrong! *(To Ah-keng)* How are we going to plug the gap without brushwood? If we don't plug the gap, how can we complete the dam? If we don't complete the dam and divert water to the drought area, how can we fulfil the task the Party has given us?

Ah-lien and **Pao-cheng** *(angrily):* Of course!

Shui-ying: Comrades, we must finish the dam tonight as planned. Stop the fire and deliver the brushwood!

All: Right! Stop the fire and deliver the brushwood!

(Ab-lien, Pao-cheng and brigade members carry off piles of brushwood.)

Huang *(sailing with the current)*: Right. Stop the fire! *(Enters the kiln.)*

Ah-keng *(to Li)*: I still don't see it. First we flood the fields, now we ruin the bricks. Such a big loss. How is our team going to stand it?

Li: You....

Ah-keng: I wash my hands of the whole thing! *(Turns to go, bumps into Little Hung who is carrying a load of bamboo scoops.)*

Little Hung *(panting and out of breath)*: Is this Dragon River Brigade, uncle?

Ah-keng: Yes.

Little Hung *(excitedly)*: My name is Little Hung. From Rear Mountain.

Shui-ying *(quickly approaches the little girl)*: From Rear Mountain?

Little Hung *(wiping her perspiration)*: Yes.

Shui-ying *(leads her to a tree stump and has her sit down)*: Rest a while, Little Hung. *(Takes the canteen from a brigade member's hand and pours her a cup of water.)* Have some water.

Little Hung *(takes the cup. Drinks)*: *Aiya*, your Dragon River water is really sweet.

Shui-ying *(hands her the canteen)*: Have some more.

(Little Hung fills the cup. Raises it to her lips, pauses, pours the water back into the canteen.)

Shui-ying: Why don't you drink?

Little Hung: Grandma says one bowl of water can revive several rice shoots.

(Everyone is moved.)

Shui-ying *(emotionally)*: Revive several rice sprouts! What's your grandma's name?

Little Hung: They all call her Mother Water-Seeker.

Shui-ying: Mother Water-Seeker!

Little Hung: In the old society there was a big drought one year, and she looked for water so hard her eyes went blind. After Liberation, the doctors Chairman Mao sent cured her. When she heard that you're damming the river to send us water, she was happy as anything! She went up the mountain and cut bamboos all day. She brought them home and wove and wove, right through the night, and made these scoops. She woke me up before dawn and told me to rush them over to Dragon River Brigade.

Shui-ying *(accepts the scoops, very moved)*: What feeling, what hopes, they represent! *(Sings.)*

They remind us how dear ones need water to save

Ninety thousand mu in danger grave.

Every strand expresses the deepest feeling,

The will of the Rear Mountain folk revealing.

Just think, why advance the brick kiln's firing?

Our vigil against plots must be untiring.

The bricks are spoilt since we've quenched the fire,

But the dam's been saved from peril dire.

Ah-keng *(distressed)*: Right.

Shui-ying *(sings)*: *We've ordered the river to change its flow,*

On wings to Rear Mountain swiftly go,

To bring the nourishment of the spring rain,

Returning moisture to the land again.

All *(sing)*: *We've ordered the river to change its flow,*

On wings to Rear Mountain swiftly go,

To bring the nourishment of the spring rain,

Returning moisture to the land again.

Shui-ying *(sings)*: *Let's go all out energetically*

And complete the dam heroically!

(They strike a pose.)

(Curtain)

SCENE FIVE

SEALING THE GAP

(That same night.)

Beside the dyke. On a huge scaffold opposite a work shed hangs a long red banner with the words "Man's will conquers heaven". Bright lights dispel the darkness.

As the curtain rises brigade members cross the stage carrying bamboo stakes. Ah-lien and Ah-keng enter with other brigade members. They halt to wipe the sweat from their faces and dust their clothes. Li enters from another direction, a large wooden mallet on his shoulder.)

Ah-Keng (to Li): All the brushwood has been delivered, brigade leader, and the break has finally been plugged.

Li: Good. Tonight, we'll all help finish the dam. The sooner it's completed, the sooner we can get to work on increasing the yield of our remaining three thousand *mu* and make up our loss.

Ah-keng: Right.

(Wind blows in from the river.)

Li: Quite a breeze.

Ah-lien: Shui-ying says it will blow even stronger after midnight.

All: Stronger still?

(The wind increases in intensity.)

Brigade Member A: As the gap in the dam narrows, the water flows faster. If the wind gets any stronger, we'll have a much harder time sealing the gap.

Li: And if we don't finish the dam on time, the gale-whipped waves will batter it down, and all the work of the past few days will be in vain.

Ah-keng: And so will the flooding of our three hundred *mu* of good crops.

Ah-lien: Even more important, our fight against the drought will fail.

Li: This is going to be a tough battle.

Ah-lien: We've got to win it, no matter how tough.

Li: Let's go and have a look at the gap. (He leaves with the brigade members.)

(The wind blows stronger. The waves roar.)

Shui-ying (sings, offstage):

The waves against the dyke seem to pound my heart.

(Enters with a lantern in one hand, a shovel in the other.)

*Patrolling the dyke, mantled by starlight, I see people busily toiling
in the glow of floodlight, full of fighting spirit, at the work site.*

*For a thousand years Dragon River has raced away,
Stopped by our heroes only today.*

*Much concerned about the drought-stricken land,
I burn to change it into fields of fragrant rice,
But now certain signs arouse my suspicion,
I must analyse carefully every condition.*

*What makes Huang so familiar with things in Rear Mountain?
Why was he so eager to burn the brushwood?*

*Linking up the dam is a vital event,
We must conquer the waves and dark schemes prevent,
Conquer wind and waves and dark schemes prevent.*

*Looking towards Peking I grow in strength,
My chest expands with revolutionary pride,
Hardships and dangers cannot make us shiver,
We step forward boldly for the revolution — iron-hearted, steel-willed —
and with the towering dam*

Lock Dragon River!

(Ah-keng, offstage, calls: "Comrade Shui-ying!" He hurries on with a broken bamboo stake.)

Ah-keng: These bamboo stakes can't take the force of the gale-driven waves. We're putting in wooden stakes instead.

Shui-ying: I'm afraid we'll have a hard time with them as well.
The gap is nearly closed. If we can't get those stakes in, the whole dam may collapse. *(She climbs to a higher vantage point and gazes towards where the dam is being joined.)*

Shui-ying *(decisively)*: Call everybody together!

Ah-keng *(shouts towards the wings)*: Everybody assemble!

(Brigade members and PLA men enter.)

Ah-lien: Shock brigade all present and accounted for!

PLA Man A: Platoon Three of the local garrison all here!

Shui-ying: Comrades! We're having trouble driving in the stakes. The situation is critical. We must be courageous and find a way to sink those stakes.

All: We guarantee to do the job!

(Offstage, Uncle Ah-chien shouts: "Shui-ying!" He enters hurriedly with Li.)

Uncle: The wind and waves are getting worse. We can't drive in the stakes.

(All discuss this tensely.)

Shui-ying *(climbs higher)*: Comrades, the only way is for people to jump into the gap and block the flow with their bodies while the stakes are being driven.

All: That's the answer.

Shui-ying *(climbs still higher)*: Our great leader Chairman Mao teaches us: **Will the Chinese cower before difficulties when they are not afraid even of death?**

All: We're not afraid of anything!

Uncle *(steps forward)*: We are Communists —

Li: So we will go!

PLA Man A *(steps forward)*: We are the Chinese People's Liberation Army —

All the PLA Men: So we will go!

Ah-lien: We are Communist Youth Leaguers —

Ah-keng: We are poor and lower-middle peasants —

All Brigade Members: So we will go!

Shui-ying: To snatch the link-up of the dam from the teeth of danger, we pledge our hearts to the service of the people!

All: We pledge our hearts to the service of the people!

Shui-ying: Let's go!

(All head for the gap.)

(Blackout.)

(Lights up. At the gap in the dam. The wind howls, waves wildly toss. Men from the Rear Mountain Commune are driving stakes, but the current sweeps them away. Shui-ying enters with the others. She unhesitatingly leaps into the water. The others follow suit, forming a human wall which slows the rushing river. Stake-drivers rapidly swing their mallets.)

Shui-ying: **Be resolute,**

All: ... **fear no sacrifice and surmount every difficulty to win victory.**

(United in spirit and with courage, they strike a pose.)

(Curtain slowly falls)

SCENE SIX

GIVING HELP TO NEIGHBOUR

(Dawn several days after the dam is completed.)

A road at the edge of the village of Dragon River Brigade. In the distance water can be seen flowing from Dragon River into the dry bed of Nine Bends River through the sluice-gate. Crops within the dyke are a tender green. Shui-ying's home stands beside the road. Running vertically on either side of the doorway are the slogans: "Follow Chairman Mao's Teachings" and "Go with the Communist Party". Horizontally above the door are the words: "An Honoured Family". A table and benches of stone slabs stand in front

of the house. New bamboos, fresh and green, fringe the side. Opposite is a big camphor tree in leafy profusion.

As the curtain rises, a cock crows, far off. Uncle Ah-chien enters with an earthenware pot of chicken soup.)

Uncle (*sings*): *Shui-ying's ill but she's working hard,
My wife, worried that she's too thin,
Sends this to help her back to health once more.
Shui-ying, Shui-ying! She must be sleeping.
To ensure her rest I'll stay outside the door.
(Puts the pot on the stone table.)*

Chang Fu (*shouts as he approaches*): Shui-ying, Shui-ying!

Uncle (*hurries towards him, whispers*): Quit that yelling!

Chang Fu: What's the matter?

Uncle: Shui-ying is sleeping.

Chang Fu: My business is urgent.

Uncle: Not so loud. Let her rest a little longer.

Chang Fu (*exasperated*): *Aiya!* For two days I've been looking for the brigade leader, but he's up on the mountain cutting fuel. Now I come to see the Party branch secretary and she's lying in bed, snoozing. Isn't anyone going to deal with this matter of mine?

Uncle: What's your problem?

Chang Fu: Look, Uncle Ah-chien. We're raising the level of the water so that it can flow to the drought area. It's getting higher and higher. My house is low-lying. If the water comes up over the bank, it's sure to be swamped. Does the secretary care about that, or not?

Uncle: Shui-ying's is much lower than yours. But she doesn't give it a thought. All she's interested in is the collective. Why don't you just go home?

Chang Fu: Nothing doing. I insist that she do something about this.

Uncle: I told you, she's asleep.

Chang Fu: I still want to see her.

Uncle: Have a little consideration.

Chang Fu: Why doesn't she have a little consideration for me?

Uncle: Be reasonable!

Chang Fu: You stay out of this! (*Bawls.*) Shui-ying, Shui-ying!
(*Advances towards the door.*)

Uncle (*blocks him*): Be careful. Don't knock the chicken soup over.

Chang Fu: Chicken soup? (*Opens the pot.*) Fine! No wonder people say: "While the brigade members suffer, some cadres are feathering their own nest!"

Uncle: Who says that?

Chang Fu: Never you mind.

Uncle: I know without you telling me.

Chang Fu: I don't care whether you do or not. Anyhow, he's right. She's not interested in the brigade members. What she cares about is sleep, chicken soup! A fine secretary! A fine cadre!

Uncle (*furious*): Shut your mouth! (*Controls his anger with an effort.*) What do you know? Because she's so concerned about our brigade members, because she wants to lessen the burden on the state, Shui-ying, sick as she is, has been standing in paddy-field water, working day and night. She gets up before daylight, boils drinking water for everyone and repairs the tools. Every night, she goes from door to door, solving problems, arranging the work. These last few days, her eyes have been red with fatigue, she's become thin as a rail. But she doesn't say a word about herself, she just works harder. Yesterday, she nearly keeled over in the fields. We had to help her home, and even then we had to force her to go. (*His anger rising.*) But you, you're so ready to listen to rumours, so ready to attack her. All you care about is yourself. You're selfish, can't tell black from white. Disgraceful! (*Sings.*)

*Since the dam has been completed,
Shui-ying's been busier than ever,
Forgetting food and rest though ill,
She leads the fight with tireless will.*

*You keep scurrying to your private plot,
Extending your hand for compensation,*

*Day and night she strives in the fields,
For self-reliance and higher yields.*

*You worry that water will lap at your door,
She jumps into the stream to stem the flow,
For her many good deeds Shui-ying is famed,
Spreading such rumours — you should be ashamed!*

Chang Fu: I should be ashamed? There's no use talking to you. I want to see the Party secretary. (*Moves towards the door.*)
Shui-ying, Shui-ying! (*Pushes the door open.*)

(From the opposite direction Shui-ying's voice responds: "Ai!" Startled, Chang Fu whirls around. The morning sun is peeking over the horizon. A cuckoo calls. Shui-ying enters, carrying her tunic. She wipes the perspiration from her brow. She is followed by Ab-lien, who carries a water-measuring rule and a flashlight, and Brigade Member C.)

Shui-ying: Looking for me, Uncle Chang Fu?

Chang Fu (*embarrassed*): Why, er, that is . . . no.

Uncle: Shui-ying, have you gone all night without sleep again?

Ah-lien: She took us up Nine Bends River to examine the flow and measure the depth.

Uncle (*to Shui-ying*): Just look at you. Your clothes are soaked!

Shui-ying (*smiles*): It doesn't matter. The water's rising faster than yesterday. If it keeps on like this, it may go over the dyke and flood five hundred *mu* of newly-transplanted rice.

Uncle: That's serious!

Shui-ying: We must organize a labour force immediately and raise the dyke level. Then we can keep the water flowing and protect the fields at the same time.

Uncle: A good idea!

Shui-ying: Our labour power will be a little tight but, relying on the masses, we certainly can do it. Come on, let's check the teams.

(She turns to go. Suddenly faint, she staggers. Uncle Ab-chien and Ab-lien rush over and help her to a seat on the stone bench.)

Uncle (*concerned*): Shui-ying, how are you?

Shui-ying: I'm all right.

Uncle: You need rest.

Shui-ying: Hundreds of people in our brigade are battling day and night, men and women, young and old, working, sweating, doing everything to raise the output of the fields within the dyke, striving for a big harvest on those three thousand *mu*. How can I rest at a time like this?

Uncle: But you —

Shui-ying (*to Ab-lien*): Let's go.

Uncle: Wait a minute. (*Picks up the earthenware pot. With feeling*)
You're too tired, child. Have some of this and warm up.

Shui-ying (*sees the chicken soup. Moved*): Uncle, you shouldn't —

Uncle: Drink!

Chang Fu (*touched*): Drink!

(Ab-keng, offstage, shouts: "Comrade Shui-ying!" Enters, followed by Man Brigade Member A and Woman Brigade Member A. Shui-ying puts the earthenware pot down on the stone table.)

Ah-keng: Secretary Kao of the county Party committee just telephoned from Rear Mountain to ask what the water level is here. I told him.

Shui-ying: Did you ask whether they'd cut a passage through Tiger-Head Cliff?

Ah-keng: Yes. Not yet.

Shui-ying: They still haven't? (*Ponders.*)

Ah-keng: They're short of men. Secretary Kao is asking some communes to send help.

Uncle: Does that include us?

Ah-keng: He said we shouldn't send any because we're short-handed ourselves. He made a special point of that.

Shui-ying: We must. The leadership is being considerate. But if that passage isn't knocked through Tiger-Head Cliff, the water will never reach Rear Mountain, no matter how much we let in.

Uncle: We ought to send people on our own.

Shui-ying: The quicker the better.

Uncle, Ah-lien and Brigade Member C: Right.

Chang Fu (*to Brigade Member A, grumbling*): We haven't even got enough hands to manage our own affairs. Why do we have to bother about others?

Ah-keng (*hesitates*): Well...

Brigade Member A: Of course, that is a problem.

(General discussion.)

Shui-ying (*looks round, ponders. Affectionately*): Comrades, gather round.

(The morning sunlight is dazzling. Birds whistle and sing.)

Shui-ying (*takes a copy of Chairman Mao's works out of her coat pocket*): Let's study *In Memory of Norman Bethune*.

All: Good. *(They crowd round Shui-ying.)*

Shui-ying: Comrade Norman Bethune, a member of the Communist Party of Canada... made light of travelling thousands of miles to help us in our War of Resistance Against Japan... What kind of spirit is this that makes a foreigner selflessly adopt the cause of the Chinese people's liberation as his own?

All: It is... the spirit of communism!

Shui-ying (*sings*):

*Holding the precious book our hearts are warmed,
A red sun illuminates our minds,
Naught for oneself, all for others,
Giving first place always to our class brothers.*

*Selfish men, though near, are far apart,
The selfless, though separated, are heart to heart,
What we read here is the Party's call,
Urging onward to battle one and all.*

(Sunlight streams through multi-hued clouds. Everyone listens inspired.)

Ah-keng: We must send people to help.

All: We must.

Shui-ying: Let's talk this over. It will leave us with less hands and a lot to do. The rice sprouts have to be transplanted quickly, and we have to raise the dyke. All this has to be well planned.

Ah-keng: We can transfer everyone out of the kiln into the fields.

Ah-lien: We can organize the older people and the school kids.

Man Brigade Member A: If we work hard and efficiently, one can do the work of two.

Uncle: We'll re-allocate our machinery and draught animals to make the best possible use of them. I'm sure we can spare some people to help Rear Mountain.

All: Right.

Ah-lien: Shui-ying, give the job to our Youth Shock Brigade.

Shui-ying: All right. I'll go with you.

Uncle: You haven't been well. Better let me go.

Shui-ying: No. The responsibilities here are also very heavy. As the water rises, the struggle is bound to sharpen. *(With deep feeling)* We're members of the Party branch committee, you and I, and Li isn't at home. We need you in the brigade to keep an eye on things.

Uncle: Don't worry. No matter how big the storm, we can meet it.

Shui-ying (*nods. Fondly*): I'll be seeing you. *(Gets her tunic, walks off, then pauses and looks back. She raises one hand and strikes a pose.)*

(Quick curtain)

SCENE SEVEN

AT THE DROUGHT AREA

(Afternoon, three days later. Precipitous Tiger-Head Cliff. In the foreground are terraced fields. In the distance, undulating hills. Red banners bedeck the work site. A tense battle against nature is in progress.)

As the curtain rises Rear Mountain Man A, standing on the cliffside, is directing blasting operations with flag signals.)

RM Man A (*shouts downward*): Look out! We're ready to blast. Take shelter.

(Mother Water-Seeker, a coat over her arm, enters carrying a water bucket, from which a canteen is hanging.)

Mother: Comrades, come and drink.

RM Man A: Hey, Mother Water-Seeker, stay where you are. It's dangerous here. *(Shouts downward.)* Get ready. Light the fuse! Comrades, this way, quick!

(Ab-keng, Ab-lien and Shui-ying swiftly mount the cliff.)

(Mother sets down the bucket and covers it with her coat. Below, there is a huge explosion, followed by distant cheers.)

All: Well done!

RM Man A *(to Shui-ying):* You've finished two days' work in one. At this rate, we'll be able to cut through Tiger-Head Cliff tomorrow.

(He, Ab-keng and Ab-lien go off excitedly.)

Mother *(to Shui-ying):* You've been working hard, comrade. Come, have a drink of water. I've brought it from more than ten li away.

Shui-ying *(accepts the water):* Thank you.

Mother: You people have grabbed the hardest jobs and finished them first. You certainly do things in style.

Shui-ying: A woman your age, coming all that distance over steep paths to bring us water. You really shouldn't, old mama—

Mother: Huh, that's nothing. When I heard that Dragon River water would be coming through, I was so happy, for two nights I couldn't sleep. If I can see it flowing through the cliff with my own eyes, taste it with my own mouth, how sweet that will be!

Shui-ying: But the water still hasn't come.

Mother: It will, soon, soon.

Shui-ying: Will it reach here in time?

Mother: Of course. In people's communes, we're all of one heart. Our energy has no limit. It will be in time, all right.

Shui-ying: Dragon River Brigade hasn't done enough to get that water to you.

Mother *(annoyed):* Not enough? You didn't do the work. You don't know what you're saying. Why, they dammed the river and flooded three hundred *mu* of their high-yield land. See this? *(Holds up the canteen.)* Their Party secretary Shui-ying sent us this canteen of their communist-style water. I haven't had the heart to drink any. Just looking at it gives me strength!

Shui-ying *(moved):* You're Mother Water-Seeker?

Mother: And you?

Shui-ying: I belong to Dragon River Brigade.

Mother: You — you must be their Party secretary.

Shui-ying: Call me Shui-ying, mother.

Mother: Shui-ying! *(Excitedly grasps her arms with both hands.)* Child! *(Sings.)*

*Dragon River brothers with sincere devotion,
Sacrifice themselves in a style that's new,
They send us water in time of drought,
Every drop warms us through and through.*

Shui-ying *(sings):* *Communes bring the water here from there,
Every drop reflecting the Party's care.*

Mother *(wiping a tear):* Well said!

Shui-ying: Mother Water-Seeker, I was just thinking of looking for you. *(Helps the old lady to sit down beside her on the mound.)*

Mother: What for?

Shui-ying: I want to ask you about someone.

Mother: Who?

Shui-ying: He lived here before liberation. He's called Huang Kuo-chung.

Mother: Huang Kuo-chung?

Shui-ying: From what we've been able to learn so far, his name used to be Wang Kuo-lu.

Mother: Wang Kuo-lu! *(Rises abruptly to her feet.)* Where is he?

Shui-ying *(also stands up):* Shortly before Liberation, he ran away to Dragon River Village.

Mother: He's a beast in human form! In the old society if we were hit by a drought like we're having today, I don't know how

many poor people he would have harmed and squeezed dry!
(Sings.)

*We used to have drought nine years out of ten,
To get water was harder than to leap to the sky,
Seeker of Water my parents named me,
But before I found it my eyes were wept dry.*

*In forty-seven we poor suffered badly from drought,
At the foot of the cliff my son discovered a spring,
That dog of a landlord claimed it was his,
And sent Wang to hold it like a greedy king.*

*The people, enraged, hotly argued the case,
Cruel Wang with one shot murdered my son,
Many a poor man's blood encrimsoned that cliff,
Till Chairman Mao brought the thunder and the tyrants were done.*

*Though our drought this year is quite severe,
We're getting assistance from far and near,
Splitting cliffs and leading water,
We hope Dragon River will soon be here.*

Shui-ying: Today, we have the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party, old mama. Your wish is sure to be fulfilled.

(Offstage, Ah-lien calls: "Shui-ying!" Enters rapidly with Ah-keng.)

Ah-lien: A telephone call from our village. The water is rising very fast. The rice fields are in danger!

Ah-keng: But the water still hasn't reached Rear Mountain. The leaves of the wheat on the plateau are turning yellow. (Holds out a stalk of wheat.)

Shui-ying (takes it. In a worried voice): Water!

Mother (longingly): Water!

Shui-ying (decisively): Time is grain. We must raise the level of the water back home so that it gets here quickly.

Ah-keng: That may mean the end of our rice.

Shui-ying: Not only that. Three thousand *mu* of fields and a dozen homes may be affected. We've got to do something, fast!

Mother: The burden on you folks is even heavier than before.

Shui-ying: The skin on the hands of the poor and lower-middle peasants is all the same skin, the fields before and behind the mountain are all fields of the people's communes. (Resolutely) Ah-lien, you and your group continue cutting through Tiger-Head Cliff. Ah-keng, you and I must report immediately to Secretary Kao, then return to our brigade tonight.

Ah-lien and **Ah-keng:** Right. (They go out.)

Mother: Wait, wait! (Takes the coat which has been covering the bucket.) It will be cold on the road tonight. Wear this coat.

Shui-ying: Thanks. I don't need it.

Mother: Child!

Shui-ying (moved): Mother Water-Seeker! (Sings.)

*There's no time for all I wish to say,
But your vengeance is assured,
Dragon River's sweet water will reach here, and then
At the harvest celebration we'll be meeting again. (Goes off.)*

Mother (follows with coat): Shui-ying! Shui-ying! (Gazes after her with deep emotion.)

(The lights fade.)

(Curtain)

SCENE EIGHT

STORM AT THE SLUICE-GATE

(The next day, near noon.

The sluice-gate, bedecked with fluttering red pennants, towers above the banks of Dragon River.

As the curtain rises, Brigade Member A, carrying tools, rushes in.)

BM A (shouts towards wings): The rice fields along the dyke are flooding, comrades. Save them, quick! (Runs off.) (Brigade members, tools in hand, hurry down from the direction of the sluice-gate

and run across the stage. Chang Fu follows and stops his son Pao-cheng who is at the rear of the procession.

Chang Fu: The water has almost reached our door. Come home with me and help me move.

Pao-cheng: Saving the brigade's rice field is more important.

Chang Fu: Foolish boy, don't you care anything about your own property?

Pao-cheng: That's selfish individualism!

Chang Fu: You don't act like any son of mine.

Pao-cheng: If I acted like you, I'd be a mess! *(Runs off.)*

(Chang Fu follows.)

(Covered with dust, Li enters from the direction of the sluice-gate.)

Li (sings): *Five days on the mountain cutting fuel we need,
I return to the village at all possible speed.*

(Huang enters from the other direction, pulling Chang Fu.)

Chang Fu: *Aiya*, brigade leader, you're back at last.

Huang: Our village is in an awful state.

Li (startled): What's wrong?

Huang: The river is rising very fast. Five hundred *mu* of rice are already half flooded.

Li (shocked): What!

Chang Fu: Our homes are in danger. Shui-ying's house is already swamped. Mine is next!

Li: Shui-ying? Where is she?

Huang: Huh, what does she care about our brigade? She's taken a group off to Rear Mountain, putting on a big show.

Li (exasperated): What's the matter with her, anyway!

Chang Fu: You've got to do something!

Huang: Everyone is saying the only solution is break open the dam.

Li: We can't do that. Not without orders from the county Party committee.

Chang Fu: My dear brigade leader, if you don't take action, not only will five hundred *mu* of rice be under water, but a dozen homes will be flooded!

Li (worried): No, we can't break the dam....

Huang (quickly): But you can shut the sluice-gate.

Li: Shut the sluice-gate and stop the flow?

Huang: Why not? They say the drought area has got water now.

Li (sharply): What's that?

Huang: They've had it for some time.

Li: Are you sure?

Huang: Absolutely.

Chang Fu: You're the leader of the brigade. You must be concerned about us members.

Huang: That's right. Fire and water have no mercy. You can't delay any longer.

Li (decisively): Close the gate!

Huang: Good. Close the gate!

(Li, Chang Fu and Huang start rushing towards the sluice-gate.)

Uncle (offstage, shouts): No, you mustn't. *(Runs on.)*

Li: Uncle Ah-chien!

Uncle: How can you order the gate closed before you've investigated?

Li: The water's reached the top of the dyke. Of course we should close the gate.

Uncle: If we stop the water, how can we help the drought area?

Li: Who will be responsible if our homes and fields are swamped?

Uncle: The cost will be heavy if the drought area is not saved.

(Mounts the stone steps leading to the sluice-gate and blocks Li's way. Sings.)

Be patient, listen to me, old friend,

You mustn't close that gate, just think,

To ninety thousand arid mu it leads,

With class brothers it's a flesh and blood link.

The Party branch committee we should obey,

We must hold the fort, with Shui-ying away.

Li (sings): *Rear Mountain has water, don't procrastinate,*

If Shui-ying were here, she'd close the gate.

Uncle (sings): *This water at Rear Mountain, who has seen it?*

Li (*sings*): *A man who's told me personally.*

Uncle (*sings*): *We can't trust those who tattle and prate,
It would be too subjective to close the gate.*

Li (*sings*): *In an emergency
I have authority.*

Close the gate!

Huang and Chang Fu: Close the gate!

(Li tries to push by Uncle. The two men struggle. Shui-ying suddenly appears beside the sluice-gate. With her are Ah-keng, Pao-cheng and several brigade members.)

Shui-ying (*sings*): *To stop the water would be a terrible crime.*

Li: You've come back just in time. Water has already entered your house, half of the rice fields are flooded, and the other half will soon be swamped as well.

Shui-ying (*thoughtfully comes down the steps*): What's your idea?

Li: Close the gate.

Shui-ying: Close the gate?

Li: Yes.

Shui-ying: And cut off the flow of water?

Li: Of course. Do you agree?

Shui-ying (*pauses*): I can't.

Li (*surprised*): You don't agree?

Shui-ying: We can't close the gate. In fact we have to open it wider.

Li: Wider?

Shui-ying: A lot wider.

Li: A lot wider?

Shui-ying: All the way.

Li: All the way?

Shui-ying: Right.

(Everyone is surprised. Huang sneaks away. Two brigade members vigilantly follow.)

Li: But doesn't the drought area already have water?

Shui-ying: No. The water has only reached the front mountain ravine. There are still seventy thousand *mu* that haven't received a drop.

All: Not a drop?

Uncle: Why not?

Shui-ying: Our land is low here. The water flows very slowly.

All: What can we do?

Uncle: "Let man fail the land just once, and the land will fail him the entire year."

Shui-ying: That's right. The farming seasons wait for no one. Fighting drought is like fighting fire. You have to work fast. We must raise the water level and make it flow quicker, no matter what the cost.

(Everyone thinks this over.)

Li: Whose idea is that?

Shui-ying: Mine.

Li: What! You again! (*Sits down angrily on a stone by the sluice-gate.*)

Shui-ying (*walks over. Fondly*): What's wrong?

Li: If we do it your way, not only will we lose five hundred *mu* of rice, but a dozen homes and three thousand *mu* of brigade fields will all be ruined. Is that what you call "losing a pawn to save a castle", I ask you!

Shui-ying (*calmly*): In the chess game of battling the drought, three thousand *mu* are just a pawn.

Li: A mighty big pawn!

Uncle: To save socialism the king, even a knight, a bishop, a castle, is worth sacrificing, to say nothing of a pawn!

Li (*emphatically slapping his thigh*): No! I must speak out!
(Rises, to Shui-ying with machine-gun rapidity) When three hundred *mu* were flooded and you said it was losing a pawn to save a castle, I gave in to you. When we ruined a kilnful of bricks and you said we have to consider the overall situation, I gave in again. Then you said we'd make up the loss of the fields outside the dyke by increasing the yield on the inside land. You talked

but you didn't act. You know how short-handed we are, yet you pulled out people and sent them to Rear Mountain.

(Uncle wants to intervene. Shui-ying stops him.)

Li: Well, never mind about that. Now, you want to open the sluice-gate wide and raise the water level. Brigade members' homes are being flooded. Have you even gone to look? Three thousand *mu* are being swamped. Have you given that a thought? All you know is sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice. Why don't you care about the brigade members' troubles, troubles, troubles? *(Pushes Ah-keng's restraining hand aside. Continues addressing Shui-ying.)* Why are you letting down the brigade masses, your companions in battle through thick and thin, the village of Dragon River which raised you?

Uncle, Ah-keng, Others *(to Li, angrily):* You!

(Shui-ying again stops them. Woman Brigade Member A and another brigade member run forward. Sobbing, Woman Brigade Member B throws herself on Shui-ying's bosom.)

Shui-ying *(looks sorrowfully at her erring comrade. Sincerely):* For several years now my work has been a far cry from the Party's demands and the masses' expectations. I haven't done nearly enough. You and I are soldiers at the same post, tied by the closest class links. You can point out what I've done wrong in the fight against the drought. If I've made mistakes, you can criticize me. But where Chairman Mao's teachings, Party decisions, are concerned, we can't allow any reservations, and we certainly mustn't go against them. Otherwise, *(becoming more and more animated)* we'd really be letting down the brigade masses, our battle companions through thick and thin, the village of Dragon River which raised us. Even more would we be letting down *(solemnly)* the class brothers who helped us rebuild our village three years ago! *(Sings.)*

Standing before the sluice-gate, I recall that perilous time,

*Deepest class emotion inscribes each brick and stone.
Floods and torrents hit us, rain in deluge fell,
Homes were wrecked, the people fled, to the heights they rushed pell-mell.*

*Suddenly in the distance we saw a red light,
Chairman Mao had sent the PLA
On a rescue boat from the Eastern Sea,
With food and clothing to warm our hearts.*

*Food in hand the villagers wept.
Chairman Mao's concern is higher than the sky,
Thicker than the earth,
Deeper than the sea.*

*The Rear Mountain folk have never spared
Themselves in helping us to
Fight the flood,
Construct the dyke,
Erect the sluice-gate,
Rebuild our village.*

*Remembering the past, viewing the present,
I'm saddened to see you act like this.
Should we forget the pain now that the wound is healed?
Should we forget the diggers while drinking the well's sweet yield?
Comrade! Battle companion!
If in this little storm your footing is unsteady,
To fight for mankind's liberation can you say you are ready?*

Li *(moved):* Shui-ying, you are right. The gate should be opened wide.

Chang Fu *(hastily):* Wait, wait. Let me go home first and move my things before you start.

Pao-cheng: Relax. Our things have been moved.

Chang Fu: Who moved them?

Pao-cheng: When Comrade Shui-ying came back to the village just now, she paid no attention to her own house, which is already flooded, but got everybody together and moved to higher

ground all the belongings of brigade-dependent* Aunt Chang, and all ours as well.

Chang Fu (*deeply grateful*): *Aiya*, Shui-ying. . . . (To Li) Open that sluice-gate wider!

Li: Not so fast. We've got to get Shui-ying's things out.

Pao-cheng: We've already moved them.

Li: We must move those other dozen families too.

Woman Brigade Member A: Shui-ying's arranged for that. All their things have been moved.

(The masses are very touched.)

Li (*regretfully*): *Aiya*, I didn't know any of this.

Uncle: There's a lot you don't know! After you left, Shui-ying was in the fields day and night. She worked herself ill. You still say she just talked but didn't act?

Ah-keng: On the way back from Rear Mountain she got the idea of shifting our rice sprouts to higher ground, so that we can plant again after the water recedes. How can you say she hasn't thought about our three thousand *mu*?

Woman Brigade Member B: She went straight to the homes on the low-lying land the moment she returned and organized the moving of every one of them. She carried old Aunt Chang on her back up the slope and found her a place to live. Is that what you mean by not caring about the brigade members' troubles?

Uncle: What nonsense you've been talking!

Li (*very distressed*): I've wronged you, Shui-ying.

(Brigade Member B and another brigade member, offstage, shout: "March!" They enter, pushing Huang ahead of them.)

BM B: Shui-ying, you were absolutely right about this guy. A desperate dog tries to jump the wall. He sneaked over to the dam and tried to wreck it!

Other BM: We caught him red-handed!

(Everyone is furious.)

*In people's communes the aged and the infirm are taken care of in food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses.

Huang (*feigning indignation*): You're blackening a good man's name! I wasn't wrecking the dam. I was only thinking of everybody's interests. (*Feigning sadness*) I couldn't stand seeing you suffering such a heavy loss. Brother Chang Fu, brigade leader, you know what sort of person I am.

Shui-ying (*sternly*): Wang Kuo-lu!

Huang (*automatically*): Yes? (*Realizes he's made a slip. Strives to maintain an appearance of calm.*)

Shui-ying: You can quit acting. (*Very angry*) Before Liberation, you rode on the people's shoulders. No deed was too bad for you — seizing water and land, murdering innocent folk. The evidence is mountain high! On the eve of Liberation you changed your name and ran away. You hid your identity for years, dreaming that your gang could make a comeback. You spread rumours, stirred up dissension, fanned evil winds, sniped with concealed arrows, schemed, sabotaged, did everything in your power to create chaos! You're a hard-core counter-revolutionary, with crimes mounting up to the sky!

(Huang collapses to the ground.)

Chang Fu: So that's the kind of man he is!

Li (*enraged, grasps Huang*): You snake in the grass!

Shui-ying: Take him away!

All: We'll thoroughly expose and settle with him!

(Brigade Member B and other brigade members escort Huang off.)

Li (*very distressed*): I fell for him, like a fool!

Shui-ying (*with deep feeling*): Wang Kuo-lu is always claiming that he is "thinking of everybody's interests". Is his "everybody" the Dragon River Brigade? Not a bit of it. Then who is he thinking of? He's thinking of his own class. Every class has its collective and its private interests, its own concepts about these things. (*To Li*) Your private interests provided the enemy with a convenient cloak. You and I are both Communists. We can't allow the enemy to use our hands to attain his goals.

Li (*ashamed and angry with himself. Sings*):

*Your words get right down to the root,
They make me angry and ashamed,
I was being responsible for the brigade, I said,
While acting for our private interests instead.*

*They limited my vision, endangered the revolution,
I disappointed the Party and my dear class brothers.
I've learned a painful lesson in all this storm and strife;
I'll ne'er forget class struggle, serve the people all my life!*

(Chang Fu shamefacedly departs. Li looks at Shui-ying, miserably lowers his gaze.)

Shui-ying (*warmly*): Raise your head, man. See, what's that before us?

Li: Our three thousand *mu* of land.

Shui-ying (*leads him higher up the sluice-gate steps*): And beyond that?

Li: Hand-Palm Mountain.

Shui-ying (*leads him to the top of the gate*): And beyond that?

Li: I can't see.

Shui-ying: Hand-Palm Mountain is blocking your view. (*Sings.*)

*Raise your head, expand your chest,
Fix your eyes on distant vistas,
Don't let "Hand-Palm" your view impede,
A world-wide vision is what you need.*

*How many slaves await liberation,
How many poor endure starvation,
How many sisters have been harmed,
How many brothers now are armed?*

*How many sisters have been harmed,
How many brothers now are armed?*

*Bury imperialism, revisionism, reaction,
Mankind must attain full liberation.
Bury imperialism, revisionism, reaction,
Mankind must attain full liberation.*

*Plant the red flag of revolution everywhere, everywhere, everywhere.
Proud may it wave on high!*

Li (*stirred*): Shui-ying, let's open the sluice-gate wide.

Shui-ying: Open the gate!

(Li strides forward to comply.)

All (*cheer*): It's opened!

(The water rushes through, seething like the emotions of the masses.)

(Curtain)

EPILOGUE

PAEAN TO A BUMPER HARVEST

(Morning, summer harvest time. Against a backdrop of multi-coloured clouds a fiery red sun rises.

At the entrance to the grain depot. Beyond can be seen fields of golden grain, sunflowers, a line of telephone poles. The harvest looks very promising.

As the curtain rises, two groups of people from the drought area approach, led by Mother Water-Seeker and Rear Mountain Man A. Each group carries a banner stretched between two poles reading: "Dragon River Brigade". All are dressed in their holiday clothes. Virtually dancing as they swing along with the grain they are delivering to the state, they meet in the centre of the stage.)

RM Man A: Mother Water-Seeker, what are you doing here?

Mother: What about you?

RM Man A: I asked you first.

Mother: I want an answer.

(Grain Depot Manager comes out.)

Manager: What are you all doing here?

RM Man A: We're the Dragon River Brigade, comrade, delivering our grain tax.

Mother: Comrade, we're the Dragon River Brigade, delivering our grain tax.

Manager (*reads their banners*): "Dragon River Brigade." Hm. "Dragon River Brigade." Now which one of you is really Dragon River Brigade?

RM Man A: We are.

Mother: We are.

RM Man A: No, we!

Mother: No, we!

Manager: Don't shout, don't shout! Yesterday, several groups came, all claiming to be Dragon River Brigade. Today, there are more. If you ask me, none of you are Dragon River Brigade.

All: We are Dragon River Brigade!

(*Little Hung enters, running.*)

Little Hung: Grandma, here comes another one!

(*Shui-ying, Li, Uncle, Ab-lien, Ab-keng and others, with a Dragon River Brigade banner, enter carrying grain. Delighted animation among all.*)

All: Comrade Shui-ying!

Manager: You see, this is the real Dragon River Brigade.

Mother and RM Man A: Comrade, anyway you must accept our grain!

Both Rear Mountain Groups: You must! And don't take theirs!

Manager: Why?

Mother: Comrade! (*Sings.*)

*In our time of drought disaster,
They flooded their fields to send us water,
Our harvest's been extremely good,
To pay their tax we feel we should.*

Manager: That sounds fair enough.

RM Man A: Comrade! (*Sings.*)

*"Dragon River" suffered for our sake,
The tax we pay for them please take.*

Manager: That's only fair.

Shui-ying: Comrades! (*Sings.*)

*When our fields were flooded,
We were given aid from every side,
Thousands helped our fields restore,
Sent fertilizer, put in sprouts once more.*

Li (*sings*):

*We saved the pawn, saved the castle, we also saved the king,
All our losses are made up, shouldn't we our grain tax bring?*

Manager: That's only fair.

Dragon River Brigade Members: Then you should accept it.

Manager: Not so fast. First listen to me. (*Sings.*)

*Since Dragon River Brigade flooded their fields,
The county Party committee has ordered us
To exempt them from their tax this season;
I can't refuse, I have no reason.*

Rear Mountain Brigade Members: Absolutely correct.

Manager: That being so, take your grain home, all of you.

All: We've delivered it here, and we're not going to take it back.

Shui-ying: Comrade! (*Sings.*)

*Our tax in grain, please don't resist,
Accept it now, we must insist.*

DRB Members (*sing*): *Here it is, you must accept.*

Shui-ying (*to all, sings*): *The others' grain, the state can buy.*

RMB Members: Good, good. (*Sing.*)

We have a surplus, the idea's great.

Shui-ying (*to Manager, sings*): *Added grain to supply the state.*

Manager: That's a good thing to do.

All: Then accept it all. (*Move forward with their baskets of grain.*)

Manager: Wait. Are you sure you've kept enough for food?

All: More than enough.

Manager: What about seed grain, and grain for fodder?

All: We've got plenty.

Manager: And grain reserve?

All: We've set all that aside.

Manager: All right, then, I'll buy it. We certainly ought to learn from your communist style of doing things.

Mother: It's we who ought to learn from Dragon River Brigade. If it weren't for the water from Dragon River, we'd never have had such a big harvest. Truly, neither water of gold, nor water of silver, nor water of sweet dew is half as precious as the communist-style water from Dragon River!

Shui-ying: Vast though the river, vast though the sea, vast though the earth and sky, none is as vast as Chairman Mao's concern for the people. Comrades, we were able to lick the biggest drought in a century only because we relied on the powerful leadership of the Party and invincible Mao Tsetung Thought!

All (sing): *Hail to the spirit of communism,
The pervading fragrance of collective flowers,
With Chairman Mao, our great leader,
With the guidance of our Communist Party,*

Shui-ying (sings): *We'll wage revolution eternally,*

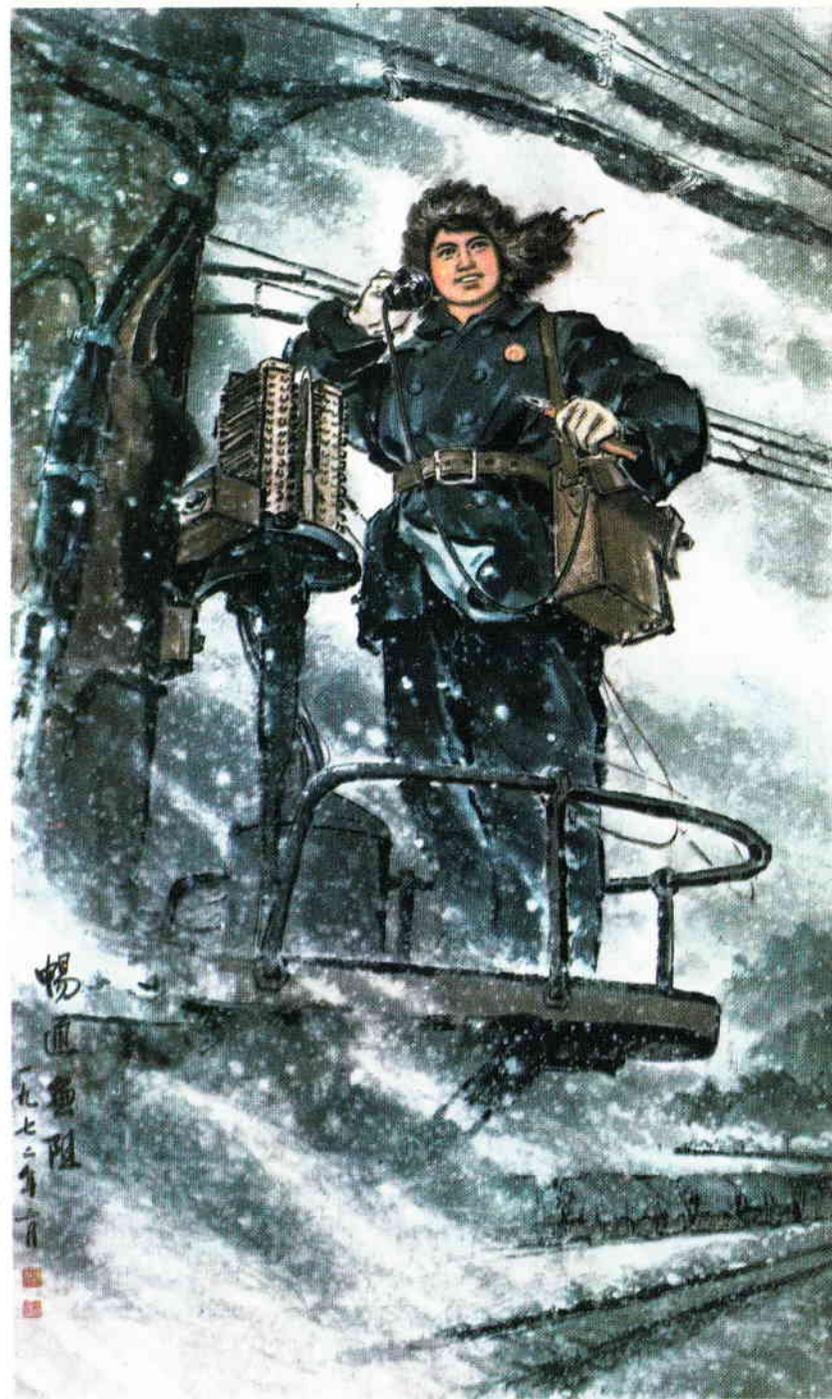
All (sing): *And drive on forward determinedly!*

(A brilliant sun casts a thousand beams. Together with the brigade members, Shui-ying holds aloft a volume of the works of Mao Tsetung. They strike a pose.)

(The curtain slowly falls)

The End

The Line Is Repaired (painting in the traditional style) by Luan Wan-chu and Wen Chung-hsun ►



Footprints

On their way to the well
In the morning mist
Our villagers stop in surprise,
Empty buckets dangling
From their carrying-poles;
For the paddy fields
Yesterday so parched and dry
Are brimming with water today.
Last night there was no rain,
None of us came —
Whose doing is this?
A miracle, it seems!
But look! The rope over the well
Is sopping wet,
The path between the fields
Is dotted with footprints.

A smile dawns on grandad's face.
"Well I know this of old," he says.
"Many years ago
When the Red Army passed this way
In pursuit of the enemy,
They watered our fields, cleaned out wells....
One night, unknown to us,
They camped near by;
When we woke next day
Red slogans met our eyes.
Last night the PLA
On field manoeuvres
Must have passed through our village.
They are carrying on
The tradition of those days."



The Story of the Iron Man

In March 1960, a crowded train sped towards Taching.

By a window in the front carriage sat a strongly built middle-aged man in a worker's peaked cap and an old sheepskin jacket. A notebook in his right hand, he was lost in thought.

Presently his knitted brows relaxed. His face lit up with a confident smile.

As the train, sounding its whistle, slowed down and stopped at a small station, this passenger leaned out of the window to see the name of the place.

"We're still a long way from Taching, Team Leader Wang." The young worker seated on Wang's right indicated the map in his hand. "You haven't had a proper rest for days. Why not catch

"The Iron Man" was the name given Wang Chin-hsi by the oil workers and poor and lower-middle peasants of Taching. Wang Chin-hsi was a Communist, a member of the Ninth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Because the Taching Oilfield was a red banner on our country's industrial front, in 1964 Chairman Mao issued the call, "In industry, learn from Taching." Wang Chin-hsi died of illness on November 15, 1970.



Wang Chin-hsi — the Iron Man

up on your sleep? I promise to wake you when it's time to get off."

Wang Chin-hsi, leader of Drill Team 1205, was on his way from Yumen to Taching to help open up the oilfield there. Throughout the journey his heart had been in a tumult. He could neither sleep nor sit still. At each stop he asked how much farther it was to Taching and when they would arrive. Now, turning to his workmate he said earnestly: "I'm too keyed up to sleep, lad."

As the train sped on through the rolling countryside, passing by many new industrial towns, Wang Chin-hsi was unable to control his excitement.

In 1959, representing crack Drill Team 1205, Wang Chin-hsi had attended the National Conference of Heroes of Labour in the capital. Puzzled by the huge bags on top of some Peking buses, he asked what they were. He was told that on account of the petrol shortage these buses were burning gas.

A stab of pain shot through Wang's heart. He thought: How galling! How can a great country like ours do without oil? As a Chinese oil worker I can't stand for this. Can't give the imperialists this chance to laugh at us...

Before Liberation, Wang Chin-hsi had tasted the full bitterness of class oppression and national humiliation. He had suffered, too, from the backwardness of China's oil industry. This had made him resolve to give his life to developing the nation's oil production. It enraged him each time someone alleged: "China is poor in oil."

"I just don't believe it," he fumed. "How can all the oil be buried underground in other countries, not in China?"

While the Conference of Heroes was on, Wang heard that oil had been discovered in Taching. He went back to his hostel in soaring spirits and immediately sent in his request to take part in constructing the new oilfield.

In mid March the order for his transfer came. The leadership told him that, on instructions from Chairman Mao and the Central Committee, a huge army of workers was being assembled for this new battle on the petroleum front. Wang Chin-hsi set off with the thirty-two men of Drill Team 1205. In the train he made them all study Chairman Mao's works and discuss the significance of this assignment.

"We're going to sink wells and get oil," said one.

"That's true, but it's not the whole truth," was Wang's reply. "We're going to make revolution! If a man has no blood, his heart stops beating. If industry has no oil, air, ground and water transport all become paralyzed. The imperialists and revisionists are trying to throttle us by cutting off our oil supply. We must build this big

new oilfield to smash the myth that China has no oil, to win honour for Chairman Mao and for our people.”

On March 25, 1960, Wang Chin-hsi and his team reached Taching. Alighting from the train, Wang went straight to the oilfield headquarters. There he rapped out three questions:

“Where’s our well site? When will the drilling rig arrive? What’s the highest record here for drilling?”

Headquarters told him: “Your site’s at Machiyao. Settle in first. We’ll let you know when your equipment comes.”

Wang heard only the first part of these instructions. That was enough for him. He and his mates tramped for two hours through the grassland before reaching Machiyao, where he climbed a hillock to have a good look round. A snowy waste stretched as far as eye could see. But in his mind’s eye Wang saw huge oil deposits below. In old China he had started begging at the age of six, a stick to beat off dogs in one hand, the other leading his father, blinded as a result of the landlord’s brutal treatment. At eight Wang himself had gone to work for the landlord as a cowherd. With nothing to wear but a tattered sheepskin coat, running bare-legged and barefoot over the hills, he was often cuffed and beaten for no reason. At fifteen he went to the Yumen oilfield to do heavy “coolie” work, and there he was savagely whipped, knocked about and beaten with bronze rods by the feudal overseers, guards and American “technicians”. He had suppressed the fury in his heart, had never shed a single tear. But today Wang’s dream of long years was about to come true. In response to Chairman Mao’s call, tens of thousands of men were gathering from all corners of the land to build up China’s petroleum industry. Tears of joy welled up in the tough old worker’s eyes.

Wang yanked open his padded jacket and wiped his eyes. “Here we are! Standing over a sea of oil!” he cried. “We’ll fix up our drilling rig and go all out. People say our oil industry’s ‘backward’. We’re going to rip that label off and chuck it into the Pacific Ocean.” He wished he could smash through the rock formation with his fist and see the jet-black crude oil come gushing out....

The villagers of Machiyao gathered round to welcome these men come to drill oil wells. Two poor peasants, Uncle Chao and his wife, clasped Wang Chin-hsi’s hands. “We’ve looked forward a long time to this day,” they exclaimed. “Now at last you’ve come.”

Noticing that the oil workers had got up from the ground to greet them, Uncle Chao asked them: “Have they fixed places for you to stay in?”

“We’ll make dug-outs to live in here, uncle,” replied Wang cheerfully. “Can we borrow a few picks and shovels from your village?”

“What! Stay out in the wilds at this time of year, with no roof overhead and snow and ice underfoot? How can you manage with dug-outs? No, you must come to our village.”

Wang thanked him and said: “This is where we’ll be drilling, uncle. So here’s where we’ll live.”

Since Wang refused to move, the villagers took his team to a tumbledown stable near by.

March in Taching is bitterly cold. The ground was frozen hard. That night the thirty-two oil drillers huddled close together for warmth in their draughty quarters. Wang Chin-hsi lit a fire for his men and saw them settle down. Then, since they were already packed in like sardines, he himself dosed down on a heap of straw in the passage.

Hard conditions temper men and test their endurance. The next morning one young fellow leaning back against his kit-bag grumbled: “This is a devil of a place — all snow and ice, with nowhere to live. How can we drill wells here?”

This young worker born in New China had applied several times in Yumen to come to Taching, eager to go wherever conditions were hardest. On the train he had led the rest in singing, beating time with his muscular hands. But here he was complaining of difficulties. Wang decided to nip this tendency in the bud by setting the youngster’s thinking straight and mobilizing the whole team for battle.

The thirty-odd men sat round the fire munching the stale buns they had brought from the train, their eyes on the *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* in their team leader’s hands. Wang opened the book at *On Contradiction*, and read out Chairman Mao’s teachings on grasping the principal contradiction. Three times he read this passage:

“If in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principal contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate position. Therefore, in studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved.”

“What’s our principal contradiction right now?” asked Wang.

The young man who had complained looked up, scratching his head, and replied: “Seems to me our main contradiction now is that we need shelters to live in, a stove to cook on and beds to sleep on. We can’t build up this oilfield till we’ve somewhere to live.”

“I don’t agree,” put in another worker. “I think our principal contradiction now is that we must arm ourselves with Chairman Mao’s thinking, with the revolutionary spirit of fearing neither hardship nor death. Before we can build up this wasteland, our hearts must first take root here.”

“To catch dragons, go down into the sea; to catch tigers, go up the hills. We came to these grasslands to open up an oilfield.”

“I agree. Our main problem is getting our thinking straight.”

When the others had aired their views Wang stood up and said: “It’s true, we’re up against plenty of difficulties. We have assembled here for battle, to take this place by storm. Tens of thousands of men have converged all at once in these wilds where there are no roads, no transport to speak of, and where food and shelter are a big problem. But as I see it, all that these difficulties amount to is roughing it for a while. However short of facilities we are, that’s nothing compared to our country’s shortage of oil. Of all the contradictions facing us, and there certainly are plenty, the principal contradiction is that the imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries are cutting off our oil supply to throttle us. We must put our country first. To rid China once for all of her backwardness in petroleum production, we can cope with difficulties mountain-high.”

The First Oil Well (woodcuts) by Chao Mei ►



Studying *On Contradiction*



Starting the Drill



Breaking Ice to Fetch Water



Racing Against Time

Wang's words warmed the hearts of all. He threw more fuel on the fire, making the whole stable bright.

"What are we to do then, team leader?" several workers asked together.

"As soon as the drilling rig arrives, we'll set to work."

"Right now, though..."

"Right now we'll go to the station to fetch the rig."

The men sprang to their feet, eager for action, and followed Wang Chin-hsi out.

The youngster whose morale had slumped kept close behind his team leader and eyed him intently. This lad had a high school education himself, whereas it took Wang over two hours to write a letter only one page long. When they started studying *On Contradiction*, in place of the word "contradiction" which he was unable to write, Wang had drawn a landlord and peasant, the peasant grabbing at the stick with which his class enemy was beating him. Since Wang often asked him the meaning of difficult words, this young fellow had the idea that his team leader was tops where work was concerned but not up to him in study. Now, carefully pondering Chairman Mao's teachings and Wang's understanding of them, he realized that the older man had grasped the crux of the matter, whereas his own view of the main contradiction disclosed his fear of hardship. His team leader stood higher, saw further, that was clear.

When they reached Taching Station, they found men milling about between huge piles of equipment. In the tumult of shouting could be heard accents from Hunan, Szechuan, Kansu, Peking, Shanghai... as if people from all parts of the country had foregathered in this small station. What with the whistles of trains, the honking of trucks, the neighing of horses and clatter of moving equipment, the place was a regular hive of activity.

Wang Chin-hsi went to headquarters to find out the situation. The dispatcher told him that their drilling rig had not yet arrived: they had better return to their site and rest for a while. But that scene of tense battle reminded Wang of the words: **We hail from all corners of the country and have joined together for a common revolutionary objective.** He told himself: It's our job

to extract oil, good oil, as soon as possible, to boost our country's petroleum industry. He talked it over with his men and they decided to remain at the station to help with unloading and transport.

Wang led his team to a freight car loaded with huge mud-pumps and other drilling equipment. He was the first to jump up there and start untying the ropes. "Never mind which team these are for. We'll unload everything that's for drilling and extracting oil," he said.

All set to work with a will. The truck was unloaded in no time. Since fresh goods trains kept coming in, far more than the railwaymen could handle, Drill Team 1205 helped unload coal and luggage too. . . . In a few days the fame of this volunteer unloading team led by Wang Chin-hsi spread far and wide.

Early one morning this volunteer team went as usual to the station, arriving there just as a train loaded with drilling equipment came slowly to a stop beside the platform. The oil driller leading the way spotted at a glance that the equipment was the kind used by their team. The brake handle was shining like a mounted bayonet. In a space beside the hoisting machine were two familiar looking big buckets. He waved one hand as if greeting a long-lost friend. "Team leader, our rig's come!" he turned and shouted to Wang.

The whole team rushed forward, cheering.

Normally it takes two cranes working together to unload a drilling rig. But the few cranes and tractors available were busy unloading equipment for other units. Drill Team 1205 had none. Should they go ahead or wait? The men were frantic with impatience.

"We must get this rig to our site, even if we have to carry it there ourselves." The political instructor picked up a cable.

"Right!" confirmed Wang. "Let's get cracking. Where there's a will there's a way. We can create the necessary conditions."

"That's the spirit. Get cracking!" chimed in the rest. "Where there's a will there's a way. We can create the necessary conditions."

Swift and strong as tigers, they went into action. Coir rope, crowbars, iron pipes, poles, all were pressed into service. Lugging, tugging, toting and using carrying-poles, with no motive power but

their own shoulders and hands, they unloaded that rig weighing over sixty tons and moved it all the way to their well site.

At dusk, Wang Chin-hsi and the political instructor returned with the last load to find a heated argument going on. The men were discussing how to install the equipment.

"Two cranes together are barely able to hoist the drilling machine. Less than three dozen of us, with a few crowbars and ropes — we'll never make it." One or two of the men evidently lacked confidence.

"Why not?" retorted another. "As Old Wang said this morning, where there's a will there's a way. We can create the necessary conditions."

"To do that we need a certain material base. There are other requirements too. We were unloading back there in the station. Installing is more difficult."

"What does that matter? We've hands. We can cope."

With Wang's arrival the argument broke off. All eyes turned towards him, awaiting the team leader's orders.

"Chairman Mao tells us to learn from the spirit of the Foolish Old Man." Wang looked round with a smile. "If the Foolish Old Man could move mountains, we can certainly install our drilling machine."

The well site fairly seethed with activity. Some men tied ropes to the equipment, others jacked it up with crowbars. Wang Chin-hsi got hold of three large sheets of iron, which he set at an angle to the drilling platform. When his men were all in place he shouted: "One, two, three!" The drilling machine started inching up the ramp.

Once the drilling machine had left the ground, crowbars were not much use as levers. Wang squatted down to get his shoulder under the rig and heave. And as the drill rose inch by inch, he made up a work chant and roared it out in his thick Kansu accent:

When oil men raise a shout
The whole earth quakes.
Nothing can daunt us,
We have what it takes!

One dark moonless night, Wang Chin-hsi made his way alone to the well site to have a look at the drilling rig, newly installed. Their job now was to drill a well and extract oil as fast as possible. Once

the derrick was up and water laid on, drilling could start. But having no means of illumination made it impossible to work at night.

Wang fetched a pick from the stable where some of his comrades were already asleep, softly closing the door behind him as he left. Having chosen a level piece of ground he lit a fire and, with his pick handle, measured the size of the sump he meant to dig. He then threw off his padded jacket and set to work.

"Team leader!" One of the men had noticed Wang's absence and come out, a coat over his shoulders, in search of him. Very moved by what he found, he fetched a shovel. Most of the team were still awake. Grabbing tools, they came out too. Fairly bursting with energy, some started digging while others collected fuel. The leaping flames of the fire lit up their swift-moving figures and swinging picks.

Many hands make light work. Soon a blazing fire made the site as bright as day. Wang's eyes flashed as he looked at the flames. Driving his pick into the ground he called out: "This bonfire of ours is brighter than a 3,000 kilowatt bulb."

"We oil drillers have the blue sky for our roof, the grass for our bed and bonfires for light," quipped one man.

"We've enough light to work by and rig up the derrick," said Wang.

Yes, the sooner they fixed up the derrick, the sooner they could start drilling. The sooner they struck oil, the sooner they could tear off that label "backward in oil". In place of picks and shovels the men fetched spanners and pliers to work away with might and main.

Three days and three nights of hard work, then a forty metre derrick towered proudly over the grassland. From a distance it seemed a pillar supporting the sky. From the top of the derrick Wang hung a red placard emblazoned with the motto: Independence and Self-reliance. That would spur on Team 1205 in each fresh battle!

Now the drilling rig had been fixed up in record time, but water was not yet laid on. And water is as essential to a drilling machine as blood is to a man. Afire with impatience, Wang thought: The

revolution can't wait. There's not a moment to be lost. We must drive full steam ahead.

"We'll fetch water ourselves," he announced. "Got to get the drill going."

"Fetch water ourselves!" exclaimed one of his men. "Where on earth has drilling ever been done that way?"

"It's going to be done here in China," replied Wang stoutly. He fetched a basin from the stable and thumped it. "Come on. We'll fetch water in basins."

Early spring in Taching is so cold that the ice on the pond was thick enough to bear the weight of a cart. Wang hammered away for quite a while with a crowbar before he could make a hole the size of a bowl. Finally, sweating and straining, they made an opening one metre round in the ice.

When the cooks heard that their team leader had taken the other men off to break ice and fetch water, they produced the only two buckets the team possessed. A strange assortment of vessels was requisitioned: a large bucket, a small bucket, wash-basins, kettles, fire extinguishers, and even the aluminium helmets oil drillers wear.

A bucket in each hand, Wang Chin-hsi set the pace, striding fast or sometimes breaking into a run, eager to carry the whole pond to their well site.

The villagers of Machiyao and the staff at headquarters were deeply moved to learn that Team 1205 was fetching water in basins to start drilling. They came with buckets and carrying-poles to help. Though their feet were like blocks of ice, their hands numb with cold, they joked: "Getting oil for our motherland has lit a fire in our hearts."

As dusk gathered, Wang Chin-hsi sped towards the well site toting two brimming buckets.

"We've enough water now, team leader! Enough!" someone yelled.

"Good! Get ready to start the drill!" rang out Wang's order.

With the lead given by Wang Chin-hsi, they had carried several dozen tons of water with buckets and basins to advance the date of drilling.

On April 14, 1960, as dawn flushed the rolling grassland, the sun rose slowly over the horizon, red as a ball of flame. The well site was a hive of activity. Wang Chin-hsi, his stained, tattered sheepskin jacket over his shoulders, jumped on to the drilling platform for a final inspection of the preparations. Then he grasped the brake handle in his powerful hands and shouted at the top of his lungs: "Start drilling!" To him, this was not a simple drilling operation but a declaration of war against imperialism, revisionism and the whole old world.

There followed five days and nights of strenuous work. Then glistening jet-black crude oil — the first Taching oil — came gushing out of the well! The huge oilfield, sealed for thousands of years, began yielding up its treasures. Wang Chin-hsi and his team gathered round, beside themselves with joy at the sight of that spurting column. "Long live Chairman Mao!" they cheered. "Long live Chairman Mao!"

It was not all plain sailing from then on, however. Soon after this first well was drilled an accident happened.

At dawn on May Day, under Wang Chin-hsi's supervision, they started dismantling the derrick to "move house". Both arms raised, his eyes on the drill, Wang moved back step by step, shouting directions.

Then, without warning, a drill pipe hurtled down. The team leader, struck on the legs, was knocked unconscious.

When Wang Chin-hsi came to, he saw the derrick was not dismantled yet, but the political instructor and his comrades had stopped work to gather round and revive him.

"I'm not a clay figure, so easily smashed," Wang protested. With a great effort, he stood up. As he did so, blood soaked through his trouser legs, staining his shoes and socks.

The political instructor tore a strip from his own overalls to bandage the team leader's wound. With amazing tenacity Wang, both arms raised high, went on directing the work.

Wang's legs became so badly swollen that his mates insisted he go to hospital. But he would not hear of this. "Norman Bethune came

all the way to China to help our revolution, and gave his life here. What's a leg wound?" he demanded. He told them on no account to spread word of his injury or report it to those in charge.

Wang's comrades, unable to persuade him to leave his fighting post or rest, made him a pair of crutches. But whenever any of the leading comrades arrived he would hide these crutches in a pile of pipes and stand up unaided to report on the work and ask for new assignments.

Before long, however, those in charge learned what had happened and packed Wang off to hospital.

Even when lying in bed in hospital, Wang's heart was in the oilfield. In his mind's eye he saw his mates, strong and active as tigers. This was no time for him to be lying there, while the others battled for oil.

The next day another patient was brought in by truck. Wang seized his chance when no nurses were about to limp out on his crutches and clamber on to the truck, which took him back to his post.

To build the oilfield fast and well, Wang Chin-hsi and his comrades battled round the clock. But his legs grew more swollen from day to day, until finally the leadership backed by his team mates sent him to a hospital farther away from Taching. They urged the medical staff there to keep a strict eye on him, and he was put in the charge of a young doctor.

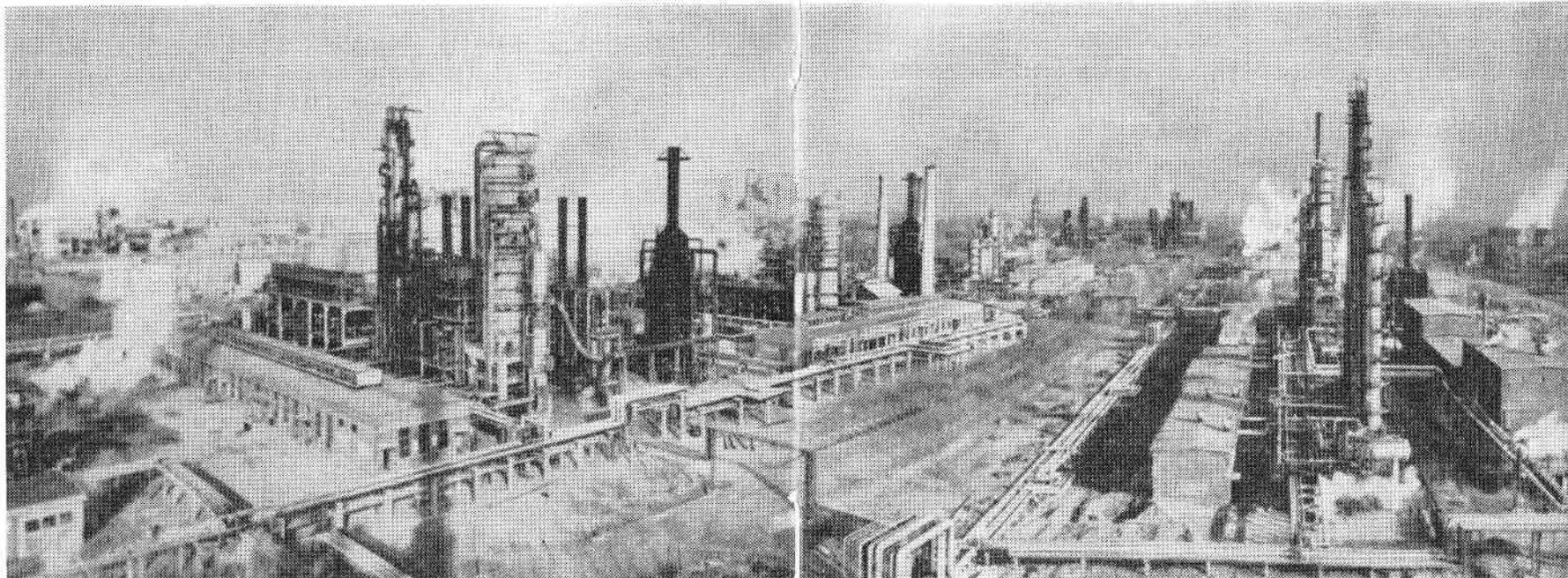
To be unable to work is the greatest hardship for a man of Wang's calibre. One hand on his bedside table, the other on a crutch, he propped himself up. Beads of sweat stood out on his forehead.

"My mates are going all out to build the oilfield," he informed the doctor. "How can I lie here idle?"

"You're in no condition to work," rejoined the other. "We're responsible for getting you back into shape."

"It's a serious matter, our country's lack of oil. This scratch on my leg is nothing. Can a few bumps and bruises stop us making revolution?" Wang rose painfully to his feet.

"The leadership has entrusted you to my care. This is my fighting post, my job."



A view of the oil refinery at Taching

"My fighting post is at the oilfield, doctor." Gazing at the young doctor, Wang spoke with feeling. "My job is drilling oil wells for our country. Won't you help me get back to my post, where my duty lies?"

The young doctor, stirred by Wang's revolutionary spirit, went off to consult his leadership. Too impatient to wait for his return, Wang slapped on his cap and stumped out of the ward on his crutches, taking the next train back to the scene of battle. It was dark and pouring with rain when he reached Taching. Too dark to distinguish mud, water, earth or sky, he slithered along as best he could through the night.

At one a.m. knocking on the door woke the men of Team 1205. When they lit a lamp and opened the door, they discovered this run-away patient from hospital, leaning on a crutch. His injured leg was in a plaster cast. He was soaked to the skin and all over mud

from his head to his bandaged feet. They hurriedly made up his bed. But by the time they looked round to urge him to rest, Wang had slipped out again behind their backs and limped on his crutches to the oil well.

Some time later, Wang Chin-hsi and his men were seated on some pipes discussing their work when — Wham! The heavy cement lid weighing several dozen pounds was blasted off the top of the drilling machine. A blow-out was imminent.

A blow-out is the most serious accident that can happen in an oilfield. When the mud specific gravity is too low, the oil and gas in a well burst through the earth to erupt like a volcano, striking sparks from the hurtling stones. The whole oilfield may turn into a sea of flame. A huge towering derrick may sink into the well. Wang held a hasty council of war with his mates and reported what had happened to headquarters.

The usual way of preventing a blow-out is to increase the mud specific gravity with heavy spar. But in this newly-opened oilfield where the wells were still few and far between, heavy spar or barytes would have to be fetched from far away. It would come too late to avert an accident. With great presence of mind, Wang came to a swift decision: They would pour cement into the mud tank.

This method had never been used before. It meant risking getting the drill stuck in the well. But Wang knew from previous investigations that the water here was too alkaline for the cement to harden immediately. If they took steps quickly to avert a blow-out, there would still be time to deal with the cement.

"Pour in cement!" he ordered.

The whole team went into action. It was a tense battle. Sack after sack of cement and loads of earth were poured into the sump.

A mixer was needed to mix the cement with the mud, but they had none at hand. Wang tried stirring the cement with a crutch, but this proved ineffective. Throwing away his crutches then, he jumped into the waist-deep mud.

Completely oblivious of his own pain, Wang trampled and stirred the mixture with hands and feet, moving swiftly and vigorously. The cement kept sinking to the bottom of the tank. As he stooped to stir it, mud bespattered his face. But simply tossing his head, he went on mixing.

Some young fellows quickly followed his example.

After a battle lasting over three hours they got the blow-out under control, saving the oil well and the drilling machine. By that time the highly alkaline mud had raised great blisters on their hands. And when his mates helped Wang out of the tank, his legs were so painful that he could no longer stand. Drops of sweat coursed down his face. None the less, he squared his shoulders, reached for his crutches and struggled to his feet.

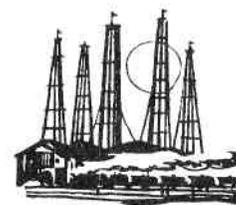
"Never mind about me," he ordered. "Go on drilling."

Shortly before this, Aunt Chao from Machiyao had arrived with a basket of hard-boiled eggs. Tears in her eyes, she gazed at the drill team leader. His sunken eyes were bloodshot. His prominent

cheekbones stood out more sharply than ever. His short beard was caked with mud. Yet he stood his ground on the high drilling platform like some intrepid warrior, his muddy figure transformed by the golden sunlight into a splendid statue of glinting bronze....

In all her sixty-odd years, Aunt Chao had never set eyes on such a sight. With lips that trembled she declared: "Team Leader Wang, you're a real man of iron!"

That is how the name "Iron Man" spread through Taching.



Chun Ching

The Party Secretary of Our County

In an old straw hat,
A green kit-bag on his shoulder,
His trousers rolled up over muddy legs,
He never spares himself in wind or rain;
By passing the village
He hurries straight to the fields
To swing his sickle in the sea of paddy,
Not stopping for breath
Until a whole swath is reaped.
All this before anyone knows
That the Party secretary of our county
Has come down to the fields.

He stands firm,
Unbowed by heavy loads,

His face bathed in sweat,
His resolve high.
His laughter ringing out across the hills,
He races like the wind,
Bounds up mountain paths,
His clothes billowing out
Above the clouds,
Unruffled by storms and danger.
Before anyone knows he has come,
The Party secretary of our county
Has brought in a load of grain.

The mud not yet washed from his feet,
He chats on the threshing-floor
With the poor peasants;
And laughing they exclaim:
"The Party secretary of our county
Is one of our own folk."
An old fellow offers him a pipe,
A youngster jerks up his thumb:
"He has what it takes,
Our Party secretary.
He can do any job on the land."

Seated on the ground,
Using his straw hat as a fan,
A smile on his bronzed face,
The secretary says:
"The masses are the real heroes.
I'm here to learn from you all."
From his kit-bag

He takes the works of Chairman Mao,
And together we read aloud,
The great teachings stirring
The rolling waves of paddy.



Stories

Hao Jan

Aunt Hou's Courtyard

When I arrived at the Reedy River Brigade at nightfall I was warmly received by Chang Tzu-sheng, secretary of the Party branch, who told me a bit about conditions there before he took me to Aunt Hou's where he had arranged for me to stay.

It was a three-roomed house facing the sun. The room on the west side had been cleaned and tidied for me; my hostess and her grandson slept in the east room. Aunt Hou was out visiting right then. Ching-ming, her grandson, was there alone doing his homework beneath the electric light. He lived with his granny while his parents worked in the city, so he told me. I stayed up for quite some time, waiting for Aunt Hou. Then, since she didn't turn up, I went into my room and lay down.

This was my first opportunity to visit a village since the cultural revolution had swept through the countryside. My new life and what I would learn there thrilled me so much that I lay awake for a while before I finally dozed off. A knock on the door woke me.

"Comrade, are you in bed?"

It was the voice of an elderly woman. My hostess must have returned. I was beginning to get up when she continued, "Don't bother to get up if you are. I've been to your door several times but thought you were working. So I didn't disturb you."

I was aware of her concern for me. I must ask her in. Throwing a jacket around my shoulders I tumbled off the bed.

"Turn out the light please if you are not reading or writing. It wastes electricity to leave the light on when you're asleep," she went on. "That's why I knocked. All right, go back to sleep now."

She walked away from my door as I quickly turned off the light. Before long, I was again wakened from a deep slumber and opened my eyes to broad daylight. I heard voices out in the yard.

"So, you climbed over the wall to steal my peaches before they're ripe, eh? Suppose you broke an arm or leg? What a naughty boy!" Aunt Hou scolded.

"I promise not to do it again. Don't be cross, please," a boy pleaded hoarsely.

"Hand them all over.... Any more? What's in your other pocket?"

"A sling-shot."

"Your teacher ought to confiscate that. He should know what his pupils are up to, whether they're studying hard at home or making trouble outside."

The poor boy pleaded in vain. Aunt Hou's stubborn scolding made me put on my jacket and go out. The boy took the opportunity to slip away.

Aunt Hou was in her fifties, tall and slim with the big hands and feet of a hard-working peasant woman. There was a look of severity on her lined face. She put two half-ripe peaches on the windowsill, turned around and smiled to me. "Good morning. Did you sleep well?"

I answered with a smile and made a few appropriate remarks, begging her not to put herself out for me.

"You'll be no trouble at all," she cut me short, waving her hand. "None at all. Comrades come to our brigade from miles away all for the sake of revolution. We're all one family. When you need

anything, just let me know. Anything I don't have, I'll borrow. You can leave your laundry and any mending you need in my room."

Then I introduced myself as having come for a short stay to work and learn from her brigade.

"Everyone has shortcomings and merits," she remarked, speaking sincerely. "We'll help each other. You can write letters, read the papers to me and tell me about important state affairs. There's plenty you can do to help me too."

The third incident happened that afternoon.

I returned to Aunt Hou's home after work. Just when I was opening my notebook to jot down a few things, I heard angry voices in the courtyard again. I hurried out.

Ching-ming was standing in the doorway. He told me that his granny was angry with their neighbour, Grabber Hou.

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"He grabs everything he can. Every now and then he puts up a new fence between our yards and each time he moves the fence farther over to our side."

Reedy River Village had only two main streets surrounded by low, marshy land. Many houses were built right beside reedy ponds or along the bank of the Chienkan River. These two family yards adjoining each other were situated beside the river.

Aunt Hou had just returned from the fields, a hoe on her shoulder. She gesticulated vigorously as she spoke.

"How much land have you grabbed this time?" she demanded. "What are you up to? Why do you take advantage of other people all the time?"

The little old hunchback Grabber Hou was a cunning man. With one foot in the trench he had dug for fence, the other on the up-turned earth, his spade still in his hands, he shouted back with the same vehemence. "You accuse me of swiping your land left and right, do you? Well, what proof d'you have?"

"Tell me who planted that tree over there. Me? All right. If you put up your fence in this trench, on which side of the fence will the tree stand?"

"If I move the fence to this side of the tree, that means I'll have to move a foot back!"

"I won't let you steal an inch of my land, let alone a foot. Stop your grabbing. Or I'll report you to Secretary Chang."

"Don't take it so seriously."

"You don't admit your mistake? All right, then we'll go and see him right away."

"I'll not quarrel with you, I'll move the fence back. Will that do?"

"But don't you fill in that trench."



"Wouldn't you like me to fill it in for you?"

"No. Leave it as it is. All the leading comrades and commune members must see it so that they can understand the situation and learn a lesson."

"Why go to all that trouble, sister-in-law? We're neighbours, aren't we?"

"It's no use pleading now. It's as useless as trying to bully me. Neither has any effect on me. This is a struggle between two kinds of thinking."

"Won't you overlook it this time? Live and let live, eh?"

"I want you to live the socialist way. Cut out arguing and do as I tell you."

What I had overheard disturbed me. The day before Secretary Chang had recommended Aunt Hou as being fair-minded and selfless. My feeling was that fair-minded she might be but selfless — no. To save electricity she woke up a visitor whom she had not yet met. And for merely two of her peaches, she had been so hard on that boy. Though it was wrong of her neighbour to encroach on her land, after he'd admitted his mistake why not let the matter drop? Why make such a scene?

When I was working in the fields with the brigade members, sitting beside a rice field during the afternoon break, I told Secretary Chang gently that I'd like to change my lodgings.

He gave me a quick glance. "Why do you want to change? Aunt Hou only has one small boy and her house is big enough. It's quiet too."

I told him that I hadn't started writing but I wanted to mix more with the brigade members first.

"Well, Aunt Hou's is just the right place for you. She's not a Party member or even a leading comrade, but she's typical of our commune members who have been tempered by the cultural revolution, and she's one of the older generation who knew life in the old society. You'll understand the achievements of the cultural revolution better when you see the changes and progress they've made in their thinking...."

So I told him I thought she was selfish and used her wrangle with Grabber Hou to bolster my contention.

The young secretary burst out laughing. "You don't know Aunt Hou, Comrade Liang. Aunt Hou protects her courtyard because it's concrete evidence of her former misery and a record of her hatred for the wretched past. The place used to be a dried-up reed-filled pond. Years ago, Aunt Hou and her family didn't have an inch of land to their name or a roof over their heads. She and her husband had to work for the landlord, she as a maid and he as a hired hand. The landlord promised to give them a plot in payment for two years' labour. But he only gave them half of a small dried-up pond. So, after working a full day for the landlord, the couple carried earth every night to fill it in. It took them another two years to fill that pond and put up a little hut for themselves. Now it serves as a constant reminder of our suffering in the old society and we often show it to our young people as a lesson on class struggle. There's another reason too for their row. Grabber Hou used to be a well-to-do peasant. He is very backward in his thinking. Two years ago, he was criticized by the masses for speculating. Now he's changed his tactics. He enlarges his courtyard by making new walls and fences every now and then. Besides taking advantage of Aunt Hou he's also hemmed in quite a bit of the collective field to the east of his yard. Aunt Hou is vigilant enough to expose his dirty tricks."

That evening, feeling a bit apologetic, I returned to the courtyard which meant so much to Aunt Hou.

Aunt Hou and Ching-ming were picking peaches. Two baskets were full. Some peaches were still on the ground.

Not stopping her work, Aunt Hou said to me, "Help yourself to some peaches, Comrade Liang. Choose the ripest."

I asked why she was picking the peaches before they were fully ripe.

"It's true, they'd taste better in a few days," she replied. "But peaches are such a temptation to boys. I don't want them to fall and hurt themselves just for a few peaches." Coming from under the tree with the baskets she said to Ching-ming, "You take

this basket to Grandpa Wang while I take this to Granny Liu." I had learned from Secretary Chang that Grandpa Wang was an old man who lived alone and was looked after by the brigade, while Granny Liu's son was in the army.

The two went off happily. I was jotting down some notes in the east room when they returned some time later. "Take that table to your own room and do your writing there. Ching-ming may disturb you here," Aunt Hou suggested. I said we could save some electricity by using just the one light.

"We should save when we can, but use it when we need to," she laughed. "We've set up some small factories and are using more machinery now in our village. So we try to save electricity for that."

She spoke naturally, without any self-righteousness and without attempting to lecture me. This entirely altered my first impression of her. She was a fair-minded and selfless commune member. Her actions stood out in sharp contrast to my own wrong thinking, spurring me on to remould myself and learn from her.

A storm broke out three days later. Since it was impossible to work in the fields after the rain, Aunt Hou went to take part in a philosophy study while I helped Ching-ming repair the cucumber trellis and tomato stakes which had been blown down by the storm.

The crack of a whip and shouting rang out behind the house.

"Another cart must have stuck in the mud," said Ching-ming. He hurried out of the yard with me following close behind.

This was a newly-made road from east to west. It crossed the Chienkan River bridge and skirted Aunt Hou's courtyard before running straight to a newly-built factory and the granary. Since the stretch behind Aunt Hou's house ran through a hollow, every time it rained or the river overflowed it became a mass of mud.

We found a cart loaded with logs. Sweating and exasperated, the driver was cracking his whip and shouting for all he was worth to encourage the horses while someone, up to her knees in the muddy water, was trying to lift a wheel from the rut. Ching-ming shouted "Granny", and ran over to help. I followed suit.

Aunt Hou, who had just returned from her meeting, raised her head and brushed the sweat from her face. "Come and help lift this wheel," she gasped. "Hold on. Don't let go. If it sinks any deeper the shaft horse will be dragged down."

We two took over.

She ran off and returned quickly with a spade and a wide plank of wood. She threw the plank down and with the spade cleared away the mud in front of the wheel in the rut. Then she called to the frantic driver, "Come and shove the plank under the wheel. That's it. A little farther. That's right." Next she told him to soothe his team so that the horses would pull with all their strength. To me and Ching-ming she said, "You two go to the other side while I stay here. When I call one, two, three, we'll all push together. With us pushing and the horses pulling, once the wheel gets onto the plank, things will be all right."

At Aunt Hou's command we pushed with all our might. The wheel rolled onto the plank just as Secretary Chang came running to the rescue with several brigade members. The driver began to thank us all profusely.

"Skip that," said Secretary Chang. "We've only done what we should. We'll try to repair this road in a few days. We'll raise it a bit so that even trucks can use it safely."

When the driver looked around for Aunt Hou, she had already gone into the house. I found her rather quiet and thoughtful in the days following that incident.

One morning a noise outside my window woke me. I dressed quickly, threw on a jacket and went outside. I was surprised to see Aunt Hou and Ching-ming sawing through the trunk of the big peach tree in the courtyard. Sitting face to face on the ground they worked the fine steel saw between them, nibbling away at the wood while golden sawdust piled up at the foot of the tree.

I asked in bewilderment why they wanted to cut it down.

Aunt Hou smiled. Before she could answer the fruitful peach tree toppled and fell with a crash, its broken twigs and foliage littering the ground, crushing cucumber supports and tomato plants while the last few peaches rolled all over the place.



I was completely at a loss. Standing up, Aunt Hou brushed the sawdust from her clothes and said to me, "You'd better go and wash up, but give me a hand in clearing up this mess first, will you? Then we three can pull the two walls down."

I was still in the dark.

"Get moving! Oh, you don't understand what we're doing? Well, it's like this. That bit of road can't be fixed properly by simply filling it in and raising its level. Besides, that would take too many work-days and even then constant repairing would be needed. It's the bend the road makes around this yard that's the cause of the trouble, dangerous for traffic too. But if I make over this half of my yard to the commune, the road can run straight."

Respect for her flooded over me. But I was sorry that she should give up her courtyard. "Is there no better way we can think of, Aunt Hou?" I inquired.

She shook her head. "Why shouldn't I make a small sacrifice to build a road for the revolution?" she asked.

So I helped her to do as she wished.

We pulled down the east and west walls and rebuilt them, making room to straighten the road which was then paved with stone.

The cracking of whips and tooting of horns sound incessantly now as carts and trucks speed straight on towards the east, towards the rising place of the sun.

Illustrated by Ah Lao

Yueh Chang-kuei

A Shoulder Pole

I had been assigned a job in Green Hills Store deep in the mountains. With my letter of introduction from the county department of commerce, I went to take up my new post. As I arrived at the store gate, I heard a beautiful voice singing with bell-like clarity in the courtyard:

I peddle my wares uphill and down,
My shoulder pole links countryside and town.

Entering the gate, I saw a girl in a straw hat squatting in the centre of the courtyard and skilfully repairing a shoulder pole. She stopped singing at my approach and jumped to her feet, pushing back the straw hat to reveal two short, thick braids. She looked twenty or so, not tall but well built with big, slightly slanting eyes. She laid down her tool and hurried towards me.

"If I'm not mistaken, you must be Comrade Chang Yen-chun, our new colleague," she said with sparkling eyes.

"And you? . . ."

"I am Shan Li-ying."

Shan Li-ying? Why, then, I'd be working under her! They had told me in the county that Shan Li-ying, in charge of Green Hills Store,

was a very fine comrade. I ought to learn from her. I had imagined her to be an experienced middle-aged woman. However, she was little more than a girl.

"What job will you be giving me?" I asked bluntly.

"Do you want to start work at once? Why not have a rest?"

She narrowed her eyes as if to size me up. Then, without waiting for my answer, she led me to the backyard of the store. There, neatly laid out, were four baskets with two shoulder poles. Two baskets were filled with farm tools, the others with daily necessities. I glanced at her and found that she was regarding me with smiling eyes. From her expression I guessed what she had in mind.

"Is this my job?" I asked. She nodded. I was startled. In the letter of introduction still in my pocket, it was very clearly stated that I was to be a "sales clerk". That meant serving behind the counter. But now it seemed I was to carry these heavy baskets. I stared at the young manager who was about my own age. Before I could speak she picked up a pole and solemnly handed it to me.

"There. This is yours."

I had a look at it. *Aiya!* It was an old pole with some parts so worn that they shone. The two ends, having split, had been bound with wire. In the act of reaching out, I drew back my hands.

Seeing my hesitation, she knit her brows. "Well? Don't you like the idea?" I could only stare at her in a stupid way. She looked at the pole, then at me. "Yen-chun," she said seriously, "there's more to this pole than meets the eye. It stands for the glorious tradition of our Green Hills Store!"

I couldn't understand why she was so worked up. Taking the pole, I found that it had the characters "Serve the People" carved on the back. This had been done recently by the look of it. Those three words warmed my heart. Grasping the pole, I lifted the heavy load. Little Shan's face lit up. Watching me with narrowed eyes she burst into laughter, laughter crystal-clear as a mountain spring cascading down a cliff.

The winding track was steep and stony. Climbing just one hill with my load made the sweat pour down my back. Breathless, choking and hot, I longed to take a rest. Several times I nearly put down my



baskets. But Little Shan carrying a heavier load than I swung steadily along, her head high, her braids swinging at each step. And as she walked she sang.

Soon our path dipped to wind through a valley. We saw a young man coming towards us. He was in a hurry, no doubt on urgent business.

"Hullo, Young Ma! What's all the hurry?" Little Shan called.

"I'm going to town," he replied without raising his head.

"Oh! Everybody's busy now, each one doing the work of two. But you have time to potter about in town."

"I never go to town unless I have business."

"What's your business today?" Little Shan asked.

"It's no use my telling you!" Young Ma shrugged his shoulders. He started to leave but the girl with her two baskets blocked the way. "What way is that to talk?" she demanded. "If you don't tell me, I won't let you pass. Are you going to the Farm Tools Plant?"

"How did you know?" The young man was astonished.

"I guessed," she laughed, raising her head. "Are you going to buy spare parts for your weeders?"

"Who told you that?" Young Ma was mystified.

"Never you mind." She brushed his question aside. "How many machines are out of order? And what parts do you want?"

"How many? Don't you know?" He winked.

"Of course I know." She reckoned with her fingers. "There are eighteen weeders in all in your brigade. Four of them are out of order. Three have gear trouble and one has a broken axle. Am I right?"

The young man was stunned. "Absolutely right! How did you know?"

"How can we develop the economy and ensure supplies if we don't know the situation?" Little Shan smoothed back her hair, then took a heavy cardboard box from one of her baskets and gave it to the young man. "Here's what you want to buy."

Stepping forward I noticed that on the box was written: New Lane Brigade, three gears and one axle.

The young man was so pleased as he took the box that he didn't know what to say. All of a sudden, however, he put it down and grabbed the pole from Little Shan.

"Let me carry this for you."

"No! We are not going the same way," she objected.

"Aren't you going to Golden Bay? I'm going back to the brigade now. Let's go together."

Picking up her load, Little Shan pointed to a ridge which zigzagged through the fields. "We'll go this way," she declared.

"What's the idea?" asked the young man. "Why not go by the path?"

Little Shan gave him a shove. "All right, go and get on with your work. We don't need you to be our guide."

I realized that the girl must have some reason for this change of route. Before I could ask her what it was she said: "We can take a look at the crops if we go this way. Do some investigation. Don't we say: No investigation, no right to speak?"

"There is nothing to investigate here," I said without thinking. "Our job is to sell the goods we have in stock."

"What's that?..." Turning around, she asked in a serious voice: "Do you know why I gave you that pole?" I shook my head. "The people of the whole country are learning from Tachai," she went on. "Should we carry our goods to the countryside and try to help the poor and lower-middle peasants? Or should we sit waiting for them to come to our store? This is a basic question in commercial work. How best can we serve the people?" Thereupon, she told me a story.

Last spring, the production teams had decided to rebuild their pigsties in order to collect more manure. On hearing this, she thought they would need cement. Thereupon, sitting in her office, she made a plan to lay in a stock of cement and bought twenty tons from town. But a whole week passed. Nobody came to buy cement. She was puzzled. So she went down to the different teams and found that they had rebuilt the pigsties with stone, without using any cement, as a result of learning from Tachai's revolutionary style of work.

"Subjectiveness landed me in trouble!" said Little Shan with heartfelt feeling. "It's not enough to want to serve the people. You must make thorough investigations too. Otherwise you can't do your work well."

We talked as we walked and had soon covered several miles. Suddenly Little Shan halted. "Look! Why have those young paddy plants turned yellow?" she cried, pointing to the paddy fields. I saw that all the young plants were a lush green except for one patch so small that one had to look carefully to spot it. "Maybe it lacks fertilizer," I said without consideration.

"Don't say maybe. Hit-or-miss methods won't do." She glanced at me. Taking her shoes off, she waded into the muddy fields. Bending over, she pulled up a young plant and showed it to me.

"Comrade Yen-chun, do you know what's wrong with it?" I examined it and found that the root was still sound. Only the tip of the shoot was a bit yellow as if it had been scorched.

"This is the first time we've grown paddy here," she said anxiously, knitting her brows. "We have no experience. If we can't clear this up at once it will soon spread. It will not only influence this year's harvest but also influence the popularization of paddy growing in this area." On hearing this, I was also very worried. "What shall we do?" I asked. Little Shan kept silent but her black eyes flashed as she again waded into the paddy fields and scooped up some mud. "You go to Golden Bay first with your goods," she instructed me. "I'm going to the agro-technical station."

I looked up at the sky. It had darkened. Black rain-clouds were converging from all sides. The summit of the mountain was already shrouded in mist. Any moment the storm might break. "Why not wait until after the storm, Little Shan," I advised.

"A storm is nothing. Disease prevention is like putting out a fire. We can't delay for one minute." So saying, she shouldered her pole and hurried off. After a few steps, however, she stopped and turned back to offer me a green raincoat.

"The cover on that back basket of yours leaks. Put my raincoat over it," she cried.

"How about you?"

"It's the goods that matter..." The rest of the sentence was drowned by a peal of thunder.

Approaching Golden Bay Village, I saw some villagers discussing something as they sheltered from the rain. When they found that I was a new saleswoman, they wanted to know where Little Shan was. Before I could open my mouth a young fellow bellowed: "Have you brought insecticide for our paddy?" I noticed that they also had some young plants in their hands. "I don't know what's wrong with the paddy. How could I bring insecticide?" I answered.

"Little Shan is not like you," retorted the young fellow. The old brigade leader shot a glance at him. "Don't lose your temper. You must take these young plants to the agro-technical station at once."

"Little Shan has already taken some there," I put in, before the young fellow could leave.

"She has, has she?" The old brigade leader beamed. Looking up at the sky, he took off his raincoat and put it over the youngster's arm. "Quick! Go and meet her." The young fellow promptly dashed off through the pouring rain.

At that moment, my pole caught the old brigade leader's eye.

"That pole! . . ." he exclaimed. Walking up to me, he gripped the pole. He examined it from one end to another, turning it over and over.

"What do you see in this pole, brigade leader?" I laughed. "It has no flowers on it. What's so special about it?"

"It has no flowers on it. But it's steeped in the blood of our old store-keeper."

"The blood of your old store-keeper?"

Looking up at the distant mountain wrapped in mist, he told me the shoulder pole's story:

Before Liberation, the poor and lower-middle peasants in this area had to walk for scores of miles if they wanted to buy something. Profiteers seized this chance to speculate in goods. We had to give them a *jìn* of medicinal herbs in exchange for a box of matches. A pelt purchased only a *jìn* of kerosene. How cruel those blood-suckers were!

Soon after Liberation, the local people's government opened this Green Hills Store here. At first, the store was small, run by just one comrade. That was the old store-keeper. It was he who, shouldering this selfsame pole, brought us Chairman Mao's concern for the poor and lower-middle peasants. At the same time, with this pole, he carried our love for our socialist motherland to the folk in the valley below. Everybody called this store "the shoulder-pole store". But a handful of class enemies hated it. Early one morning, the old store-keeper was carrying goods to the villagers along a mountain path when two ruffians rushed out from the forest with clubs and knives in their hands. Like savage wolves they barred the old store-keeper's way. In a rage, the old store-keeper shouted: "You can kill me. But you can't block this path!" Raising the pole he charged the enemy.

Our old store-keeper fought to the last drop of his blood for the interests of the people.

"What was his name?" I inquired with feeling.

"Shan Ju-sung. He was Shan Li-ying's father."

"Ah! Little Shan's father!" I exclaimed. Taking the pole, I clasped it to my chest. I could find no words for all I wanted to say. By giving me this pole which had such a glorious history, Little Shan had shown great faith in me. She had also shown how much she expected of me. But I... My eyes filled with tears. I looked at the steep path shaded by green pines. This path seemed a cord which nothing could snap, running from the foot to the summit of the mountain.

"It was the old store-keeper who trod out this path," the old brigade leader told me meaningly.

Yes! Acting on our great leader Chairman Mao's instruction, **"Develop the economy and ensure supplies"**, this revolutionary predecessor of mine had blazed this rugged trail with his firm steps. Little Shan had inherited her father's pole, had shouldered a heavy revolutionary burden and was striding boldly forward. Now the pole was on my shoulder. I determined to follow in the old store-keeper's footsteps along the path. I would follow it to the end...

The rain stopped. The whole sky looked like a broad lake, with scattered clouds like small boats drifting across the lake. The green hills and trees and the red flowers were doubly fresh and beautiful, newly washed by the rain. A gentle breeze blew over the mountains. We heard a voice singing with bell-like clarity, a voice familiar and dear to all of us.

"Little Shan has come back!" The old brigade leader ran to meet her.

The sun appeared again. A rainbow arched over the sky like a splendid, many-coloured bridge spanning high mountain peaks. Under the rainbow, on the winding path, appeared the short, sturdy figure of Little Shan. From her shoulder pole hung two baskets loaded with farm tools and insecticides. Each step she took was firm and forceful. The golden sunlight mantled her whole form, and beneath her feet stretched the long unbroken path.

Illustrated by Chou Chien-fu

Hung Lin

From Our Tea Plantation We Gaze Towards Peking

A sky-line flushed with dawn,
On all sides hills,
With singing drifting through the mist
And floating everywhere the scent of tea.

As spring tides rise
Out come the tender shoots,
Up jade-green peaks we climb
Through tea plantations,
Treading in the steps of heroes,
Never tired.

Figures far off are blurred,
But coming close we see the nimble fingers
Gathering leaf-buds green as emerald,
Filling whole baskets
With the glory of spring.

The tea-plants sway
Swifter than eye can see,
As deft hands scatter dewdrops;
Red hearts are tempered
In these vast plantations,
Green battlefields where we
Can win fresh merits.

Wind blows away the morning mists,
Through the fresh air laughter rings;
In the folds of these green hills
Flags red as flame
Unfurl beneath blue skies.

Clear as spring air,
Rich with our heartfelt feeling,
Load after load of tea is sent
To Asia, Africa, Latin America. . . .
Our wind-borne seeds of friendship.

High we climb to greet the rising sun,
Our hearts turbulent as spring tides;

From our tea plantation
We gaze towards Peking,
Glorying in the far-flung red
Of the eastern sky.



On the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*, a film version of the revolutionary modern ballet *The White-Haired Girl* was released and at once became a hit. Here are some views of the film artists on this production.

—Editors

About the Film “The White-Haired Girl”



Sang Hu (Director)

The legend of the White-Haired Girl was widely known in the Hopei countryside during the War of Resistance Against Japan. The story is as follows: In a village in north China live a poor tenant peasant Yang Pai-lao and his daughter Hsi-erh. Just as they are preparing to celebrate the New Year, the despotic landlord Huang Shih-jen comes to demand payment of a debt and seizes the daughter by force. Her sweetheart Wang Ta-chun, a poor peasant living in the same village, flees with hatred in his heart to join the Eighth Route Army led by the Communist Party. Later Hsi-erh runs away from the landlord's house and hides herself in a dark cave in the mountains. Years of hunger and cold, of exposure to wind and rain, turn her hair white. When the Eighth Route Army liberates this village, Wang Ta-chun and some others discover

Hsi-erh in the cave. Then, together with the masses, they punish the landlord.

The past stage versions of the White-Haired Girl depict the cruel exploitation and oppression of the peasants at the hands of the feudal landlord class, but contain serious defects, the main one being an inadequate portrayal of the rebellious spirit of the poor and lower-middle peasants. For example, after the landlord forces Yang Pai-lao to put his finger-print on a deed of sale of his daughter in lieu of paying his debt, Yang returns home and kills himself in despair. This makes the old peasant appear weak and helpless vis-a-vis the landlord. Another defect is the prominence given to the love between Hsi-erh and Wang Ta-chun. After the liberation of the village by the Eighth Route Army and the punishment of the wicked landlord, the lovers are happily re-united and there the story ends, giving the audience the impression that the revolution has reached a successful conclusion.

Although the revolutionary modern ballet *The White-Haired Girl* is based on the same story, both the central theme and the characterization are handled in a totally different fashion. This ballet underscores the unyielding opposition of the poor and lower-middle peasants to the landlord class. Yang Pai-lao is no longer a timid old peasant but a rebel who defies Huang Shih-jen and raises his pole to strike him when the traitor landlord tries to drag Hsi-erh away. Again through her resistance to the landlord when he insults her, Hsi-erh is shown as a spirited girl full of grit and determination, with nothing servile in her make-up. The creation of heroic characters such as Hsi-erh, Wang Ta-chun and Yang Pai-lao in this ballet truthfully reflects the revolt of millions of poor peasants against the landlord class in old China. And here emphasis is placed not on the love between Hsi-erh and Wang Ta-chun, but on their deep comradely class feeling. When young Wang joins the Eighth Route Army, he is not thinking of avenging Hsi-erh alone, but of liberating thousands and tens of thousands of women from Hsi-erh's fate. The conclusion of the ballet is also new. Although the village landlord has been overthrown, imperialism still exists, Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary gang still exists, the whole country is not yet liberated. A hard struggle still lies ahead. Faithful to the historical truth, this ballet makes

Hsi-erh take up arms and join the Eighth Route Army, vowing to carry the revolution through to the end under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. This exemplifies Chairman Mao's glorious Marxist concept of continuous revolution. The whole ballet lays stress on the central theme, on class struggle, armed struggle and Party leadership.

Following Chairman Mao's instructions to make the past serve the present and foreign things serve China, *The White-Haired Girl* Group of the Shanghai School of Dancing has persisted in meeting the requirements of the revolutionary content, the characters of the ballet and the demands of the worker-peasant-soldier masses by introducing bold innovations in the western ballet form. While preserving the characteristic dance movements of the traditional ballet, they have incorporated classical Chinese dancing, folk dancing, Chinese boxing and the acrobatics of Chinese opera to make the dance movements more vigorous and spirited and adapt this art form to express revolutionary content. They have also broken with the western convention by incorporating singing; for the combination of singing and dancing has always been a special feature of the Chinese theatre. The songs in the ballet *The White-Haired Girl*, which effectively convey the thoughts and feelings of the characters and heighten the drama, are widely popular.

After years of practice, the drama groups producing the revolutionary model operas have summed up their experience in creating heroic characters of the working class. They have formulated the principle of "triple emphasis". This means putting the chief emphasis on the positive characters, putting the chief emphasis on the heroic characters among the positive characters, and putting the chief emphasis on the main hero or heroine among the heroic characters. In making this colour film *The White-Haired Girl*, we have also gone by this principle and have on the whole succeeded in conveying the atmosphere of the original ballet, transferring to the screen the revolutionary feelings of the heroic characters and other strong points of the original. What is more, by making use of cinematographic techniques, we have in some respects improved on the images of the

revolutionary heroes, overcoming the restrictions imposed by a stage performance.

In past film making the director's word was law. All decisions were up to him. But during the cultural revolution we debunked this lack of democratic discussion and adopted the system of democratic centralism. We explained beforehand to the actors and cameramen what we were aiming at in the way of directing, filming and stage effects, so that they could discuss these problems. We consulted them too at every stage, sometimes making alterations or additions on the base of their suggestions. The film director must listen to, analyse and study ideas from all sides. He must know how to sum up these ideas and have the courage to do this. Carrying out this mass line raised the quality of our film *The White-Haired Girl*. In addition, we received valuable assistance from all sides which enabled us to overcome the difficulties encountered regarding art, technique and equipment while making this film.

Hsi-erh's Indomitable Spirit

茅惠芳

Mao Hui-fang

Our great leader Chairman Mao has taught us: **“The ruthless economic exploitation and political oppression of the Chinese peasants forced them into numerous uprisings against landlord rule.”** Before the shooting of the colour film *The White-Haired Girl*, I had played the part of Hsi-erh on the stage for several years. And through practice in life and art I gradually deepened my understanding of the rebellious spirit of this poor peasant's daughter.

I am a ballet dancer brought up since the founding of New China, with no experience of suffering in the old society. When we went to the countryside to perform for the former poor and lower-middle peasants, they told me many stories of their cruel oppression at the hands of landlords in the past, which deepened my sympathy for Hsi-erh and my hatred for Huang Shih-jen. In the prologue of this film, black clouds lour over the village dominated by the landlord and a bitterly cold wind is blowing. Darkness reigns. The Huang family mansion seems to have opened wide its ravenous jaws to bathe on the blood and sweat of the hired hands and tenant peasants. Hsi-erh accompanies her father Yang Pai-lao to the gate of this fearful house to pay their rent. As I played this part, the past sufferings of which the poor and lower-middle peasants had told me rose before

me. Involuntarily I clenched my fists and threw back my head, longing to smash that dark old society with one blow!

As the action unfolds, Hsi-erh's hatred of the landlord deepens, and her indomitable, militant spirit stands out more sharply. When Yang Pai-lao is beaten to death by the landlord, Hsi-erh's passionate grief is conveyed by the song sung from the side: “Of a sudden the world grows dark... Dad, dad ... so cruelly killed...” She rises swiftly to perform a dance of bitter lamentation, then rushes to clasp her dead father in her arms. Here the camera successfully conveys the intensity of the girl's grief as expressed in her dancing movements.

After Hsi-erh is taken by force to the landlord's house, harsh treatment and misery fail to break her spirit. When the landlord's mother starts beating her in the gloomy hall of worship, Hsi-erh seizes the

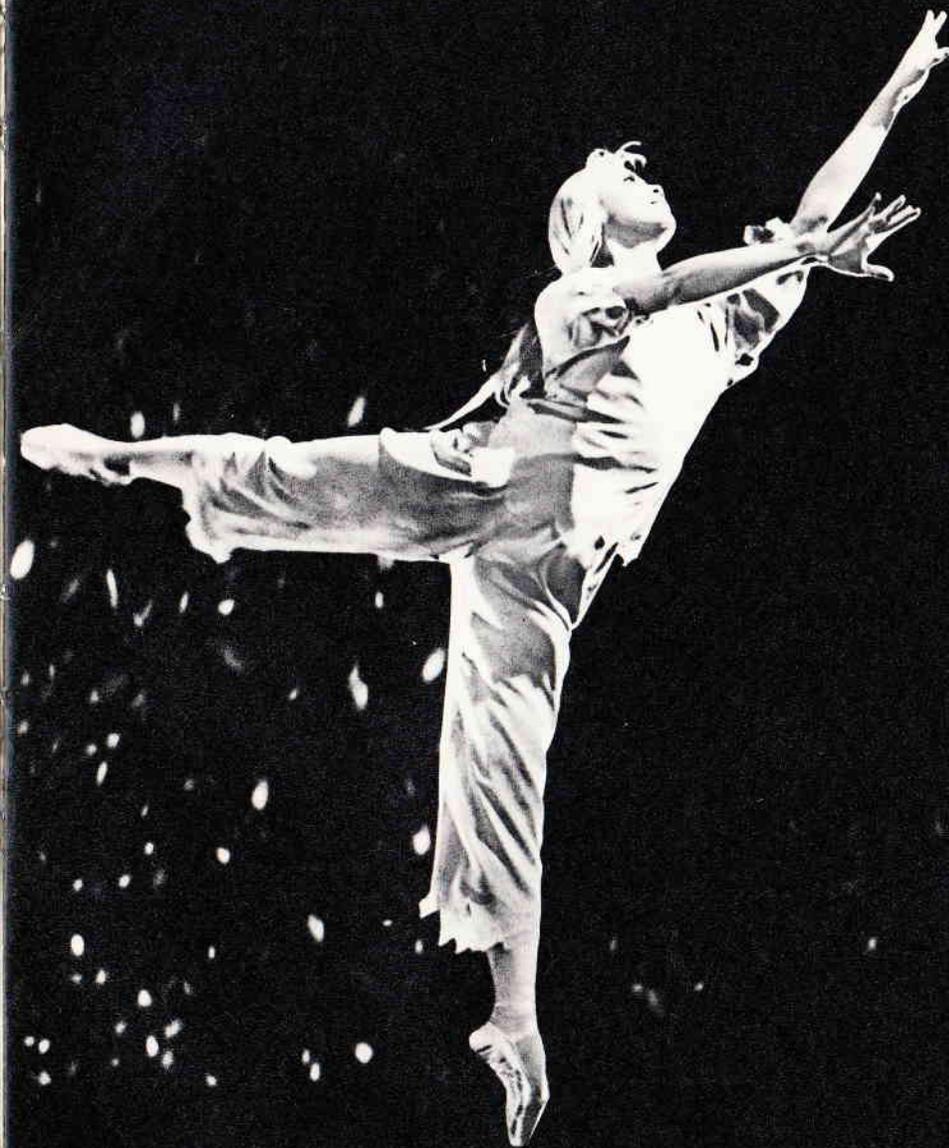
Mao Hui-fang (right) working in a Shanghai steel-tube plant



cane and throws it to the ground. When Huang Shih-jen tries to rape her, she puts up a stubborn resistance and boxes his ears. When he persists, she darts to the altar-table and snatches up the incense-burner to slug the landlord, who takes to his heels in fright. This shot is filmed from low down, so that as Hsi-erh raises the incense-burner to strike the landlord she towers above the cringing tyrant as he backs fearfully away. Stirring music and lighting effects help bring out her fearlessness. From the scene in which Hsi-erh laments her father's death to those in which she seizes old Mrs. Huang's cane and strikes back at the landlord with the incense-burner, the film shows how her grief is transformed into open revolt.

The characters' thoughts and feelings are depicted in detail in this colour film. Thus a close-up of the light and shadows reflected by the water on Hsi-erh's face when she escapes into the hills and drinks from a stream clearly convey her thirst and her exhaustion. On the other hand, the film also succeeds in recording complete dances. For example, the girl falls unconscious after a savage beating by the landlord's thugs, then gradually comes to and rises to dance. The film records these dance movements from start to finish, vividly portraying Hsi-erh's fortitude and rebellious spirit. By making full use of the potentialities of cinematographic art, a more perfect delineation of the heroic characters is achieved.

The workers, peasants and soldiers in our audience are our best teachers. When I enacted Hsi-erh's escape to the hills, I swayed and tottered to show her difficulty in fording a stream. A former poor peasant who saw this felt it was untrue to life. He said: "Hsi-erh is the daughter of a poor peasant, brought up to rough it. She shouldn't be so soft." I found this criticism of my acting most helpful. Closer acquaintance with the life of the masses has helped me to play this part more realistically.



The White-Haired Girl (a film in colour)



Hsi-erh waits eagerly for her father to come home for New-Year's Eve.



After hiding to avoid his creditors, Yang Pai-lao returns home in a snowstorm.

Yang Pai-lao ties a length of red wool round Hsi-erh's plait.

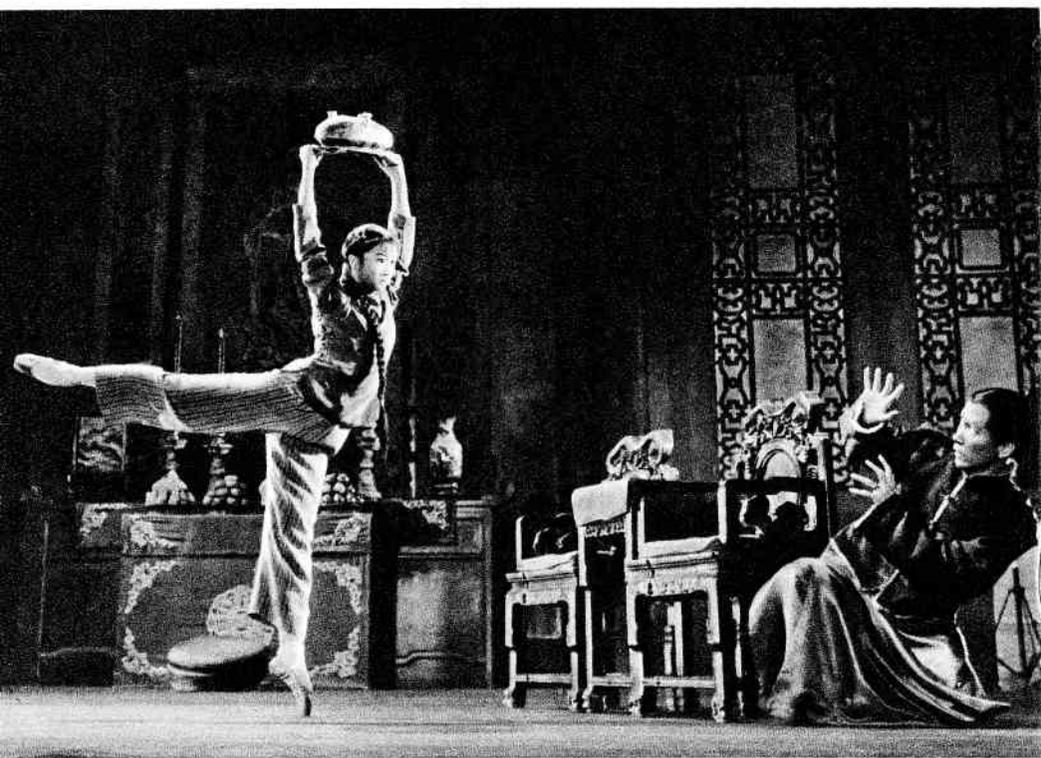


The landlord Huang Shih-jen forces his way into Yang's house at night and attempts to seize Hsi-erh. With a shoulder pole, Yang Pai-lao strikes out at Huang and his henchman.

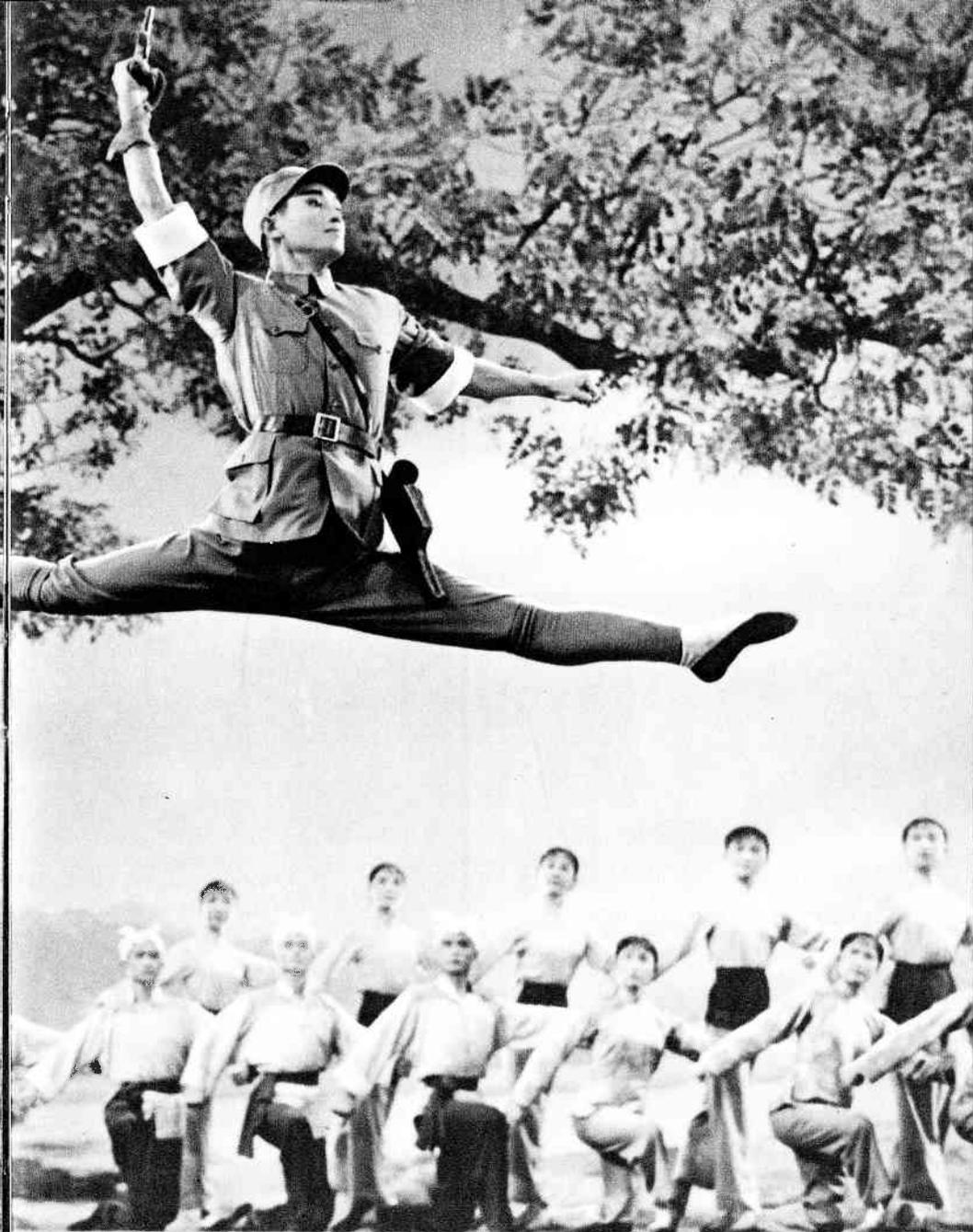


Hsi-erh is harshly treated in the landlord's house. Aunt Chang who works for the landlord cares for Hsi-erh like a mother.

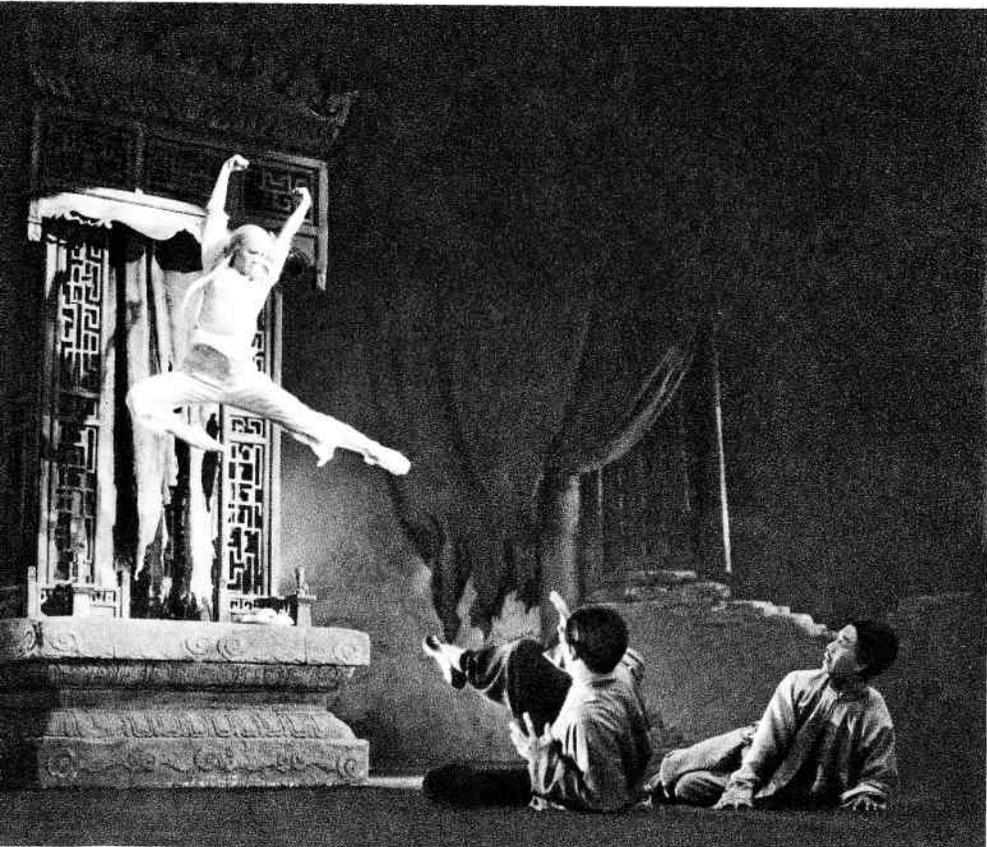
Hsi-erh snatches up an incense-burner to strike Huang Shih-jen when he insults her.



Wang Ta-chun joins the Eighth Route Army and, guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, matures into a staunch fighter.



Ta-chun calls on the villagers to take up arms, and they march on to fight for the liberation of the toiling masses throughout the world.



In the Temple of the Goddess, Hsi-erh recognizes Huang Shih-jen and his henchman who are trying to run away. She leaps down from the shrine and attacks her enemies.

Hsi-erh pours out to Ta-chun angry accusations of Huang Shih-jen's crimes.





Friends gather round Hsi-erh and tie a red scarf on her head to symbolize the new life beginning for her.



Gun in hand, Hsi-erh joins the Eighth Route Army.

A Heart Burning with Revenge

Shih Chung-chin

I am a young ballet dancer enjoying the happiness of life in New China without ever having experienced the hardships of the old society. While rehearsing the part of the White-Haired Girl, I went to see an exhibition of clay sculptures, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, which reveals how cruelly a big Szechuan landlord exploited his tenant peasants. This exhibition gave me a more concrete and a deeper impression of the vicious savagery of the landlord class.

Hsi-erh, resisting oppression, escapes from the wolfish landlord's lair with the help of Aunt Chang, a poor peasant woman and hired hand in the Huang mansion. There the film makes use of natural scenery, mountains, ravines and streams, raging wind and snow and the howling of wild beasts to enhance the indomitable character of Hsi-erh as she battles with the elements, and to convey her burning desire for revenge. Hard conditions turn her hair first grey, then white. My role in the film version of *The White-Haired Girl* is Hsi-erh after her hair has turned white.

The White-Haired Girl keeps herself from starving by eating wild fruit and nuts and stealing sacrificial offerings from a temple on a desolate mountain. One night after the liberation of the district by the Eighth Route Army, the landlord Huang Shih-jen who is trying to



Before rehearsal

run away, takes refuge from a thunderstorm in the Temple of the Goddess. A flash of lightning enables the White-Haired Girl to recognize her enemy. As I played this episode, I had a mental picture of the fiendish landlord in the *Rent Collection Courtyard* exhibition. The poor peasants had to deliver all the grain harvested at the cost of so much sweat and blood to the landlord's granary, while they themselves begged for food or were forced to sell their children. I seemed to hear the groans of the old man, the wailing of the sick child, the mother's weeping, and my heart burned with the longing for revenge as the shooting of this scene started. In the film, the White-Haired Girl stands proud and erect on the shrine looking down with furious eyes at the landlord. As she leaps down from the shrine, the panic-stricken landlord grovels at her feet. She spreads out both arms to bar the way, wrathfully advancing towards her enemy, and finally seizes hold of a candlestick which she brings down on Huang Shih-jen's head.

Then Wang Ta-chun, who has been pursuing the landlord, comes to the temple. The White-Haired Girl slips back into her cave. Wang follows her, they finally recognize each other and are re-united after so many years of separation. The sun rises, shedding light into the dark cave. Friends gather round and tie a red scarf on the White-Haired Girl's head, to symbolize the new life beginning for her. They lead her out of the cave. As I played this part, the figures of millions of liberated poor peasants rose before me, so that as I walked step by step out of that dank, gloomy cave my eyes were brimming with tears. This dance scene, more concentrated and more typical than actual everyday life, thanks to skilful camera work gives a profound reflection of the tremendous changes in the status of China's poor peasants — the change from the old society to the new.

Taking up Arms

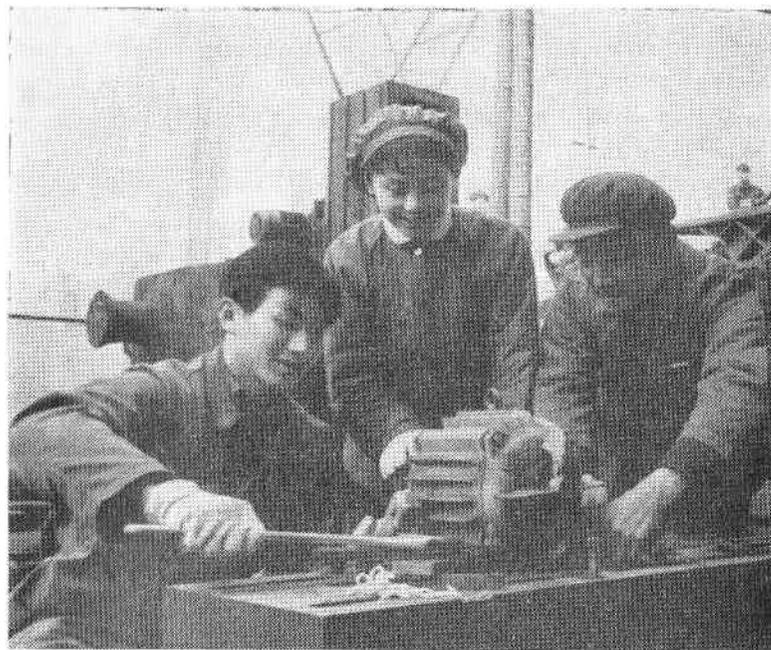
凌桂明

Ling Kuei-ming

I was born in a poor peasant family. At the time when New China was founded, I still hadn't entered any school. If not for the loving care of our great leader Chairman Mao and the Party, I could never have attended a primary school, to say nothing of going to a school of dancing.

In the past, ballet was a form of art never even heard of in the countryside. During the last few years, we have been to the villages to perform some scenes and passages from *The White-Haired Girl*. The poor and lower-middle peasants who flocked to see us from dozens of *li* around were quite carried away by the scene of the liberation of the villagers who had been oppressed by the landlord class and led a miserable life in the past. However, it is impossible to put on a full-length ballet such as *The White-Haired Girl* in every village. So, early last year, when I heard that this ballet was to be filmed, I was so thrilled that the broad masses all over the countryside would have a chance to see this model revolutionary drama that I couldn't sleep that night. I was determined to project the heroic image of Wang Ta-chun successfully on the screen.

Wang Ta-chun is a typical figure who at first rebels spontaneously against the old society, but afterwards becomes a staunch fighter who



Ling Kuei-ming (left) working in a Shanghai machine plant

firmly follows our great leader Chairman Mao and the Communist Party and takes up arms to make revolution.

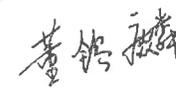
When I came to the episode in which Wang Ta-chun dances with furious indignation after Yang Pai-lao has been beaten to death and Hsi-erh seized by the landlord Huang Shih-jen, I recalled the bitter sufferings of my own family. Shortly before the establishment of New China, my family could no longer endure the oppression and exploitation of the landlord. We left our native place and went to Shanghai. My father hurried from pillar to post and toiled all day long, but he could not support the whole family. He had to send my elder brother to an orphanage in the suburbs of Shanghai. The tragic departure of my brother flashed upon my mind, and this past grief and pain of my own enabled me to put true feeling into my performance.

When Wang Ta-chun swings his axe, ready to fight it out with the landlord, Uncle Chao, an underground Communist, stops him and shows him a red Eighth Route Army arm-band, advising him to join the Eighth Route Army led by the Communist Party. A series of shots show Wang Ta-chun and some other young poor peasants looking at the arm-band with excitement and passing it around; then Wang raises the arm-band and bids farewell to his neighbours. Here the film sets forth the truth that has dawned upon the young man: To stand up and win liberation, the poor must follow the road of armed struggle under the leadership of the Party.

When the villagers are rejoicing over their victory after Huang Shih-jen's execution, Wang Ta-chun's heart is in a tumult. He associates Hsi-erh's experience with the fate of class brothers and sisters throughout the world, who are still longing for emancipation from the abyss of bitterness. He raises high a rifle and hands it to Hsi-erh, who accepts it eagerly. Then he turns round and gazes into the distance, looking ahead to the prospect of new battles. This is an expressive shot.

The film ends, to the strains of martial music, with a shot of Wang Ta-chun and Hsi-erh marching shoulder to shoulder with firm steps at the head of a fighting column. It shows that they will for ever follow Chairman Mao and the Party and carry the revolution through to the end.

Three Blows with the Shoulder Pole



Tung Hsi-lin

The new colour film *The White-Haired Girl* has created a heroic image of Hsi-erh's father Yang Pai-lao, a poor peasant. Yang is a toiler who worked hard on the land of the despotic landlord Huang Shih-jen, but he is dauntless in the face of his tormentor's whip. When Huang Shih-jen presses him to pay his debt, he fearlessly exposes his creditor's cruel exploitation. When the landlord orders his henchmen to drag Hsi-erh away, inflamed with passion Yang deals the tyrant three hard blows with his shoulder pole. This wins approving applause from the audience.

In the former stage versions on the same theme, Yang Pai-lao was depicted as an old man who just swallowed insults. Dunned by the landlord, he fell on his knees. Then Huang Shih-jen forced him to put his finger-print on a contract selling his daughter to the landlord. After that, knowing that Hsi-erh would soon be dragged away, overwhelmed by grief he took poison. But this aroused sharp criticism from the audience of workers, peasants and soldiers. "Yang Pai-lao shouldn't commit suicide," they said. "That's not in the nature of poor and lower-middle peasants!" This comment taught me a lot.

Later, my experience in the countryside while living, doing manual labour and studying Chairman Mao's works with former poor and lower-middle peasants made me understand how cruelly poor peasants of Yang Pai-lao's generation had been oppressed and exploited by the landlord class in the old society. The immense hatred built up by countless wrongs gave rise to a strong resistance to their oppressor. Our great leader Chairman Mao teaches us: **"The poor peasants have always been the main force in the bitter fight in the countryside.... They are deadly enemies of the camp of the local tyrants and evil gentry and attack it without the slightest hesitation."** To resist and revolt is the nature of the poor and lower-middle peasants. It is a distortion to present them as pathetic characters. On the basis of this understanding, we designed a series of choreographic movements making Yang Pai-lao indignantly drub Huang Shih-jen with his shoulder pole.

The ballet dancers hear a commune member recall the bitterness of the old society and savour the sweetness of the new (Tung Hsi-lin is first on the left in the second row)



The Yang Pai-lao in our film, after hiding to avoid his creditors, comes home in a snowstorm to enjoy a happy New Year's Eve with his daughter Hsi-erh. He makes his entry holding a shoulder pole and with a white cape round his shoulders; striding fast towards the camera. His militant spirit is distinctly conveyed by the way in which he battles with the snowstorm. When Huang Shih-jen seizes Hsi-erh, Yang's stern eyes flash with hatred, his sinewy hands grip the shoulder pole steeped in his blood and sweat. He strikes three blows in succession, toppling the scoundrel and trampling him underfoot. Every time I come to this point a sense of deep satisfaction surges from the bottom of my heart. Cinematographic techniques and the use of successive shots have further highlighted Yang Pai-lao's spirit of resistance.

Liu Chun-hua

A Glorious Task

While still in primary school, owing to my elder brother's influence, I took an interest in drawing and used to make sketches in my exercise books of incidents in school life.

In 1958, when I was fourteen, a mass movement for smelting steel swept our country. That spurred on my teachers and schoolmates, myself included, to go out into the streets and paint wall-pictures of steel smelting. To my astonishment, after seeing these paintings some people brought scrap iron from their homes and presented it to us, saying they wanted to help boost steel production.

I didn't fully understand the propaganda and educational value of those paintings until later when, in the middle school attached to the Lu Hsun Academy of Fine Arts, I studied Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art*. Chairman Mao urges us to **"ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy."** Of course, that steel smelting episode in turn deepened my understanding of this teaching and helped clarify my aim in studying art.



A common fight — the medical workers of Viet Nam and China working on an operation together (sketched in Thanh Hoa hospital, Viet Nam)

When the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution started in 1966, I was studying in the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts in Peking. On many occasions at Tien An Men Chairman Mao received Red Guards from all parts of the country. The sight of his powerful figure and kindly face as he smiled and waved to us always made me recall my family and especially my father. My folk were poor peasants. It was as a famine refugee that my father went to Heilungkiang, now

my home province. After I passed the entrance examination to the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts he said to me: "As a child you searched the dust-heaps for cinders, but now you're going to college. This is all thanks to Chairman Mao and the Communist Party." In our socialist society there are tens of thousands of young people like me. The thought of this stirs me to the depth of my heart.

It was deep love for Chairman Mao that made my classmates and me rush out of our institute into the streets to paint portraits of Chair-



A young woman
of Nung minority
of Viet Nam

man Mao on the high hoardings. We painted round the clock. Sometimes, worn out, we just stretched out on the ground to snatch a nap before getting up again to continue painting. As I worked on a ladder seven or eight metres high, I saw that the people passing below often stopped to watch us intently. Most of them were workers in overalls on their way home from a work shift, peasants from communes near Peking, or PLA men. Their burning desire to see portraits of our glorious leader was an additional encouragement to me.

In 1967, we started work on the oil painting *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan*. Anyuan Coal Mine lies in the west of Kiangsi Province. Opened up in 1898, by the twenties it employed over 12,000 workers. We visited this mine before starting painting. The veteran miners whom we met helped us understand the utter misery of their life before Liberation. Then they worked for sixteen or seventeen hours a day, lived in mat sheds and ate mouldy food not fit for pigs. Many were killed by the foremen, who savagely beat and abused them.

The Chinese Communist Party was founded on July 1, 1921. Before that, the Anyuan miners had waged a hard struggle against the bosses. But because they lacked a vanguard—the Communist Party—all these struggles ended in failure. As soon as Chairman Mao reached Anyuan in September 1921, he visited the miners in their sheds and went down the pits with them to understand their wretched conditions. He pointed out that the only way for the working class to win liberation is by closing its ranks and uniting as one to fight the capitalists. In the winter of 1921 Chairman Mao paid a second visit to Anyuan, set up a Party branch there, and started a workers' night-school. In 1922, Chairman Mao sparked off the great strike of 12,000 Anyuan miners. Later he personally launched and led the Autumn Harvest Uprising* in the villages on the border of Hunan and Kiangsi

*In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek sabotaged Kuomintang-Communist co-operation by launching a counter-revolutionary coup d'etat, which caused the defeat of the Northern Expeditionary Revolutionary War against imperialism and feudalism. During the harvest in September that year, Chairman Mao led the workers and peasants of east Hunan and west Kiangsi, together with some forces of the Northern Expeditionary Army, in an armed uprising. They formed a revolutionary army of workers and peasants to fight the enemy, then advanced into the Chingkang Mountains and organized a worker-peasant government.

and organized Anyuan workers to join in this struggle. Following this, the first revolutionary base in the Chinese countryside was set up in the Chingkang Mountains. Thus opening up the glorious road for the seizure of political power by armed struggle.

Chairman Mao's revolutionary practice in Anyuan was truly epic. The *Yenan Talks* calls for the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form. To achieve this, I considered that the most important thing was to present the image and thinking of Chairman Mao during his youth. While visiting Anyuan, we went down the pits to talk to old miners who had taken part in the great strike. We also read articles and poems written by Chairman Mao early in his career, reminiscences of his revolutionary activities, and historical data on Anyuan. On my canvas, I put Chairman Mao's figure in the forefront, as if advancing towards us. The

Vietnamese women weave straw mats



越南婦女編草蓆

于越南太平青光涼席社

1971.11.18

hills, sky, trees and clouds in the painting were means used artistically to throw his image into strong relief. Thus I painted turbulent clouds scudding past to convey how serenely Chairman Mao came to Anyuan at that time of sharp class struggle, to bring the revolutionary storm and victory to the miners.

In the *Yenan Talks* Chairman Mao points out: **“All our literature and art are for the masses of the people, and in the first place for the workers, peasants and soldiers; they are created for the workers, peasants and soldiers and are for their use.”** Oil painting in China is a foreign art form which was long regarded as “high-brow”. The broad masses neither liked nor understood the patches of oil daubed on many canvases. But the ballet was also introduced from abroad. And if the ballets *Red Detachment of Women* and *The White-Haired Girl* could express a revolutionary content and serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, why shouldn't oil painting do that too?

Chairman Mao teaches us to create works with the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit which the common people of China love. I had never been taught oil painting. But in accordance with the requirements of the theme and the tastes of the masses, I tried to combine the vivid colours and expressiveness of oils with the fine brushwork and attention to detail typical of the best traditional Chinese painting. The result moved to tears some old miners who had taken part in the big Anyuan strike. One of these said to me: “Chairman Mao is our saving star. We Anyuan miners owe everything to him. We must see to it that Chairman Mao's splendid image stands proudly for ever above our Anyuan hills.” The enthusiastic reaction to this painting strengthened my determination to paint for the workers, peasants and soldiers.

Last year, as a member of a delegation of Chinese art workers, I paid a visit to the heroic Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. The revolutionary enthusiasm with which the armed forces and people of Viet Nam are fighting and working was a great education and inspiration to me. In the War of Resistance to U.S. Aggression and for National Salvation, the masses have shown themselves capable of overcoming all odds. History has proved that the people's strength is invincible. I had no time to paint while in Viet Nam, but I made some sketches. And this experience brought home to me the truth that going among the workers, peasants and soldiers, learning from them and creating works for them, is a glorious task for literary and art workers.

The Folk Song "Wild Lilies Bloom Red As Flame"

Wild Lilies Bloom Red As Flame is a revolutionary folk song. It was already widely known during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1937) and the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945). With buoyant revolutionary passion and a stirring tune it praises the Chinese people's great leader Chairman Mao, the Chinese Communist Party and the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army led by Chairman Mao. Revised during the cultural revolution by literary and art workers in Shensi, this song is now sung throughout China and is popular with the broad masses.

Folk songs of this kind with revolutionary content are created by the labouring people themselves. Like all revolutionary literature and art, they are products of the reflection of the life of a given society in the minds of revolutionary people. In China, ever since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party and the people's revolution led by Chairman Mao, there have been folk songs reflecting the people's revolutionary struggles.

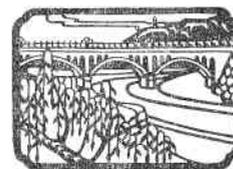
During the War of Resistance Against Japan, the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region, with Yen-an as its centre, was the base of the Chinese revolution. Thus folk songs popular in this region were generally known as Shensi folk songs. A well-known example is *Tung Fang Hung* (*The East Is Red*) which eulogizes the Chinese people's great leader Chairman Mao. These Shensi folk songs are very rich in content and have a great variety of artistic forms, the most popular and most representative being the melodious *hsin-tien-yu* and the ballad forms. *Wild Lilies Bloom Red As Flame* is based on these two types.

In October 1935, Chairman Mao and the Central Committee of the Party led the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army to northern Shensi after the Long March, thoroughly smashing the military encirclement of Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary forces, and consolidating and expanding the revolutionary base in order to wage a war of national liberation against Japanese aggression and lead the revolution to victory. The folk song *Wild Lilies Bloom Red As Flame* reflects this great turning-point in history.

The clear, lilting melody with which the song opens carries us to the undulating hills of the northern Shensi plateau, to Yen-an, the sacred city where Chairman Mao spent thirteen fighting years. Then the soprano soloist, her voice full of emotion, conjures up the picture of how Chairman Mao led the Central Red Army to northern Shensi, how even mountains and streams seemed to laugh for glee amid the fluttering red flags of the powerful army. Then with the gongs and drums of the *yangko* dance so characteristic of northern Shensi the music quickens and increases in passion. "Thousands of households open wide their doors, inviting in our soldier dear ones. . . . Fried cakes piping hot, warm wine for these dear ones of ours. . . ." Here male and female voices alternate, vividly conveying the joyful solicitude of the local people as they welcome the Central Red Army. After a short interlude the tempo slows down to pay fervent tribute to Chairman Mao's mighty achievements in leading the Chinese revolution. Then the soprano sings another solo, and the *hsin-tien-yu* tune soars higher, gaining in breadth to depict the swiftly gathering momentum of the revolutionary movement.

The final verse, "Wild lilies bloom red as flame, Chairman Mao leads us to free our land," expresses the unshakable confidence and heroism of the hundreds of millions of Chinese who, following the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, fought bravely to overthrow the oppression of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. This is the climax of the whole song, and the variations of the melody amply convey the singers' emotion.

Wild Lilies Bloom Red As Flame is a song of joy, of struggle and of triumph, showing how the Chinese people followed Chairman Mao to make revolution.



Wild Lilies Bloom Red As Flame

Expansively and warmly

A Shensi-Kansu folk song

Range af-ter range of moun-tains yo, Long stream af-ter stream; Our
 Cen-tral (oh) Red Ar-my To North Shen-si is come. Our
 Cen-tral (oh) Red Ar-my To North Shen-si is come.
 Red ban-ner u-pon red ban-ner yo, Gun u-pon gun;
 Ours is a peo-ple's ar-my, Our forc-es are strong.

Allegro Appassionato

(Male) Thou-sands of house-holds, (Chorus) Ai hai ai hai yo, (Male) O-pen
 (Female) Fried cakes pip-ing hot, (Chorus) Ai hai ai hai yo, (Female) For our
 (Male) Round our sol-diers, (Chorus) Ai hai ai hai yo, (Male) Seat-ed on
 wide their doors, (Chorus) Ai hai ai hai yo, (Male) In-vit-ing
 sol-diers, (Chorus) Ai hai ai hai yo, (Female) Warm wine
 warm kang, (Chorus) Ai hai ai hai yo, (Male) We tell the
 in our sol-dier dear ones, (Chorus) Yi erh
 for these dear ones of ours, (Chorus) Yi erh
 thoughts — deep in our hearts, (Chorus) Yi erh
 ya erh lai pa yo.
 ya erh lai pa yo.
 ya erh lai pa yo.



High wind clears off, *Ai hai ai hai* yo, Dark storm



clouds, *Ai hai ai hai* yo; Chair-man Mao's com - ing



sweeps the sky clean, Yes, it sweeps the sky clean.



Chair-man Mao's com - ing sweeps the sky clean,



Yes, it sweeps the sky clean.



Loud, loud the thun-der rum-bles yo, Light-ning flash-es far and wide; Our



peo - ple's rev - o - lu - tion Goes from strength to strength. Our



peo - ple's rev - o - lu - tion Goes from strength to strength.



Wild lil - ies are in full bloom yo, Red as



flame; Chair - man Mao leads us To free our land.



Chair - man Mao leads us To free our land.

Albanian Ballet Troupe Gives Premiere in Peking

The Ballet Troupe of the Opera Theatre of the People's Republic of Albania gave its premiere in Peking on May 6.

Attending the premiere were: Yao Wen-yuan, Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; Kuo Mo-jo, Member of the C.P.C. Central Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; Wu Teh, Member of the C.P.C. Central Committee and Head of the Cultural Group under the State Council and Albanian Ambassador to China Xhorxhi Robo and his wife.

Also present were leading members of government departments, the Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the China-Albania Friendship People's Commune.

Liu Hsien-chuan, Member of the C.P.C. Central Committee and Deputy Head of the Cultural Group under the State Council and Mantho Bala, Albanian Vice-Minister of Education and Culture, Chairman of the Albanian Arts and Culture Committee and leader of the Ballet Troupe, both spoke at the premiere.

After the opening ceremony, the Albanian artists performed the two-act ballet *Çuca e Maleve*. The ballet reflects the revolutionary spirit of the heroic Albanian women who, in their fight for liberation, waged

resolute struggles against the class enemy and the force of old habits, in line with the teachings of the Albanian Party of Labour. Their performance was accorded a warm welcome.

Picture-Story Books Published

Recently, a series of picture-story books have been published in Peking and Shanghai. Some of them reflect real life and the struggles involved in socialist construction. Among them are: *In Praise of "125"* which depicts the birth of China's first 125,000-kw. steam turbo-generating set with inner water-cooled stator and rotor, and *Fish-Dragon Dam* and *Tempering Themselves in the Vast Countryside*, both of which describe young school graduates who settle down in mountain areas to take part in agricultural production there.

The picture-story books *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* and *The Red Lantern* are based on revolutionary model Peking operas. *Tunnel Warfare* and *From Victory to Victory* are based on feature films. These works have clear proletarian thinking and feeling. They create heroic images by combining captions with pictures, and are rich in content as well as varied in style.

The authors of these picture-story books are workers, peasants and soldiers, some of whom received assistance from professional artists. Most of their works is characterized by its realism and lively expressive form.

Two Korean Feature Films on Show in China

Two Korean feature films, *The Blossoming Village* and *A Worker's Family*, have been shown in Peking, Shanghai and other cities since the middle of April this year.

The Blossoming Village depicts the revolutionary spirit of the Korean peasants who, following the teachings of their respected and beloved great leader Premier Kim Il Sung, arm themselves with proletarian ideology and strive to build a thriving socialist new countryside.



From *The Blossoming Village*

A Worker's Family, which deals with a family of three generations of miners, portrays the heroism of the Korean working class engaged in the great cause of building socialism in the spirit of Chollima (the Winged Horse).

Shanghai Dance Drama Troupe Makes a Friendly Performance Tour of Korea

Bearer of the deep revolutionary friendship of the people of China for the people of Korea, the Shanghai Dance Drama Troupe has made a tour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, performing in Pyongyang and elsewhere.

During its visit to Korea, the 204-member troupe gave performances of the modern revolutionary ballets *The White-Haired Girl* and *Red Detachment of Women* and the piano concerto *The Yellow River*.

Letters

—From Our Readers

Dear Readers,

We would like very briefly to express our gratitude here to those readers who have helped us a great deal by sending in valuable comments ever since our magazine started. Special thanks are due to those who have read *Chinese Literature* and kept in constant touch with us for years. We shall be publishing excerpts from our readers' letters from time to time to strengthen the contact between us, hoping that this column will prove a bridge of friendship. Please write to us as often as you can, to help us improve our editorial work and the quality of our English.

The Editors

The brilliant work *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art* of the great leader Comrade Mao Tsetung was an illuminating red lantern for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.... Years ago under the guidance of Comrade Chiang Ching began the creation of many theatrical works such as *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, *On the Docks*, *The Red Lantern*, *Shachiapang*, *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment*, *The White-Haired Girl*, *Red Detachment of Women* etc.

These are of major historic significance. They reveal the richness of your genuinely proletarian stage of literature and art over the counter-revolutionary revisionist black line on literature and art....

The theatrical works are of unspeakable value for all peoples of the world be they liberated or engaged in the struggle for liberation....

We know nothing about the history of the Chinese people's long war and that this war was led towards victories by the Communist Party and personally by the great Chairman Mao Tsetung, that under his leadership the Chinese people performed heroic deeds, that the teachings of Comrade Mao Tsetung, the red sun of their hearts, made them gladly give their life for the people and the country. Readers like us will be supplied with enough material to understand all these things by reading your theatrical works....

They are for me like the first rays of the happy spring sun that scatters the darkness of the night to reveal the red horizon of the Chinese popular culture.

*Seman-Fier,
Albania*

V.M.

The revolutionary reminiscences *On the Long March with Chairman Mao* and *In His Mind a Million Bold Warriors* have been gone through with considerable interest. Chairman Mao is a great leader of us poor people. This has been fully demonstrated in the way he treated Chen Chang-feng who joined the Red Army at the age of 15.

*Lagos,
Nigeria*

E.E.

I am thrilled to see that Lu Hsun's works are taking so prominent a part, and that Kuo Mo-jo also is a contributor. I am studying Chinese at university and Lu Hsun is one of my special texts.... I think that you could usefully explain a little more of the background and meaning of the stories. For instance *Diary of a Madman*, though superficially it appears to describe a case of paranoia, the madman is actually seeing the truth about man eating man.... One point which particularly could be stressed is Lu Hsun's realization that the 1911 revolution had not abolished the feudalism of Chinese society, and that his works were aimed at changing feudal attitudes.... I believe there is a Lu Hsun Museum in Peking.

If it does exist a description of it in an article in your magazine is something I would be most interested to see.

*Oxford,
England*

J.S.

I would really appreciate more emphasis on the art of China and on cultural activities, theatre, music etc. as well as literature.... If Chinese art and literature is fitting into the life of the people in new ways it would be good to learn about how this is occurring.

*Ontario,
Canada*

J.M.M.

The bourgeois press seeks to distort people's democracy.... However, truly progressive people understand the great accomplishments and international tasks achieved in China. We are constantly amazed at the high level of culture and ideals of the Chinese people compared to this society with all its wealth in a sea of injustice....

My wife and I would also like to visit revolutionary China someday.... We send our love and spirit of solidarity.... We're just working people who identify with all that the Chinese people have accomplished for the workers, peasants and soldiers....

*New Jersey,
USA*

M.& M.K.

On the Long March with Chairman Mao; When I say that I liked it,

I have two reasons: 1. It gives a useful and interesting historical view of the time from 1930 up till 1946. 2. The reminiscence is good and precise revolutionary poesy. Because I found it so interesting, I could wish that the story had not ended so early as 1946, but continued until today. Then it would give a complete picture of the very important years until the finish of the cultural revolution....

As a revolutionary my first criterion is that art should be a part of the revolutionary movement.

This criterion is fulfilled in *Chinese Literature*. The poems, articles, etc. have three very important things: Revolutionary action, revolutionary power and revolutionary optimism.

Some friends and I have sometimes informal meetings about the magazine *Chinese Literature*. We discuss the contents and read for each other the things that we like very well. Usually we have such meetings once a month. We are very interested in Chinese history and literature.

*Tengelfjord,
Norway*

A.M.



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ADVANCING TOGETHER (clay figures)

Cheng Yu-ho



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