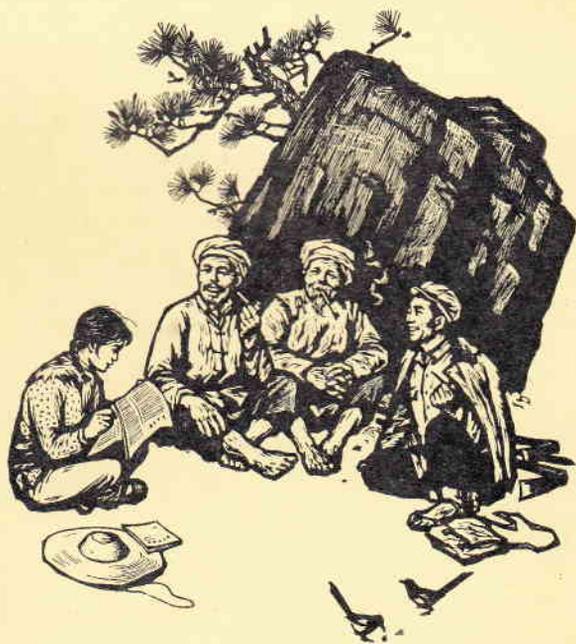
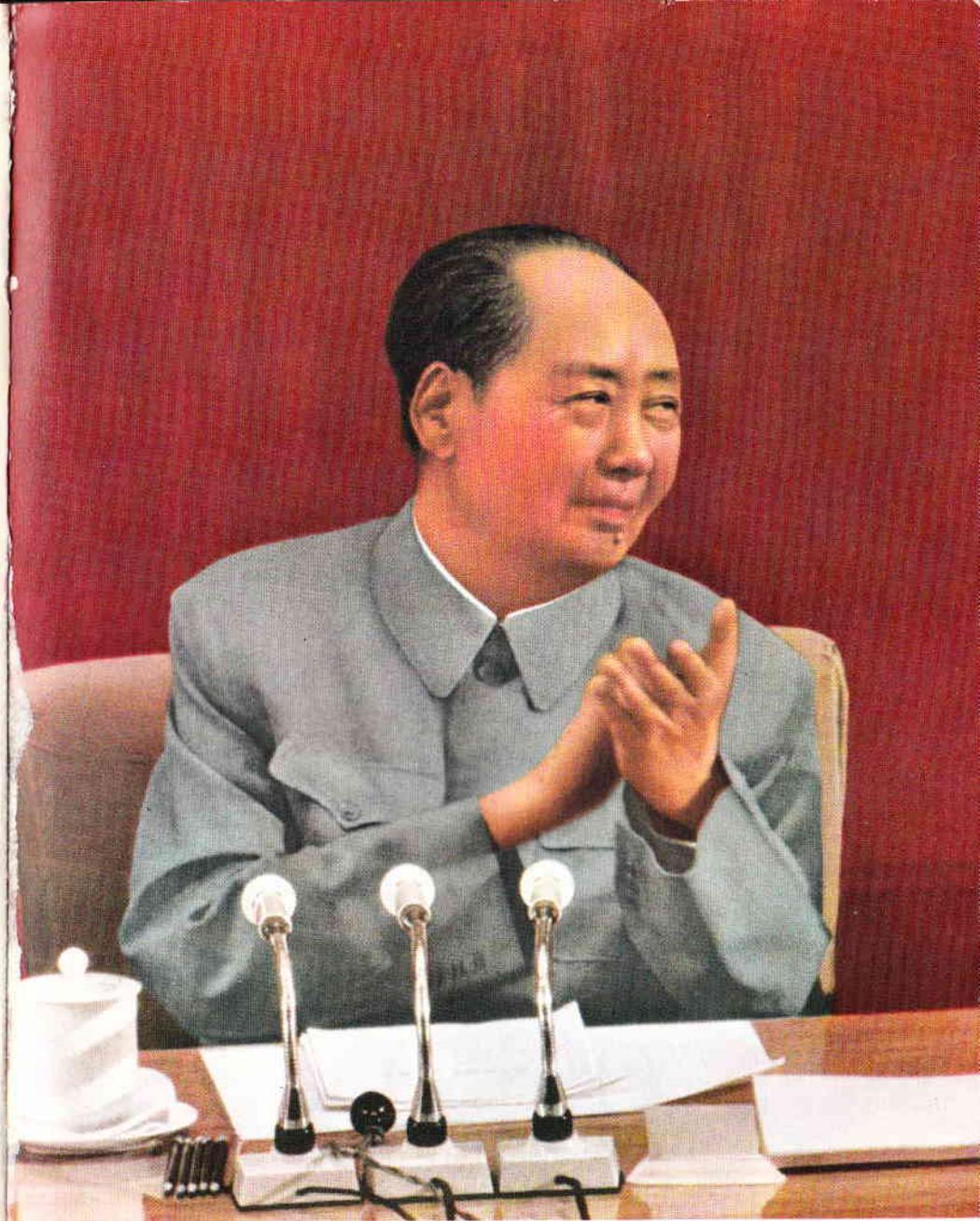


CHINESE LITERATURE



11
1973



The Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China was held solemnly in Peking from August 24 to 28. Comrade Mao Tsetung, the great leader of our Party, presided over the congress.

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Saifudin

Beloved Teacher

Slaves rose up to fight for liberation,
Smashed their chains and dug the grave of the old world;
Millions of Kurban Tulmus* are standing up. . . .
Chairman Mao, from you we draw our boundless strength.

The Tarim and Tzungar are bathed in brilliant sunshine,
All our cities and villages are abloom with flowers;
Our fine sons and daughters grow steeled in the flames of struggle. . . .
Chairman Mao, it is your line which has shown us the way.

The writer, a Uighur, is alternate member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and first Party secretary of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

*Kurban Tulmu, an old poor herdsman of the Uighur nationality in Sinkiang, found his status transformed after Liberation. He has been to Peking and was received by Chairman Mao.

Stirring mukkam* songs are heard on every side,
All our nationalities dance for joy and sing,
And every song is a song for our beloved teacher —
Dear Chairman Mao, we wish you a long, long life!

*A well-known collection of traditional Uighur music.

Yen Chia-wen

Fond Wishes from the Tuchia People

On the slopes of our mountain ranges
We have lighted blazing bonfires;
On cliffs under the Polar Star
We make merry music with our bamboo pipes.

Seas of paddy wave a greeting,
Clear mountain springs accompany our singing;
The news of the Tenth Congress*
Makes all hearts wing to Peking.

In that splendid hall ablaze with lights
Bright as stars in a cloudless sky,

The writer is of the Tuchia nationality.

*The Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China held in Peking from August 24 to 28.

Close to our great leader Chairman Mao
Sits one of our Tuchia girls —

There, in her finest head-dress,
Her gayest, brightest dress,
She holds a delegate's red card
Embodying our people's hopes and wishes.

Let her show the rich tapestry of coloured silk,
Fruit of our wisdom, our dream for these crop-scented hills;
This is the Tuchia people's most precious gift,
Present it for us, lass, to our beloved leader.

Tonight, our singing carries to Peking,
Tonight, we too are dancing in Tien An Men Square;
There by Chairman Mao sits our Tuchia delegate,
Our people unite as one round Chairman Mao.

Su Ming-ching

A Tung Song

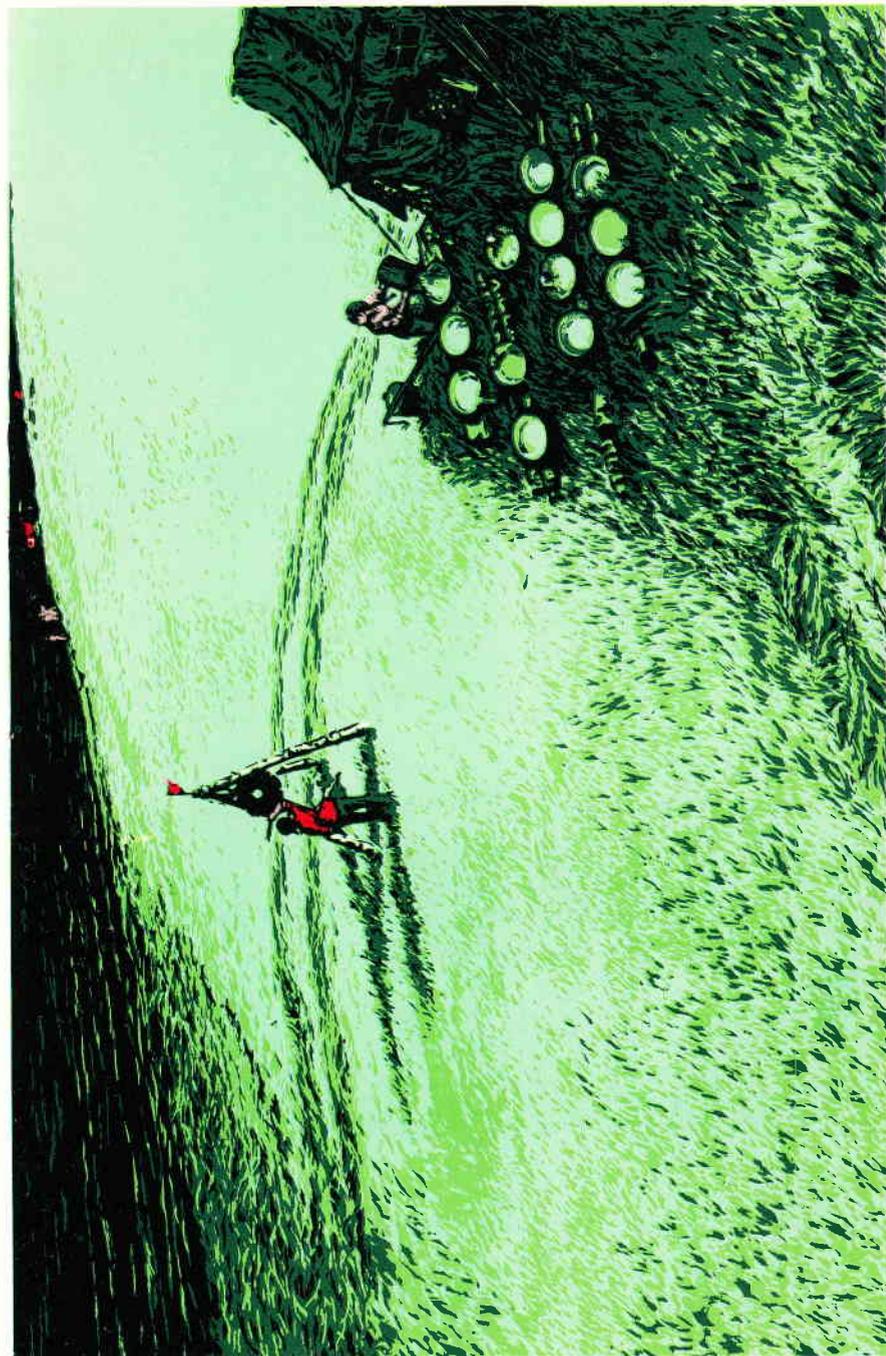
Fish from dried-up pools
Long most for the mighty ocean,
Eagles from the heights
Delight most in the vast blue sky,
And we Tung people, freed from captivity,
Love most of all the red sun in Peking.

From South Mountain we cut gold bamboo
To make a sweet-toned pipe,
From Wuling Mountain we choose sandalwood
To make a golden lute;
We sing our best songs of praise
For Chairman Mao and the Party.

The writer belongs to the Tung minority nationality in China's southwest.

What makes the bamboo pipe so loud and clear?
Our new life, sweeter than rice-wine.
What makes our lute so full of joy?
Our longing to spread word of our good harvest.
What makes our Tung songs so fine?
Their praise of the Tenth Party Congress!

Morning Gong (coloured woodcut)
by Hao Po-yi ►



Chai Chia-hsin

Sky, Why So Blue and Clear?

Ah, sky of our motherland,
Why so blue and clear?
Because the golden sun
Has scattered the clouds.

Ah, flowers of our motherland,
Why so sweet and luxuriant?
Because rain and dew
Give them good nourishment.

Ah, heart of a soldier,
Why so jubilant?
Because I am off to see Chairman Mao
And to discuss affairs of state with him.

The writer, a PLA man, is a delegate of the Tenth Party Congress.

Our great Party
Has struck off my chains;
I, once a poor cowherd,
Am entering the hall of the Tenth Party Congress.

Now, I have seen Chairman Mao,
I am swimming in a sea of happiness;
Hurrah for the red sun risen in the east!
Hurrah for our motherland spreading her young wings!

Thousands on thousands of songs —
Which one shall I sing?
Thousands on thousands of flowers —
Which one shall I give to the Party?

My heart is afire,
Our whole land resounds with singing.
Long live our great leader Chairman Mao!
Long live our great, glorious and correct Party!

Whirling Snow Brings in the Spring

Whirling Snow Brings in the Spring is about miners in present-day China. The first part of the novel was published in August 1972 by the Shanghai People's Publishing House.

The story starts in 1968 during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Many workers come to Lake Reflection Hill to get the iron mine there into production. The chief character Sung Tieh-pao heads a group of eighty workers whose task it is to drive the main tunnel. But Sung and his men at once run into obstacles: a hidden enemy sabotages the work; a conservative cadre slows it up by not following the correct line; and the arrogance of the fearless miner Chang Chung is used by the enemy to sow dissension. The result is class struggle and a contest between the socialist and capitalist lines which involves contradictions between the people and the enemy as well as contradictions within the ranks of the people. In this highly complex situation Sung Tieh-pao keeps a cool head. He and his mates soldier on unflinchingly and, by persisting in the correct policy of achieving unity with comrades through criticism and uniting the working class, step by step they force the enemy to expose themselves. In this way they gain the initial victory in opening the mine. The first part of the novel ends as the struggle at the mine develops in depth.

This novel, although it lacks polish, is considered one of the more successful works about industrial workers in China. The picture it presents of miners

engaged in class struggle, the struggle to get the mine going and in scientific experiment should help readers to understand the lives of Chinese workers.

Certain excerpts from the novel depicting the chief characters and chief episodes will appear in this and the next issue of our magazine.

— The Editors

1

For centuries the Chinyun Mountains remained shrouded in mystery, for few men ventured up these heights to explore their secrets. Then, under the leadership of the Communist Party, rich mineral deposits were found here and the place began to seethe with activity. An epic struggle unfolded, a saga of heroism and high endeavour.

Rumour had it that at the end of the Ching Dynasty, when the Empress Dowager was scouring the land for good timber, lumbermen were sent to these mountains. No paths existed, but by clinging to creepers they managed to climb halfway up. All around grew trees, some towering straight to the sky, others grotesquely twisted, the largest several metres around and so tall that one could hardly see their tops. Their thick foliage kept out the sunlight. Only here and there did silvery rays pierce through, lighting up the exotic plumage of the birds that flitted from bough to bough. Leaf-mould lay knee-deep on the ground, and the place was chequered with the tracks of wild beasts. The lumbermen cut their way through a forest of giant bamboo till finally they discovered the timber they wanted. When they felled a tree, however, the dense growth around it prevented the tree from falling and they could not haul it away. They decided to spend the night there and finish the job the next day. In the middle of the night one of them let out a yell. The others, waking, saw a circle of baleful green eyes, some large, some small, closing in on them in the dark. They quickly built up their fire, whereupon the wild beasts gradually retreated. When day broke, unwilling to risk their lives for a mere pittance, the men abandoned the superb tree they had felled and made their way down the mountain as fast as they could. . . .

During the War of Resistance Against Japan guerrillas were active in this region. Ten miles north of the mountains ran the River Yi-

ching; forty miles north of the river stood Mount Mopan, a guerrilla base under Party leadership; and twenty miles south of the mountains lay the Pingshan Colliery which had fallen into the hands of the Japanese. The Party, working underground, organized miners to steal dynamite from the mine and conceal it in a foothill of the Chinyun Mountains, from where it was sent to the guerrilla base.

The hill where the dynamite was hidden was only a few square miles in extent, not very high but precipitous and rugged. On it grew wild winter-plums which blossomed in the snow. Since this hill overlooked Lake Toleng and was clearly reflected in the lake, it was called Lake Reflection Hill.

Although the place was fertile, it had never attracted settlers on account of the wild beasts which roamed the mountains. At the time of Liberation in 1949 there were no villages here, no irrigated fields either, only a few hunters who lived close together.

Now, in the winter of 1968, the situation was completely different. Work teams had come one after another to the Chinyun Mountains to collect medicinal herbs or to prospect for mineral deposits. The timber was being felled; the wild beasts had fled. The change in Lake Reflection Hill was even more striking. It had become a production brigade of Toleng Commune and a dozen villages had sprung up there. Moreover, since 1958, when Chairman Mao called for a speed-up in steel production, rich deposits of iron ore had been discovered in the hill and miners had converged here from all sides. By the railway less than ten miles away a huge iron and steel plant was being constructed. Thus Lake Reflection Hill was completely transformed.

Constructing the mine and the steel plant was not plain sailing. The work went very slowly. In the mine, four big shafts had been sunk to a depth of more than two hundred metres, yet so far no iron ore had been extracted. As for the plant, some equipment had been installed but not a single blast furnace had been finished.

In 1966 the cultural revolution was launched. Under the leadership of the Party Central Committee headed by Chairman Mao, the people exposed Liu Shao-chi as a renegade and traitor and recaptured the power which had been usurped by the capitalist-roaders. In the process of debunking Liu's counter-revolutionary revisionist line, the

workers realized why the project there had been such a fiasco. Now they were going all out, guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, determined to get the mine going and start producing iron and steel by the next spring. The difficulties confronting them were immense, and the class struggle in this district was stubborn and complex. A hard battle still lay ahead.

The task force required to get the iron mine into operation was gradually being assembled — more than ten times the number of the original miners. Each newly arriving company received a hearty welcome from the provisional headquarters. It was strange then that when a company of eighty workers led by Sung Tieh-pao arrived here, nothing was ready for them. No living quarters had been assigned to them. Ting Chih-chin, one of the leading cadres in the headquarters, immediately rang up Chang Chung, the head of No. 1 Company who was in charge of the sinking of the shafts, and told him to get his men to put up some huts for themselves, vacating their own housing for the newcomers.

Had this order come from anyone else, Chang would have raised hell. But since he had a special feeling for Ting he made no protest, although inwardly fuming. The reason for his resentment was that, according to Ting, the provincial metallurgical bureau had applied for special permission from the ministry to have Sung Tieh-pao's company transferred here to drive the main tunnel, 1,500 metres in length, connecting the main shaft with the branch shaft. This would be no easy job as the geological conditions were tricky: they would have to bore through brecciated faults and might run into underground water. Yet Chang was thoroughly disgruntled because of this transfer. It seemed to him totally unnecessary. His No. 1 Company was the mine's best shock team, so why not assign this tough task to them instead of applying to the ministry for special permission to bring this group all the way from another province? Chang's company had lost face. Was the other team really better? Ting's telephone call made Chang even more browned off. Of course it was necessary to build more huts, and he didn't mind No. 1 Company vacating their own quarters. A little hardship was nothing. What he didn't like was losing face.

This resentment naturally affected the job. Normally Chang's company could have rigged up a few huts in no time; but now the building went so slowly that by the time Sung Tieh-pao's contingent arrived the huts were not yet thatched. Sung and his men pitched in to help, then moved their equipment in, making do with the rough and ready accommodation. Chang made a perfunctory offer to vacate his housing; but in the end No. 1 Company stayed put.

The stretch of lake at the foot of the hill was frozen when two of Sung's young workers came out of their new hut early the next morning to wash themselves in the lake. There had been no time last night to fix up a stove to heat water; but used as they were to roughing it they did not mind washing with cold water in winter.

At sight of the frozen lake, Lu Hsiao-lung, a thick-set youngster with an incipient moustache, called out: "There's no hot water and no cold water either. We'll have to wash like cats — a lick and a promise."

"Just wait," said Li Hsiao-hsiang, a taller, slimmer young fellow. "I'll get you water in a couple of minutes." He ran back to the hut for a hammer with which he started breaking the ice.

"You're scattering ice in all directions, not making a hole. Let me do it." Lu seized the hammer and swung it hard. A block of ice broke off and sank into the lake.

"The others will be coming out to wash too, Lu. Make a few more holes."

Lu did as he suggested.

By now a number of their mates had come to the shore. The first to dip his towel into a hole pulled it out frozen solid. "Look, a fried fritter!" he exclaimed. "How am I to wash with this? I'd better roll it over my face." The others chortled. "It's quite a weight," he continued. "Watch me wringing water out of my face." As he wiped the melted ice from his cheeks he chuckled, and the others roared with laughter again.

Then an older man stepped forward. Short but sturdy, in a padded cap and sheepskin coat, he had deep lines etched on his face and shrewd bright eyes. Pointing at Li and Lu, he warned the fellow who had been clowning:

"Don't go scaring these kids fresh from school; their skin is still tender. Your hide's like steel; ice splinters can't even dent it."

This man in his early forties, Kuo Ping-yi, was a member of the Party committee of Sung's contingent. A daring miner who used his head, he was respected for his courage and tact. Calmly stepping over to the ice hole, he took his towel from his neck and dipped it in the water, shaking it so hard when he lifted it out and wiping his face so quickly that the towel did not freeze until he had finished washing.

"That's the trick! Smart work!" The others followed suit.

Now another man emerged from the hut and joined them. This was Chen Kuang-yao, Kuo's contemporary and old work mate in the Pingshan Colliery. Chen was also a member of the Party committee. Known for his tremendous strength and hot temper, in many ways he was the opposite of Kuo. Even in mid-winter he left his jacket unbuttoned, a thick cord round his waist and his chest bare. Though a keen north wind was blowing, he not only appeared impervious to the cold but seemed to revel in it. Chen's way of washing was typical of the man. Instead of wetting his towel, he scooped up water in his powerful hands. By the time he was ready to dry his face with his towel, icicles had formed on his beard.

After washing, Kuo and Chen stood by the frozen lake watching the youngsters having what they called "cock-fights". Two young fellows standing on their right legs faced each other on the slippery ice, holding their left feet with both hands and ramming each other with their left knees. Sometimes the one taking the offensive lost his balance and fell before scoring a hit; at others his opponent was knocked over before he could strike back. Their padded clothes kept them from coming to any harm. Watching this horseplay, Kuo and Chen laughed. Then the youngsters crowded round them to insist that the pair of them have a "cock-fight" too.

As Kuo and Chen were scuffling and sparring with the youngsters, another man approached through a clump of pines. He was wearing a fox-skin cap, a shabby black padded jacket with a leather belt, and black padded trousers and shoes. His jacket, unbuttoned, revealed a tiger-skin waistcoat. More than average height with broad shoulders, thick eyebrows, big eyes and a prominent nose, he had a

bull-dog jaw and a confident set to his mouth. This was Chang Chung, whom we have already met.

At thirty-five, Chang had endless energy and liked nothing better than tackling tough assignments. During the hard years of 1959 to 1961, when the economy ran into temporary difficulties, Liu Shao-chi and the other revisionists in high places tried to force the iron mine to close down by withholding funds, stopping the miners' pay and ordering them to find themselves jobs elsewhere. Chang, given a correct lead by his superiors, took his men up the Chinyun Mountains to cut timber which they sold to support themselves. One day, running into a tiger in the mountains, without turning a hair he killed the beast with his axe and made a waistcoat out of its skin. Once they had solved the problem of making a living, he proposed continuing the sinking of shafts. Since they had no pneumatic drills, they used hammers, steel spikes and dynamite instead; and since they had no skip hoist, they rigged up a wooden pulley over the shaft which they operated by hand. These exploits were well-known to all familiar with the history of the mine. Then, however, Chang grew a little too cocksure. When Ting Chih-chin told him that Sung's company, which had established a fine record elsewhere, was coming to take on the most difficult task and Chang should learn from them, he felt resentful. He thought: What hard job have I ever shirked? Why should a 1,500-metre tunnel be too difficult for me? They may have scored successes, but so have I.

Ting, however, kept advising Chang to learn from the newcomers, and criticized him for not looking after them well. He urged him to find Sung Tieh-pao first thing the next morning and apologize to him. Chang had come now not to apologize but to see how good this new contingent was. Halting under a pine tree he watched the "cock-fighting" on the ice, and noticed a couple of older workers joining in. He snorted. Instead of fooling about, they ought to be thinking of the revolution and production, setting a good example for the youngsters; but here they were taking the lead in wasting time. What a bad show! This outfit couldn't be much good. He was walking away in disgust when someone called: "Comrade Chang Chung!" At once he stopped.

Turning, he saw a tall, swarthy man in a brown fur cap and brown padded jacket. His long-lashed eyes under long eyebrows gleamed with determination. This was Sung Tieh-pao.

Sung was thirty-four this year. In the cultural revolution he had been one of the first to denounce the revisionists. Interested in political problems, a keen student of Marxism and the works of Chairman Mao, he lived up to his principles. Once convinced that a certain line of action was right, he lost no time in putting it into practice. His prestige in his company was high. Wiping his hands, still greasy from examining a pneumatic drill, he went over now to greet Chang.

"Company Leader Chang, I want to thank you for the help you've given us. We know how busy your company is, yet you sent men yesterday to get our quarters ready."

Sung was speaking from his heart, but Chang thought this a sarcastic reference to the fact that they had not vacated their own quarters.

"Company Leader Sung, in this matter about your quarters I don't really care what you think," he retorted. "Of course you're shouldering the heaviest task — driving the main tunnel. Our company will just be doing odd jobs."

Sung raised his eyebrows slightly. Who's been treading on your corns? he wondered. I've only just got here, so what have I done to offend you? Chang's face was flushed, but he looked an honest fellow. Sung decided not to jump to conclusions, but to have a good talk with Chang later to find out whether he had done something wrong without realizing it himself or whether there was some misunderstanding. Pretending not to have noticed Chang's annoyance, he responded heartily:

"Company Leader Chang, we'll be fighting shoulder to shoulder. I was going to call on you, but you've got in first. Come on in!"

Chang took a deep breath and tightened his belt. He knew there were many old miners under Sung, yet this young company leader had the respect of them all — that took some doing. The man was obviously a diplomat, able to answer a barbed remark with a smile. But this cut no ice with Chang. Only skill on the job could impress

him. Still smarting from having his company passed over, he answered truculently:

"I didn't come to see you, Company Leader Sung. I came. . . ." he jerked his head towards the crowd on the ice. ". . . I came to watch the fun. Well, see you later." With that he left in a huff.

Sung did not let this rudeness ruffle him. From his experience of men he sensed that Chang was an honest, straightforward type, only somehow they had got off on the wrong foot. Whatever the problem was he could clear it up later. As soon as Chang appeared in a better temper, he would find out just what was wrong.

The men on the ice were still enjoying themselves. Sung turned to watch them. He understood these workers. His high-spirited company did nothing by halves. Although the stove had only just been finished, so that they had no hot water and breakfast was late, not a single man had complained — instead, they were larking about on empty stomachs. This did not mean that they were slackers, it showed their fine spirit, their attitude towards hardship. As the result of long steeling under arduous conditions, they needed no pep-talks from him to boost their morale.

Striding towards the crowd, Sung went to join in the game.

2

Night had fallen. The north wind howled in the ancient forests on the Chinyun Mountains.

In one of the huts Sung, as Party secretary, was presiding over a meeting with his two committee members. The subject under discussion was whether or not to go to the steel plant to help install the blast furnace. Chen Kuang-yao who had years of experience as a miner demanded gruffly:

"If we don't start till January, how can we finish the 1,500-metre tunnel on time? Let's not mill around like a fly that's lost its head. I don't see how we can send men to help the steel plant."

Sung made no answer but got up to open the window. Standing there taking deep breaths of fresh air, he tried to work out this complicated problem. Yesterday when he went to report his company's

arrival, the PLA representative Yuan Chien, the top man at headquarters, had gone to the ministry for a meeting. Ting Chih-chin, the second in command, welcomed Sung warmly.

Ting told him that teams of workers were arriving from all sides, and this had caused confusion. Headquarters had just been set up on a provisional basis, so everything was still at sixes and sevens. He hoped that Sung would make allowances for any negligence and that his men would rise to meet the challenge of these difficult conditions. After a few days' rest, when they were more settled, Chu Fu-ming, the man in charge of operations at headquarters, would assign them jobs.

Sung had rejoined that his men were eager to get cracking and would like to start work the next day. Ting expressed approval and promised to make the arrangements as soon as possible. As Sung was about to leave, Ting said:

"I've seen your list of names. You have one worker called Yen Lao-hsiang who is fifty-two. We don't think a man of that age should do underground work, so we're transferring him to the store-room where dynamite is kept."

This took Sung by surprise. After a moment's thought he replied that as Yen was an old hand with rich experience he hoped he could be kept on the job.

"I understand how you feel," Ting cut in. "But we must look at things from all sides. Old Yen is a Party member and taking charge of the dynamite is a very important job. We have to guard against enemy sabotage. If your company runs into any difficulties in driving the tunnel, you can still rope him in. It's the duty of the leadership, you know, to take good care of veteran workers."

Sung wanted to argue the point but was prevented by someone else's arrival. Ting urged him before he left to come to him in case of difficulties and promised again to do all he could to help.

That afternoon Chu Fu-ming called on Sung and told him that the entrance to the main shaft was temporarily closed and the skip hoist ordered for the branch shaft had not yet arrived, so they could not go underground to start on the job for the time being. Headquarters had decided to send half of Sung's men to the steel plant to help install

a blast furnace, leaving the other half to prepare for the excavation of the tunnel. Actually the No. 3 Company leader Sun Tch-chang had told Sung that same morning that the skip hoist originally used in the branch shaft had been dismantled and moved away by Chang Chung before their arrival for use on the No. 1 ventilation shaft. Sung had also discovered that workers over fifty in other companies were not allowed underground but were kept on as technical advisers. As for the blast furnace, it was to be built on the rocky mountainside. This would cut down considerably on the concrete needed for the foundation and thereby speed up construction. However, this meant levelling the slope by blasting, and although the steel plant had asked several months ago for workers for this job, headquarters had not assigned any until Sung's company arrived.

"Well, Tieh-pao?" Sung's long silence had exhausted Chen's patience. Driving this long tunnel was going to be quite hard enough in view of the complex geological formation. Therefore, in Chen's view, they should get back the skip hoist which Chang Chung had taken away, so as to make an early start on the work and ensure its completion on time. A new hoist would not arrive for another couple of months. They couldn't wait that long. Of course the steel plant was important too, but workers from other companies not engaged on such urgent tasks could be transferred there.

When Sung still remained silent, Chen rounded on Kuo Ping-yi. "Have you nothing to say either?" he demanded.

Kuo had sized up the situation: it wasn't normal. Since Liberation he had worked in some dozen mines, but this was the first time they had been faced with such a difficult task and unable to get cracking on it. He sensed the existence of hidden obstacles; since Sung was thinking things over he did not like to disturb him by expressing his own views. He had great faith in Sung's ability. Though both he and Chen were older than their team leader, Sung was able to see things more clearly from the angle of the Party's policy. When it came to working experience, of course, Kuo and Chen had helped Sung's father Sung Chang-keng to hide dynamite twenty-four years ago when Sung was only ten. But it isn't just age that counts. Sung had better political judgement. When Chen urged him to speak Kuo nudged

him, meaning that they should give Sung time to think over the problem.

When Sung finally spoke, his words surprised them both. He proposed:

"Let's continue this discussion later. Suppose we take a look round first?"

At once Kuo caught on. "You want to solve the problem of getting down the shaft first, so you want to see what equipment's available. Right?"

"That's it," agreed Sung. "We've been told the set-up here is complicated, but we don't know the details yet. We can't make decisions based on subjective ideas. First we must find out the exact situation, solve some specific problems and consult comrades in other companies." After a short pause he added to Chen, "I think we ought to help the steel plant too."

To this Chen did not reply.

Taking electric torches, they left the hut. They skirted the lake by the dim light of the moon, then crossed two hills. In three quarters of an hour they came in sight of the headgear some sixty metres high over the main shaft. From a distance it seemed a pillar on the mountainside. Seen closer to, it looked like a storied building. To speed up the extraction of iron ore, the building workers spurred by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had been racing with time, working day and night before freezing set in. Now the main construction was ready and the installation of equipment had started. The fitters were also braving the cold day and night, some working dozens of metres above the ground, others lying stretched out on the icy concrete. To prevent things falling down the shaft, its mouth had been closed with a thick steel plate five metres across. Among the equipment being installed was a large skip hoist capable of raising thirty tons of iron ore in just over a minute from the bottom of the shaft two hundred metres below sea-level.

The revolutionary drive of the workers here increased their own eagerness to get to work. Going into a shed close to the shaft, they found a man in his fifties. This was Han Shui-keng, an old miner.

Sung greeted him: "Not resting yet, mate?"

"The older a man gets, the less sleep he needs," answered Han. "Are you three from the fitting office?"

"No, we work for the mine. We only came yesterday," Sung told him.

"No wonder I didn't recognize you. I know all the comrades here. Of course, you must be from that company which just came. Chang Chung wouldn't let you have their quarters, right?"

"Company Leader Chang helped build our huts. We're very grateful to him," said Sung. "How could we let them vacate their own quarters for us?"

"That's the spirit," said Han. "We miners are used to roughing it. Who cares about living quarters? We only want to get the ore out faster. We workers have to unite. If Chang behaved selfishly, we mustn't let it worry us. He's a fine fellow, full of daring and drive. Only he's taken to riding the high horse and won't listen to advice."

Sung responded: "Company Leader Chang seems a straightforward fellow. We hear that he played a notable part in the struggle between two lines here, and he's really tops in his job. We've a lot to learn from him."

Han grunted noncommittally. Then his eyes lit up and he asked: "Is one of you Sung Tieh-pao?"

Kuo told him their names, and Han introduced himself. Then seizing Sung by the hand he said eagerly: "Comrade Sung, you've come just at the right time. There's a lot you should know about the set-up here. . . . Still, we can talk about that some other time. . . . They didn't have accommodation ready for you, the main shaft's closed and your skip hoist's been dismantled so that you can't get down to start on your job. I know all that. But, believe me, the workers in this mine are very pleased to have you here, you'll soon find that." He broke off at this point to pour his visitors some tea.

Sung was nonplussed. How did this old worker know his name and all the setbacks they had run into here? Han seemed to have a lot on his mind yet to be reluctant to come out with it. Sung decided not to press him. After taking a sip of hot tea he raised some of the problems which had brought them there.



"Comrade Han, the closure of the main shaft affects the work of other companies too. I have a suggestion. I'd like to know if you think it feasible." Setting his mug on the table he explained, "Here's the main shaft." He placed a box beside the mug. "And this is the small hillock by the shaft." Next he put the lid on the mug. "Now the shaft's closed." Then he laid one finger on the box. "If we open an inclined passage-way here to the main shaft, the mouth of the shaft can stay closed so as not to affect the installation of equipment, but we can bore our way to it from the side and go down from there."

"That's a good scheme," Han exclaimed. He calculated the distance from the slope to the main shaft. "The side passage can be done in a week. This plan of yours is first-rate, Comrade Sung. I've been cudgelling my brains for safety measures to enable us to go down the main shaft, but your plan is much simpler. Tomorrow I'll get hold of the third company leader Sun Teh-chang, and we'll consult Chu Fu-ming who is in charge. I should think he's bound to agree."

Further talk revealed that Chang Chung and Sun Teh-chang had both served their apprenticeship under Old Han.

The four men went out to inspect the site again and decided on the place where the passage-way should be dug.

"Let me have the job," urged Chen. "I haven't done a stroke of work for days and my hands are itching. I guarantee to dig this tunnel in five days."

"No," said Han. "You leave this job to Sun Teh-chang's team. You should take it easy for a few days and then do your preparatory work. Why be so impatient?"

Sung told them not to fight for the job just yet but wait till he had gone with Sun the next day to ask Chu about it.

The prospect of this early solution to their problem elated Sung, who asked Han whether there was any old equipment which could be utilized. If so they could tunnel from both ends and speed up the work instead of waiting for another skip hoist.

Han frowned reflectively, then informed them that a mine car at the No. 1 ventilation shaft had been condemned to the scrap pile.

Whether it was still there or not he did not know. Sung and his comrades decided to go and find out.

So Sung, Chen and Kuo climbed a mountain path through the thickets. Though the moonlight could not penetrate the dense foliage, they knew their way well enough to walk in the dark. Kuo, however, sometimes flashed his torch on the bore-holes by the path. "Look, you two," he remarked abruptly. "These bore-holes are pretty close. I reckon there's one every fifty metres."

Sun and Chen stooped down to look. The torchlight showed a hole as wide as a rice bowl, its concrete seal bearing the stamp: 803 Prospecting Team of the Ministry of Metallurgy.

Sung told Chen and Kuo that there had been a fierce struggle at this iron mine between those taking the socialist road and the handful of people trying to restore capitalism. In 1958, when this prospecting team came up here during the mass movement to boost steel production, it discovered rich deposits of iron ore. The provincial metallurgical bureau at once sent an old Party cadre called Shih Kai to prepare to open a mine. The preparations were well under way when the capitalist-roaders in the Party called the whole project off, on the pretext that adequate information was still lacking. Remembering Chairman Mao's instruction to open more mines, Shih Kai rallied the masses to help the prospecting team. Working round the clock, they bored one hole every fifty metres, until they had obtained irrefutable data. This was the reason for the number of bore-holes here.

Eager to hear the whole story, Chen exclaimed: "This Comrade Shih Kai who defied those capitalist-roaders so early sounds terrific. He must have made a good study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Is he still at the mine?"

"No." Sung sighed. "Unfortunately he fell ill and died early this year. The workers thought the world of him. They got permission to bury him on this mountain. His grave is just ahead, in the plum grove."

They turned into the grove and went up to Shih Kai's grave, in front of which stood what looked like a dark rock in the shape of a big bamboo shoot.

When they examined this strange tablet, however, they found it was a slab of iron ore with the inscription in red: "Here lies Shih Kai, the fine cadre who led us to start the iron mine. This tombstone was set up in February 1968 by all the workers of the mine." These words had been cut deep with a pneumatic drill, then painted red. With full hearts the three men left the tomb and continued towards No. 1 ventilation shaft.

Not far from the plum grove they came to a huge pine tree. Chen pointed it out to his companions and said:

"This is where we used to hide dynamite. Just by this pine."

The others needed no reminder. The sight of the giant pine casting a great circle of shade on the moonlit ground stirred painful memories. When Chen pointed at the tree Kuo tugged at his jacket to silence him, while Sung seemed lost in thought. Chen realized his own tactlessness and said no more. However, Sung rejoined calmly:

"Are you afraid that coming here upsets me? Don't worry. It strengthens my will to fight on. It's getting late though. We must hurry. We can come back here some other time."

The iron mine had four openings: the main shaft which would be used for bringing ore to the surface, a branch shaft for transporting men and equipment, and two ventilation shafts, one downcast and one upcast.

Sung and the two others found that the mouth of the downcast shaft was also about five metres in diameter. Concrete mixed with sand, pebbles and a fixing agent had been sprayed on the walls to prevent loose stones from falling.

After looking down the shaft, they went into the winding-room. The skip hoist had a drum three metres in diameter. Steel cables were attached to a cage large enough for twenty men and installed with a section of rail so that wagons and heavy equipment brought here by rail could be pushed straight in.

As they were watching, the bell rang and the skip hoist started going down. Sung timed its operation. When next the bell rang, only forty seconds later, the cage had reached the bottom of the shaft two hundred metres below sea-level.

Sung was questioning one of the hoistmen in the hope of finding out whether there were any derelict mine cars here, when the bell rang again and the cage came back to the surface. One of the men in it called out: "Company leader, our team's set a new record today: 3.2 metres!"

"If we don't set new records, how can we grab the job of driving the main tunnel? That other crew's pretty tough."

Sung turned and saw that the last speaker was Chang Chung, who had just come up the shaft. Wearing a miner's helmet, oilskins and waders and holding a pneumatic drill which weighed a good fifty pounds, he looked bursting with energy.

As Chang stepped out of the cage, he saw Sung and the other two standing there. His face fell.

Sung immediately went up to greet him.

"Don't get me wrong, Company Leader Sung," said Chang. "I dismantled this skip hoist from the branch shaft before I knew you were coming. I had no idea then that the building of the main tunnel. . . ." He was on the point of saying "would be assigned to you." But since this was something he still meant to contest, he amended it to "would have anything to do with you".

"So what are you going to do about it now?" Chen demanded.

"Well, we shall have to see," said Chang stubbornly.

"See what?" fumed Chen. "You've dismantled that hoist, so now we can't get down the shaft."

Assuming that they had come to demand the hoist back, Chang said with a frown: "It's not such a simple matter."

Sung made haste to intervene. "We've not come to ask for the skip hoist, Company Leader Chang. Since you've already installed it here, we wouldn't think of doing that."

This only made Chang more convinced than ever that Sung was a slippery customer and to argue with him would be a waste of time. "That's all right, then," he said. "See you later." As he turned away he called loudly to one of his crew: "Tell the store-room to send over more dynamite. We'll break another record tomorrow." Then he swaggered off with his heavy pneumatic drill.

Chen was left speechless with anger.

Kuo smiled and asked: "Why did you provoke him, Old Chen?" "He's too bloody selfish!"

"Selfish, is he?" said Sung. "And what about you, insisting on having the skip hoist?"

Kuo chuckled and Chen flushed.

They did in fact find a mine car, only to be told by the workers there that Chu Fu-ming had forbidden them to use it because it had broken down and nearly caused an accident not long ago. After examining it carefully, Sung decided to ask Chu the next day to let them repair it and use it.

On the way back Sung said to the other two: "We can continue our Party committee meeting now. Let's first discuss the problem of helping the steel plant."

Chen proposed: "Tell headquarters that we've now found a way to go down the shaft and start work. Our task is so heavy, they should send another team to help the steel plant."

"That won't do," Kuo objected. "We're not afraid of shouldering heavy tasks. The steel plant's important too. We ought to help out. If we keep half our people for preparatory work that should be enough."

"We've only just arrived here, Old Chen," said Sung. "The situation is tricky. We must keep cool-headed and not do anything rash. Don't you agree?"

Since Chen did not answer, Kuo quipped: "If Old Chen doesn't want to go to the steel plant, I'll take a task force there."

"Who says I don't want to go?" protested Chen. "I feel ready to explode here. Of course I'll go, while you and Old Sung go ahead with preparations for tackling the tunnel. You'll have to open that shaft from the side, get the mine car repaired and cope with that fellow Chang Chung as well as someone called Chu Fu-ming. No. If I were to stay here, I'd be bound to blow up. I'd rather blast rocks instead."

Sung laughed. "How are you going to lead your men if your thinking's all snarled up? The comrades in the steel plant will wonder: Why is this hefty miner in such a foul temper? If you mess up

the foundation because you're angry, they won't be able to install their furnace."

Chen smiled sheepishly. "All right," he said. "Have your joke. I guarantee to make a good job of it. I'll level the cliff and keep grinning all the time." He pulled a face which set the other two laughing.

When they finally reached their quarters, the other workers were sitting up waiting for them. Asked the reason, someone explained that they reckoned the three Party committee members must have gone out to make plans, and they couldn't sleep till they knew what their jobs were to be. Sung understood how keen they were to get started. He regretted not having waited till they were all asleep before going out. After a brief consultation with Chen and Kuo, he told the men to go to the central hut for a meeting.

The hillside was silver in the moonlight and the pines were nodding in the wind as the men crowded eagerly into the meeting place to hear Sung's plans for them.

3

The next morning Chen led a task force to help the steel plant, while Sung and Kuo drew up more detailed plans for preparatory work. Then Kuo went off with the rest of the men to the mine and Sung set off for headquarters to find Chu Fu-ming, as he had arranged with Old Han.

The provisional headquarters was on a slope quite a long way from their quarters. On his way there he started thinking of Chairman Mao's treatise *On Practice* which he had been reading after last night's meeting. Chairman Mao points out that it is only through practice that people come to understand the world around them. Though the main tunnel had to run through faults in the geological strata where water might have accumulated, this was nothing to be afraid of. It was lack of experience that made men afraid. Once you understood the difficulties through practice, they were not insurmountable. Of course, taking difficulties too lightly and not coming to grips with them would result in failure, and then the job would seem impos-

sible. Sung was confident that, if they acted on Chairman Mao's teachings, they would solve the problem of the tunnel all right.

Crossing another hill Sung came in sight of headquarters, two rows of red brick buildings. The front row housed the offices of the various construction projects; the back row, the political department and the offices of the leading cadres. As Sung approached Ting Chih-chin's office, meaning to ask him about the discarded mine car, he heard Ting's voice raised in anger.

"You intellectuals should honestly accept education from the workers. Why can't you learn the working-class spirit of fearing neither hardship nor death? Why can't you learn their honest, conscientious working style? The geological conditions must be thoroughly checked. We have to be absolutely sure of our data. You should go down the shaft yourself. If the work requires it, stay underground and have your meals there. I don't want to waste more words on you. Remember, you're responsible to the Party and the people..."

Sung opened the door and went in. Ting Chih-chin was yawning at his desk as if he had been several days without sleep. His shoulders drooped, his pale face looked haggard and his eyes were puffy. There was no lack of energy, though, in his booming voice. The target of his criticism was a plump man with grizzled hair who was standing there mumbling assent from time to time. Seated on a chair to one side was Chang Chung, a sheet of paper in his hand and a look of exasperation on his face. Seeing that Ting was busy, Sung turned to leave; but Ting quickly got up and warmly invited him in. He dismissed the technician with a few sharp words, then asked Sung what he wanted. At that Chang Chung sprang to his feet.

"Aren't you going to deal with my problem first?" he demanded.

"Comrade Sung Tieh-pao has just come to our mine. Shouldn't we show him special consideration?" With a smile at Chang, Ting gave another yawn and again asked Sung his business.

Sung nodded apologetically to Chang, then explained about the mine car which they wanted.

Ting said: "We'll have to see Chu about this. Since you don't know your way about yet, I'll take you to him." Ignoring Chang,

he started leading the way out. Sung could only smile apologetically again at Chang who was looking even more disgruntled.

Chu Fu-ming, a short cadre in his forties, radiated efficiency. His office was next door but one to Ting's. They found Old Han and Sun already there. As soon as Chu saw Ting he said eagerly:

"Old Ting, they propose opening an inclined passage-way to lead into the main shaft so that, even with the entrance closed, the work can go on at that end. This means that the installation job on the surface and the tunnelling underground can be done simultaneously. I think we should okay this right away. What do you say?"

Old Han put in: "This was Comrade Sung Tieh-pao's idea."

Chu nodded at Sung. Then he turned to Ting. "All right?"

Ting smiled. "You're the expert. I'll back you up whatever you decide, you know that." Then he went off.

"We'll assign this job then..."

Before Chu could finish, Sung cut in: "Assign it to us!"

Han protested: "That won't do. You've just arrived and have all your preparatory work to do. Let No. 3 Company handle this."

Sun grinned at Sung. "So you want to grab this job from us? Nothing doing."

Chu thought it over, then announced, "All right." To Sung he said: "Forty of your men have just gone to the steel plant. You'd better not fight for this job as well." When Sung made no further protest Chu continued: "That's settled then. Any other business, comrades?" Leafing through his files he sighed: "We're up to our necks in work here, so if you don't mind..." Raising his head to see Sung and Sun still there, he asked again, "Do you have other business?"

Sung told him about the mine car condemned to be scrapped.

Chu pushed his files aside at that and stood up. "No, you can't use that mine car," he said firmly. "It's already caused one accident."

Sung and Kuo had in fact learned about this accident that morning. It had happened during work on the downcast shaft when the winding-engine stalled and the dredger attached to the mine car slipped downwards. Sun had acted promptly. By ramming the drum with a log

he had brought the car to a halt, avoiding any injury to the crew and equipment.

"I've heard about the accident," Sung said. "One big cog-wheel is damaged and parts of the car are corroded with rust; but it can be repaired. Can we try it out?"

"Try it out?" Chu looked at him gravely. "This is no laughing matter, comrade. We can't risk our men's lives like that."

Sung answered equally gravely: "Of course, we won't run unnecessary risks. Let us repair it and try it out. We won't use it unless we're sure it's safe."

"That's what you say," retorted Chu. "But suppose you get carried away by enthusiasm? What if an accident happens?"

"We guarantee to keep cool-headed. After we've repaired the car we'll ask you to check it before we use it. How about that?" Sung countered.

"No! That car's only fit for the scrap-heap. We must be scientific. You want me to check it? I know that old crate well enough to tell you right now it won't do. I was against their using it before. It was because they insisted that we nearly had a serious accident."

Although Chu argued so heatedly, Sung remained unconvinced. "We believe in science too," he said. "But the best test is practice. If the car's old and worn out, we can give it a new lease of life. If it caused an accident before, we can find out the reason and solve that problem. You have to let people experiment and test things in practice."

"Any attempt to use that mine car again would be a waste of time," replied Chu stubbornly.

"The skip hoist ordered for the branch shaft hasn't arrived, yet now you forbid them to repair this mine car," put in Sun hotly. "If Comrade Sung hadn't thought out the plan to dig an inclined passage-way leading to the main shaft, work there would be held up too. What's the idea, Comrade Chu? Do we want to dig the tunnel or not?"

"Well, the tunnel..."

Chu broke off as the door swung open to admit Ting again.

"Some difference of opinion, eh?" he asked.

"They want to use that mine car which nearly caused a serious accident, and I said no," explained Chu.

"And what do you two think?" Ting asked Sung and Sun.

Sung explained why he felt they should try out the car.

Ting paced to and fro, then stopped before Chu and said: "Old Chu, I think we should support their proposal. After all, everything is learned through practice. One or two failures don't matter."

"What! Failures don't matter, Old Ting? That shaft reaches two hundred metres below sea-level. A screw dropped from the surface hits the bottom like a bullet. We can't allow them to risk their necks before they even start work," Chu protested.

"Well, they can't just sit and wait. The skip hoist ordered for the branch shaft won't be here for more than a month," Ting reminded him.

"Is that our fault?" Chu shrugged. "I still think..."

Seeing that Chu was about to protest again, Ting asked the two others to wait in his office while he and Chu talked this over.

After Sung and Sun had left, Chu continued: "I can't see that waiting another month or so matters."

Lighting a cigarette, Ting said: "Old Chu, I don't want you to make another blunder. Can't you size up the situation? The Party Central Committee wants to speed up the construction of mines. This tunnel project was decided on by the bureau's Party committee. As I understand it, the emphasis is on speed: that's the crux of the whole matter. But you want to go slow. You're not keeping up with the times. What sort of attitude does this show in relation to our Party's General Line for building socialism? To Party decisions, to our Party leadership? You're not going all out to answer the Party's call but ignoring the wishes of the army representative. Besides, Sun Teh-chang backs Sung, and Sun is the masses' representative at headquarters. The masses' representative is a new product of the cultural revolution. If you don't take his opinion seriously you're cutting yourself off from the masses again, repeating your old mistake under new conditions. All these charges will be brought against you. When that happens how are you going to clear yourself?"

"I never disguise my own views, that's the way I am. I'll take the blame if I make any mistake. After all I have to do what I think right," muttered Chu less truculently.

There was silence for a moment as Ting yawned. Then he said: "They're waiting. We must reach a decision. Let's agree to their trying out the mine car, and back them up. We hope they'll succeed and be able to start work early."

When Ting returned to his office, Sun had gone. Having told Sung the decision about the mine car, he saw that Sung had something on his mind. "What's the matter, comrade?" he asked. "Aren't you satisfied?"

"Quite satisfied," was the answer.

"Come and see me if you have any other problems," Ting urged as he saw Sung out.

Sung was still puzzling over what had happened when he and Sun entered Ting's office a few minutes ago. They had run into Chang Chung on his way out, fuming, with a sheet of paper. Sung asked him cordially:

"Is your problem settled, Company Leader Chang?"

Chang flared up: "How can we compare with you?" We don't have your backing." He strode away with a face as black as thunder.

Sung was wondering what could be at the bottom of this.

4

The same day that the side passage-way to the main shaft was completed, the mine car was repaired and installed above the branch shaft, completing the preparatory work before starting on the tunnel itself. Chen had also returned with his task force, having finished their assignment at the steel plant. Since it was a Sunday, Sung asked Han to show his company round the exhibition of the mine's history.

The exhibition was divided into four sections. The first showed the situation in the Big Leap Forward of 1958 during the mass movement to produce more steel, when they went all out to open the iron mine. The second showed how the provincial bureau, acting on orders from Liu Shao-chi's capitalist-roaders, ordered the mine closed

down, and how the workers fought their decision. The third showed how the head of the provincial bureau changed his tactics, telling the miners to wait for the arrival of some foreign experts; but the workers led by Comrade Shih Kai battled on. The fourth section, still a blank, was to show the big drive now under way with workers coming from all sides to speed up construction. They were waiting for new exploits by the heroic workers at the mine to fill up this section.

Sung's men were deeply moved by the serialized paintings in the first section. These showed how after the discovery of rich iron deposits in the mountain in 1958, workers aided by the local peasants came to build a road through the mountains. These workers slept and had their meals in the open. When the supply of dynamite ran out, they used hammers and steel spikes to smash rocks. There were two youngsters who were new to this job, and when the others would not let them join in they practised welding hammer and spike themselves. The one swinging the hammer dared not hit hard for fear of hurting the one holding the spike; but the latter said: "Go ahead! To answer Chairman Mao's call to open up more mines, to modernize our country's economy, you must hit as hard as you can. I won't complain even if you smash my fingers." Then the lad with the hammer hit hard. When one blow missed the mark and struck the other's hand, making it bleed, he stopped in consternation. "Never mind," urged the other. "To learn at school, we have to pay school fees. Go on. When I give the order, smash hard." He called out: "To build socialism, smash!" The hammer came down hard. "To modernize our economy, smash!" His mate hit hard again. In this way they soon mastered the job. The youngster holding the spike was Sun Teh-chang.

The second section displayed shoulder-poles, crates, picks, wheelbarrows and similar exhibits. Han explained that when the mine had no funds to pay the workers, Shih Kai had urged them not to leave but to find means to feed themselves. Thereupon they helped to lay railroads, transport bricks and tiles, and build housing for other organizations; and with the money so earned they were able to keep themselves and continue sinking shafts. Han pointed out the shoulder-pole used by Shih Kai to carry bricks and told Sung that when

they went out on a job and stayed in peasant families, Shih Kai introduced the working style of the Eighth Route Army, getting his men to sweep the yard and fill the water vats for their hosts before they cooked their own meal every morning; after which they would march to work singing Eighth Route Army songs. So though life was hard, the workers' spirits were high. Not one wanted to leave the mine.

"Now, after more than two years of the cultural revolution, the men have even more go in them," said Han. He added significantly: "But one hidden saboteur could ruin everything." He paused, then shook his fist. "We'll ferret out that scoundrel."

In the third section there was a gouache painting of Chang Chung as he worked alone blasting rocks for eight hours underground. His action was the miners' answer to those capitalist-roaders who had sneered that workers on their own could never open a mine.

This painting set Sung thinking. If Chang Chung had always been such a fine worker, how account for his behaviour now? Chang had started life as a poor cowherd, then worked in several mines where he had displayed his loyalty to the Party and the people and made an excellent showing. What made him so obstructive today? Did Han's hint about sabotage explain Chang Chung's conduct? Looking at the painting again, he was impressed by Chang's fearless, exuberant face. Chang's a fine comrade, he thought. I'm sure he'll come round and fight shoulder to shoulder with us.

The exhibition contained references to Chu Fu-ming and Ting Chih-chin as well.

The reference to Chu was in the second section. Vice-manager of the mine at that time, he had sided with Shih Kai. When the provincial bureau head urged Chu to persuade the workers to go home, he had resolutely refused. "There's iron here, plenty of good ore," he said. "I must do what I think is right."

The reference to Ting was in the third section. When he came to the mine in 1964, they were short of equipment. He got into touch with other organizations and overcame various difficulties to get hold of some good pneumatic drills, which greatly speeded up the work.

All this gave Sung food for thought. As he left the exhibition, he ran into Chang Chung.

"Company Leader Chang!" exclaimed Sung warmly. "We've just been looking at the exhibition and learned a lot from it."

"Don't make fun of us, Company Leader Sung," Chang retorted. "We're like frogs at the bottom of a well, thinking that's the whole world. We managed somehow to get things going here. This exhibition is just to remind us not to forget those hard times. We can't compare with you and the big jobs you've done all over the country."

"We're determined to learn from you and the other veterans here," said Sung. "We must learn from your fine spirit and good working style, so as to do our bit in constructing this mine. We hope you'll help us in future."

Never having met Sung before he came to the mine, Chang had no personal prejudice against him. What he had resented was the major task being assigned to Sung's outfit. Rather abashed by the other man's modesty, he smiled more cordially and said:

"Who am I to help you?" Since Sung looked completely in earnest, he added: "Comrade Ting at headquarters is an old cadre with a high political level. If you have any problems, go to him. He's bound to help you." This reminded him of something and he proposed: "By the way, not far from here there's a place worth visiting. It's tied up with the part Ting played in those early days of revolutionary struggle. If you like, I can take you there." He pointed to the mountain. "It's just by that big pine."

Chang's friendly attitude delighted Sung, especially this offer to guide them to a place where they could learn more about Ting's early career. Leaving behind the other men who wanted to spend more time at the exhibition, he, Kuo and Chen set off with Chang Chung.

They climbed the slope to the big pine tree. Its trunk was more than two metres across, its branches thrust up to the sky. Sung stood there with hidden emotion, reluctant to leave; but when Chang who had gone ahead called him he moved on. When they reached the place where Chang was standing, the three men knew at once what he meant to show them.

There was a hidden cave here the size of a small room hollowed out of the mountain. Chang parted the brambles and lifted a wooden

board which covered the entrance. Beckoning them down a ladder, he lowered the board above them. The cave was quite bright, for light filtered in through some ventilation holes made in the rocks. The walls were lined with planks bearing traces of the paper which had been pasted on to keep out the damp.

Chang announced that this was the place where Ting had hidden dynamite during the War of Resistance Against Japan.

On hearing this, Sung, Kuo and Chen were startled.

Chang took their expression to signify admiration. He went on to explain: "The Japanese had taken over Pingshan Colliery, so Ting led the miners to fight them. They got dynamite from the mine and hid it here. When there was enough, he sent it to the guerrillas in the mountains. At that time..."

Chen opened his mouth to speak, but Sung stopped him with a look.

Chang continued: "The struggle then was really hard. Not to talk about other things, just hollowing out this underground hiding-place in such a deserted spot took plenty of guts."

Chen was bursting to speak, but Sung tugged at his jacket while Kuo smiled at Chang and nodded.

"Ting used to spend the night here all on his own and take the dynamite to the guerrilla base the next day," Chang went on. "If he'd come across a Jap, he would have been done for. But he was an experienced fighter and very alert. He carried out his task successfully every time."

By now Chen could no longer contain himself. But knowing that Sung did not want him to tell the truth — that it was he and Kuo who under Sung's father Sung Chang-keng had actually built the cave — he asked:

"How much dynamite did Comrade Ting carry each time? How did he take it?"

This foxed Chang. Not knowing what lay behind the question, he said: "Several dozen pounds at a time, I suppose. And he had to camouflage the dynamite, of course."

To stop Chen from challenging Chang or blurting out the true story, Kuo intervened:

"Quite a load that, for such a long trip. And camouflage must have made it more complicated." He turned to Chen. "Don't interrupt Comrade Chang. Let him tell us the rest."

Sung nodded his approval.

Why was Chen so excited? Why wouldn't Sung let him speak? Why did Kuo agree with Chang and pull Chen up?

Here are the facts of the case.

Twenty-four years before this, when Kuo and Chen were lads of eighteen, Sung's father Sung Chang-keng had brought them to this mountain, where by digging for a whole week they built this cave in which to hide dynamite. Later, they often helped Old Sung bring dynamite here. Another miner Yao Yu-chuan, now deputy Party secretary of the provincial bureau, sometimes came with them too; but never once had they set eyes on Ting. As for taking the dynamite away, that was not their job. The guerrilla base sent men there, usually with a wheelbarrow. In summer they brought pumpkins in the barrow. Once they reached the cave, they would hollow out the pumpkins and put the dynamite in, then plaster mud over the opening to conceal it. In winter, they generally brought a few goats which they killed here, then hid the dynamite in the goats' bellies. When Old Sung and Yao were unable to get away, they would send Kuo or Chen to make contact with the guerrillas, and this involved a complicated system of secret signs.

Since the account given them by Chang was completely wrong, hot-tempered Chen felt like blurting out the truth to stop Chang from assigning credit where none was due.

Sung had a different idea. Though he had been too young to help build this cave, he knew all about it. So what was behind this story? Had Ting made it up? Or had Chang heard it from some other source? To the best of his knowledge Ting had had no hand in the delivery of the dynamite. What did this mystery mean? Old Han had hinted to him that the situation in the mine was very complex and, naming no names, had implied that some responsible member of headquarters was a dubious character. He wanted to hear Chang tell his story in full in order to unravel the mystery and perhaps get on to the track of the hidden scoundrel Han had hinted at. Sung had no desire

to make Chang Chung look a fool. He could clear up any misunderstanding later; but this way of doing things seemed best for the revolution and for Chang too. If they told Chang the truth now, the man's blind faith in Ting might make him flare up and that would complicate matters. This was why Sung did not want Chen to speak up.

As for Kuo, he was shrewd and observant, swift to size up a situation. It was clear to him from the enthusiastic way Chang talked that Chang must either be closely connected with Ting or at least have a very good opinion of him. Chen was obviously bursting to blurt out the truth, while Sung wanted to tackle the problem in another way. To help Sung silence Chen, he made a show of agreeing with Chang to stop Chen from speaking out.

"Comrade Ting was just twenty-six at that time," Chang continued. "But he was already the leader of the underground Party at the colliery. He pulled off many a brilliant coup and made a big contribution to the revolution."

Sung felt a sudden surge of anger. By sheer will-power he suppressed it. He turned to take a breath of the air coming through the ventilation holes and took a fresh grip on himself. Now what had made him so angry? The recollection of something which had happened here just outside this cave by the big pine tree.

It was during the War of Resistance Against Japan. One day before breakfast, the Party liaison man from the guerrilla base had come to fetch dynamite. After this man had gone, as Chen and young Sung left the cave Kuo came running up. He passed the boy a few sticks of dynamite to stow away in the cave. While the boy was doing this, Kuo told Chen that Sung's father, the head of the underground Party in the coal mine, had been arrested by the Japanese gendarmes. Yao Yu-chuan, another underground Party member, now hiding in a pit, had told Kuo to warn Chen to take cover for a few days. As Kuo and Chen were talking, young Sung came out and spotted a group of men approaching. At once the three of them hid in the cave.

Peeping out through a hole Kuo recognized some of the Japanese soldiers stationed at the mine and a couple of collaborators. They

were pushing forward a man with his hands bound. That man was Sung Chang-keng.

Kuo realized that the enemy, acting on information received from some renegade, had brought Sung Chang-keng here to show them the hiding-place. He knew that nothing would induce Sung to speak; but what if Chen saw the enemy torture his master whom he loved so dearly? He might dash out. And then there was Sung Tieh-pao, still only a child. If he heard his father's voice, he might start crying and disclose their whereabouts.

The Japanese tied Sung Chang-keng to the big pine tree. A Chinese thug, whip in hand, bellowed: "Tell us where the dynamite is hidden. Quick!"

Chen and young Sung heard this and were consternated.

"You're dreaming. You'll move the lake up the mountain sooner than find out the hiding-place from me."

When young Sung recognized his father's voice, he parted his lips to call out. Kuo quickly stopped the boy's mouth, at the same time signing to him not to utter a sound.

Then they heard the crack of whips and the enemy's curses, but not a word did Sung Chang-keng say.

Young Sung's face was stained with tears. Clenching his fists hard, he crouched on the ladder. The lad was worn out after days of cold and fatigue. Now this unexpected calamity struck him senseless. Kuo took the unconscious boy in his arms while Chen, red in the face and looking ready to burst, clawed at his clothing in frenzy. Then they heard the thug snarl:

"If you act dumb, we'll slice you up."

Kuo and Chen sprang to their feet and stepped towards the ladder.

A Japanese soldier barked out an order, then the swine started torturing their prisoner.

Chen could bear it no longer. His eyes brimming with tears, he snatched up an axe and set one foot on the ladder. Kuo, his face wet with tears, still holding the boy, barred the way.

Then they heard Old Sung's resolute voice:

"You beasts in human form, your days are numbered! We shall fight on and we shall win. Nothing you do can stop us. Nothing

you do can intimidate a revolutionary. We'll stand any torture but never betray our cause. We'll give our lives to win the war, to bring forth a new China, a whole brave new world. Long live the Party! Long live Chairman Mao!"

In the sudden silence which fell then, Chen flung back his head and stepped down from the ladder. With clenched teeth, he picked up a clod of earth and crumbled it to dust...

So when Chang Chung told them that Ting had been the leader of the underground, Sung Tieh-pao was enraged by this disparagement of his dead father. He controlled his anger, but it was too much for Chen. Ignoring all his mates' attempts to restrain him, he stamped his foot now and swore: "I'm suffocating!"

Chang Chung assumed that Chen meant the cave was too close. He said: "All right. I'll let in some more air." He mounted the ladder and raised the wooden cover.

Chen heaved a long sigh and with a great effort refrained from saying any more. Chang, however, sensed that something was wrong. "What's the matter?" he asked. "Isn't Comrade Ting a fine example for us?"

Chen's eyebrows shot up. "To hell with him!" he bellowed.

"What's that?" It was Chang's turn to be shocked and angry. "You can't talk like that about a fine old revolutionary."

Chen stepped belligerently forward and shouted:

"It was Sung Chang-keng who built this hiding-place. It was Sung who headed the underground, Sung who died a hero's death under the pine tree. Ting's nothing but an impostor. This is shameful, shameful, shameful!" His outburst took Chang by surprise and left him speechless.

Since Chen had let the cat out of the bag, Sung hastily interposed: "Company Leader Chang, the situation was very complicated, and it all happened a long time ago. There's no need to sort it out now. We can discuss it some other time."

Chang had a hot temper too, but Sung's reasonable attitude made him control himself. "If that's how you feel, all right. Though, mind you, I don't agree with this fellow," he said. "Of course I

shan't mention this to Old Ting; but you newcomers shouldn't believe everything Yao Yu-chuan says either."

Chen was about to protest again when Old Han's head appeared over the entrance to the cave. "So this is where you are," he cried. "Come on up, quick. Old Ting has been looking for you everywhere."

When they climbed up the ladder, they found Ting up there too. He took Sung's hand and said warmly: "So you're the son of Comrade Sung Chang-keng who headed the Party underground at the coal mine. I didn't know until Comrade Yao Yu-chuan told me just now. I did underground work with Old Sung and Old Yao, but I worked in the office while they worked down in the pits. Later a rumour went round that I was the leader of the underground and the one who built this cave. That's entirely wrong. Old Comrade Sung was my very dear friend, of course. Ah, he died a hero's death. The thought of it still wrings my heart today." As Ting spoke, his eyes misted over. "How splendid that his son has grown up to carry on his work. Both Yao and I are delighted to have you here. It's like seeing Old Sung again. Come on. Old Yao has been transferred to our mine, and he's eager to see you all." He turned to Chang Chung. "Comrade Yao wants to see you too. I was afraid you might refuse to go; so while he was talking to Chu I slipped out to find you. Come on." Then he said to Sung: "We must have a good talk later."

Chang was puzzled by this speech of Ting's, but he said nothing. With a final glance at Chen he walked quickly off.

Chen merely grunted as he and Kuo fell into step behind Sung and Ting. They started off together to headquarters.

A wind sprang up. Sung looked up at the sky. Clouds were billowing as if stirred by a giant mixer. The pine tree towered proudly, its branches tossing, ready to brave any storm.

5

The Party secretary of the provincial bureau had come to the mine. A mass meeting was called at which he urged the workers to

boost production, then announced the formal setting up of the iron mine's headquarters. After studying the opinions of the workers, they had decided to appoint Yao Yu-chuan, deputy-secretary of the bureau Party committee, head of the mine administration and its Party leading group with the army representative Yuan Chien as his deputy. New additions to headquarters included Old Han, Sung Tieh-pao and Chang Chung and they, like Sun Teh-chang, were also to remain at their own posts of work but to help with decisions at headquarters. Heads were appointed for the various sections too.

The new Party leading group also comprised a senior cadre in charge of political work, an army representative and Old Han.

These announcements were greeted by tumultuous applause as well as a buzz of comments:

"The leadership at headquarters is much stronger now."

"The bureau committee has hit the nail on the head. Our leadership certainly needed strengthening."

"Why aren't Ting Chih-chin and Chu Fu-ming in the new Party leading group?"

"Chang Chung has been getting a swelled head. It's a good thing he's been asked to join headquarters but not included in the Party's leading group."

"Maybe they don't want too many old cadres in the new Party leading group. So Ting and Chu will have more time to take charge of operations."

The Party secretary of the bureau, Yao and Yuan and Ting and Chu who had headed the provisional headquarters lost no time in going to the various companies to talk over the work. Yao had supper with some old hands in No. 3 Company, and during their meal they discussed the measures to be taken before they started mining ore in spring. Dusk was falling by the time they finished supper, when Yao decided to go on to Sung's company.

The winding mountain road gleamed like a pale belt in the deepening twilight. The green pines and cypresses were shrouded in mist; the mountains behind were hazy. The lamps rigged up for the lumbermen on the mountain glittered like giant stars. The lake was lost

in darkness, except where reflections from the lamps above revealed its whereabouts.

As Yao walked along, he heard someone calling him. He turned and saw Chang Chung coming up with a piece of paper in his hand.

"What's that? Your request for a task?"

"Yes. I was coming to headquarters to find you."

Yao took the paper over to the nearest lamp. Surprised by what he read there he asked: "Did your company discuss this today?"

"No, today we discussed the bureau Party secretary's report. This was written several days ago. I think there's more reason now to hand it in." Chang's face was grimly set.

No. 1 Company had asked for the task of driving the main tunnel, which they guaranteed to finish on time.

Yao was taken aback. "What's in your mind now, Comrade Chang Chung?" he asked.

"We want to play our part in the drive to get the mine into operation!" Chang threw his head back half defiantly, for he suspected Yao of backing Sung.

"I've no doubt that if this task were assigned to you your company could carry it out." Yao looked intently at Chang. "But why propose this after the decision has been made? What's your motive? Let's get this straight."

"Seems to me our veteran miners here are quite capable of doing the job ourselves without roping in outsiders. I wrote this request hoping you'd reconsider this. The workers here have weathered plenty of storms. They're not weaklings but seasoned fighters."

Yao realized that this was a serious problem. Making Chang sit down with him on a rock, he said: "I know you speak your mind. Just tell me everything that's worrying you." He offered Chang a cigarette and lit one himself. "Go on. Out with it. We are both Party members. We can be frank. No need to keep anything back."

Chang took a puff at his cigarette. "What's worrying me is very simple," he said. "Getting Sung Tieh-pao's team here to open the main tunnel was a slap in the face for our own veteran workers. It casts a slur on our fine fighting record. I'm not trying to cut a dash,

I just want a fair deal for our men here with their glorious history of struggle."

"Is this your idea?" asked Yao. "Or do many of your men think that way?"

"A lot of them feel as I do, only they dare not speak out," replied Chang frankly.

"This request is written in the name of your whole company. Were all your veteran workers in favour of it?"

"Of course they were. With the basic idea at least."

Yao felt that no time should be lost in solving this problem. He did not believe that all the old workers in No. 1 Company agreed with Chang's estimate of their past record or with trying to snatch another company's assignment on the strength of that record. There must be more behind this. Actually, it would be easy to refute Chang: he need only point out that although bringing Sung's company here had been his idea, he had had nothing to do with the work's assignment. That had been fixed by the provisional headquarters. However, Yao was too experienced to handle the matter this way; for although it would clear up a misunderstanding it would not solve Chang's ideological problem. Yao decided to rely on the masses to unravel this mystery and straighten out Chang's thinking. Postponing his visit to Sung's company he said:

"The problem you've raised is extremely important, Old Chang. I'd like to hear the views of your veteran workers. Let's go and find them."

So Chang took Yao back with him to his company.

The men of No. 1 Company were holding a meeting to discuss various problems in the iron mine. Some were problems concerning work, others involved class struggle and the struggle between two lines. The meeting was very lively and informal with everyone chipping in to supplement or refute what the speakers said. Yao and Chang, entering the packed room unnoticed, squatted quietly down in one corner.

"Listen, mates!" cried a middle-aged miner. "How is it that when things were toughest and we had no machinery, we were still able to sink a vertical shaft? How is it that when those capitalist-

readers kept back our pay, we still managed to carry on? It's because we were clear in our minds. When Comrade Shih Kai gave us a lead and we worked according to Chairman Mao's instructions, we weren't afraid of anything and we all pulled together. That's how we cleared so many hurdles. But now all sorts of unpleasantness has cropped up. When Sung Tieh-pao's company arrived, we wouldn't even give them our living quarters. Call this pulling together? When they were assigned the tunnel, we should have let them have the big skip hoist which we took to the downcast shaft. We shouldn't mind roughing it ourselves to make work easier for others."

"That's not the way I see it," another said. "When the skip hoist was taken our company leader was thinking of speeding up the work, and it was agreed to by the management. If we give it back now, can we get the job done on time?"

A youngster put in: "Even if we dismantle the skip hoist they won't take it, so we needn't argue about that. What worries me is something else. I think our company leader's getting too proud. This is very bad for the work. He keeps harping on our mine's glorious record in the past. I haven't been here long, so I've no share in that glory. But what's the use of harping on the past? We should continue making revolution. Better not have a fine record, I say, if it makes you swell-headed."

Hearing this, Chang was annoyed. But with Yao beside him he could not blow his top. He blamed himself for not having stayed to preside over this meeting, which had now got out of hand.

"I'd like to add something to that." An old worker rose to his feet stubbing out his cigarette. "I learned a lot from this morning's report by the bureau Party secretary and this afternoon's discussion. Chairman Mao has called on us to open more mines. Well, Chang Chung's made a contribution to that, he's done good work for the Party and the state. All this is to his credit. The leadership knows it too; that's why he's back at headquarters again. But I think bit by bit he's changed. He appears to care for the work, but his mind's not really on it..."

The first part of this speech struck Chang as showing sound judgement. The concluding remark, however, made him want to

explode. He had been leading a crew working underground and they had recently broken two records running. How could anyone say that his mind was not on his work? He was preparing to get up and protest when Yao cast him a warning glance.

Meanwhile the old worker continued: "Of course we mustn't criticize anyone unless we're sure of our facts. Well, I'll tell you some of my evidence. First, before the provisional headquarters was set up, when Old Chang was in charge of operations, he changed all our company's old drills for new ones, giving the old ones to other companies. Was this trying to speed up operations for the whole mine?"

Chang thought: That's splitting hairs. I *was* thinking of the whole mine. By setting the pace, we can spur the others on. What's wrong with that?

"Secondly, when Comrade Chu was in charge of operations in the provisional headquarters, Chang refused to take orders from him and always consulted Comrade Ting instead. Why?"

Chang thought: Why not? Ting's always more correct.

"And thirdly, a few days ago he wanted our company to write a request for the task of driving the tunnel. I told him that the assignation of work was up to the leadership and that job would probably go to the newly arrived company under Sung Tieh-pao, because we've heard that his men are really first-rate. We shouldn't try to grab the job from them. Then Old Chang fumed at me: 'Don't you want us to keep up our splendid record?' And he took the request to Ting."

Another old worker stood up to challenge this. "What's wrong with asking for hard jobs?" he demanded. "I think Old Chang was right. He always volunteers for the difficult tasks. That's a fine working style. It's not as if the work had actually been assigned..."

A young worker sprang to his feet. "I wrote out that request for Comrade Chang," he cried. "And he knew at the time that the job was going to Sung's company."

This set the whole meeting in an uproar. Some could not believe it of Chang. Others commented indignantly:

"Trying to outsmart another company!"

"Must he always be top dog?"

Remarks of this kind were being bandied about when another youngster rose and announced loudly: "I can supply another important fact. At supper-time our company leader sent for me. He said since I'd been to school and studied theory he wanted me to read through the request and correct any mistakes in it, because he was going to take it to Party Secretary Yao."

This added fuel to the fire.

"What sort of behaviour is this?" one man demanded. "Instead of giving a good lead and getting us all to think up ways to ensure that the mine's producing by spring, all he thinks of is cutting a dash."

"In fact, this way, he's spoiling our past record."

"We must fetch him back. Don't let him hand in that request."

By now Chang was completely flustered. As the men were still making angry and scathing comments, Yao squeezed his way forward through the crowd and called: "Comrades! I've a few words to say too."

Yao's unexpected appearance caused a sudden hush. Then the workers clapped vigorously.

Yao began: "You've all spoken well, keeping in mind the socialist line. As you say, Comrade Chang Chung made a valuable contribution to getting this mine going. He's a good comrade. But our bureau Party committee didn't help him enough; so now that the situation's changed he appears to be lagging behind. We all agree that this mine has a glorious history, and Chang had a good fighting record in the past. Why do we say that? Because our struggle was to defend Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. We must carry on that magnificent tradition and make new contributions; but the only way to do this is by keeping firmly to the Chairman's line. There is no other way. Comrade Chang Chung works hard, that's true; but up against this new situation he sometimes deviates from the correct line, sometimes even goes against it. This is why you comrades are so worried for him. What I want to say now is this. We in the Party leading group will certainly pay careful attention to the suggestions you comrades have made. We shall help Comrade Chang Chung to make a better study of the works of Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao,

so that he can improve his understanding of the new situation and go forward together with you all."

Though Yao had not spoken at length, the workers felt he had gone to the heart of the problem and appreciated his modest attitude. They were loud in their applause.

Then they resumed discussion of the work.

With very mixed feelings Chang went with Yao to his office, where his first act was to tear up the request.

"What are you doing?" asked Yao.

"Fire away," said Chang glumly. "Whatever you say, I can take it."

Instead of criticizing him, Yao looked at Chang with concern. "Think of the position you're in now, Comrade Chang Chung," he said. "The leadership thinks highly of you and the masses trust you, but some people may be trying to make use of you too. You must make a more serious study of Marxist-Leninist works and of Chairman Mao's teachings, so as to improve your judgement. Simple class feeling isn't enough in the battle we're fighting today."

Chang scowled. "What do you mean by saying some people may be trying to make use of me? I can't accept that. Are you implying that I've been utilized by some class enemy? The only man I'm really close to is Comrade Ting. Don't tell me he's an enemy! I'm not that gullible. I know Ting. He's all right."

Unwilling to pursue this subject, Yao asked: "Do you agree with what the workers said just now?"

"With some of their views, not all. I agree in the main but not on every point." Chang drew on his cigarette before going on: "I still think our company is good enough to drive the tunnel. Weren't you being rather prejudiced and showing favouritism when you gave that job to Sung's outfit? It's not that I don't trust them. Still I have my doubts."

"I may as well tell you," said Yao, "I wasn't the one who gave that job to Sung's company; it was assigned by the provisional headquarters. We can clear up this misunderstanding at least."

As Chang gaped at him in surprise, Yao continued: "If your company's good enough for the job, that's fine. You can make time to

help Sung's men and pass on your skill, so that they finish the tunnel ahead of time. I've some other work in mind for your company. You'll have something to tackle, don't worry."

"Pass on our skill?" Chang muttered. "If I do that, more people will accuse me of pride."

"Why let that worry you? I'm not asking you to show off but to act the way Chairman Mao wants, helping each other and going ahead together. When you go there, just tell them I sent you to learn from them. If they have strong points, learn them. If they have shortcomings, give them some help." Yao had a dual purpose in giving this advice. Apart from encouraging Chang, he wanted him to see how Sung's company tackled a job. This should help to overcome his arrogance.

It was time for Yao to leave now, and Chang saw him back. As he returned to his own quarters he was wondering: Why is Yao Yu-chuan so different from what I imagined?

It was very late at night by the time Yao entered his office, but he found Sung waiting there. "Anything the matter?" he asked.

Sung and Yao were no strangers. They had first met in a tungsten mine when Sung was still a youngster. He had heard that some leading cadre was coming to see him, but not knowing when this man would turn up he went down the shaft as usual. The Soviet pneumatic drill which he was using was heavy and cumbersome. While drilling holes for blasting it suddenly jammed. Young Sung was wondering what to do when someone stepped up behind him, took the drill, and gave it a slap which started it working again. "This is the way to use it, Tieh-pao," said the man, and gave him a demonstration. Sung was surprised that this stranger knew his name. Since the man was dressed like a miner, he assumed he must be an old worker. But the head of the mine came up to him and whispered that this was Yao Yu-chuan, his superior.

The name Yao Yu-chuan was familiar to young Sung. He had heard it mentioned many times by his older mates Yen Lao-hsiang, Kuo Ping-yi and Chen Kuang-yao. Knowing that Yao had led the underground Party group in the coal mine with his father, Sung stepped forward and called him "Uncle".

Yao switched off the drill and looked at him searchingly. "So you've grown up." He seemed very pleased and stirred. Then, Old Yen coming along, Yao shook him by the shoulders exclaiming: "Still fit, eh, old mate?"

"Sure," said Yen. "I'll work another fifteen years yet."

Then Kuo and Chen came up too. The latter let out a whoop and throwing both arms round Yao lifted him off his feet. Yao punched Chen's broad shoulders fondly. "You crazy fellow, still strong as a bear!" he joked. "Are you married yet?"

Flushing, Chen set him down while Yen replied: "Yes, he is. And so is Young Kuo, just back from his honeymoon."

Yao turned to Kuo. "You imp, why didn't you let me know?"

Kuo retorted: "I didn't know where you were, otherwise I'd have stuffed you with our wedding sweets."

That night Yao stayed in Old Yen's place, sharing a bed with young Sung. Kuo and Chen came in too and they chatted for most of the night. From their conversation young Sung learned more about his father's capture by the enemy.

That had been in the autumn of 1944. Sung Chang-keng and Yao were both underground Party members while Yen, Kuo and Chen although not in the Party were helping the resistance. One day Chen was away from the mine. At the end of the shift Sung, Yen and Kuo came up together in the cage, but it was too crowded for Yao to come up that trip. When the cage reached the top, Sung was the first to get out. He had barely rounded the corner when some Japanese soldiers with mounted bayonets converged on him. To warn the others, Sung shouted: "What do you want me for? Why are you guarding the entrance?"

On hearing this Old Yen turned back, but the foreman stopped him, saying: "Now that you're up you can't go down again." Yen signalled to Kuo who was still in the cage, and Kuo refused to come out. He announced that he wanted to work another shift and that he had left his lantern down in the shaft. "Damn you!" the foreman swore. "I'll come down to see that you don't try any tricks."

As the cage descended again, Kuo shouted to the men waiting below: "What's the rush? There's no hurry." They took the hint

and hemmed the foreman in so that he could only yell with impotent fury. Kuo seized this chance to tell Yao what had happened, and Yao did not go up. He hid himself in the pit for nearly a month and the enemy failed to find him, despite frequent searches. . . .

When Yao left the tungsten mine, he gave young Sung a set of Chairman Mao's works and urged him to study them well. The revolution was going on, he must follow in his father's steps and do his bit for their socialist motherland.

Not long ago they had met for a second time. That was when Sung went to the provincial bureau to see about his transfer here. Yao gave him a warm welcome and they discussed the cultural revolution, the history of class struggle, the struggle between two lines in the iron mine and the difficulties Sung might encounter there. As he was leaving Yao warned him:

"Tieh-pao, the situation at this mine is complex. Your job isn't going to be easy. Keep the class struggle in mind. When problems crop up, analyse them carefully and always rely on the masses. I'm sure this coming struggle will steel you further. . . ."

Today Sung was seeing Yao for the third time. He told the new Party secretary: "I want to report on certain happenings here."

"All right. Go ahead." Yao moved a chair up for Sung, then took out a pen and notebook.

Sung said: "Our company has reviewed the various problems in our work and we have a proposal. To get the underground workings ready is crucial if we want to have the mine in operation by spring. We must break the old rule of waiting till the tunnel is finished before starting on the stopes. If we sink a shaft to where the stopes will be and start work there at once, as soon as the tunnel's completed the mining can start."

Yao listened quietly but with inward excitement. Apart from the difficulties involved in driving the tunnel, the underground workings also presented a problem which Chu had so far been unable to solve. Yao had been meaning to get the workers to discuss this the next day. The bureau had fixed spring as the time for starting actual mining operations, without naming any specific date, because the geological faulting would make driving the tunnel a tricky job, and



because preparing the stopes would also take time. Now Sung in a few words had solved the problem. Of course, this was the result of the collective wisdom of Sung's whole company, including its young leader. Yao did not commend them, however, thinking: We must make strict demands on Sung to spur him on. Too much praise might go to his head. So he said simply:

"Good. That's a valuable suggestion. You can put it forward again tomorrow at the management's meeting, when we'll go into it more thoroughly."

Then Sung described some of the odd things which had happened since their arrival. For instance, the provisional headquarters had transferred Old Yen to the store-room for dynamite; and Chang Chung had told them that it was Ting who had hidden dynamite in the cave near the big pine, and that Ting had often passed the night there alone....

Yao pricked up his ears at this. After careful thought he told Sung not to speak of this to any of the people concerned. They must investigate further.

Not until the small hours did Yao see Sung off. He stood watching till Sung was swallowed up in the darkness, then went back to his desk to prepare for the day's work.

6

Creaking and groaning, the mine car slowly carried Chang Chung down to the bottom of the branch shaft, two hundred metres below sea-level. As Chang made his way along the tunnel, he noticed a number of changes. Though work on the tunnel had not yet been resumed, a line of red paint on the dripping wall already marked the height it was to be. Overhead hung a plumb-line to ensure that the tunnel be driven straight. Further on was an old sump which had been drained. Water dripping from the rocks was gathering there again now. Near the entrance he found two large cisterns, each about a hundred square metres in size and four or five metres deep. The lamplight showed clearly that these had been blasted out of the rock, yet the sides were as smooth as if they had been polished,

with no jagged protuberances. Making such large, trim cisterns was no easy matter. Chang realized that it called for great skill in blasting as well as in calculation.

Soon he reached the end of an inclined shaft forty metres deep leading to a working-place 160 metres below sea-level. The ore there would be lowered through the inclined shaft to be hauled away in the mine car of the tunnel. This inclined shaft had been completed before the arrival of Sung's company, but they had rigged up another ladder there made of steel cables and bars. It took Chang a few minutes to figure out the reason for this. Then he understood that when work on the tunnel was resumed they might strike underground water. They had blasted the big cisterns and prepared the ladder ready for this eventuality. In case of flooding this ladder would come in useful. Chang had to admit that Sung thought of everything. His company's preparations were really thorough.

When Chang reached the working-place, he found Sung's men hard at work. An air-pump was scattering dust and debris. Pneumatic drills were roaring. The work-face seemed shrouded in mist — water sprayed from the drills. In the lamplight the miners appeared to be riding on clouds.

Carrying his drill, Chang went forward meaning to join in the drilling and then chat with the workers. But soon he had to stop. From a distance he had seen only misty shadows. From close at hand he observed that there were a dozen drills operating together on the small work-face: one row of men in front, another behind, and a third lot higher up. Those behind operated their drills over the heads, past the elbows or under the legs of those in front, not leaving a single gap.

Since it was impossible to join in, Chang put down his drill and watched. The crew of twelve worked intently, without a word. One youngster squatting on the ground had his face splashed with water from another drill; but he did not even turn his head away, just closing the eye affected and going on drilling. Chang thought: No wonder Yao sent for this outfit. I've never seen anything like it.

Rows of holes were drilled in swift succession. Each man as he finished switched off his drill and went to fetch dynamite. Chang

moved back to watch the blasting. The mist on the work-face gradually cleared. Then all the holes were ready. Four old hands swiftly put in the charges; another four examined the drills, oiled them and fitted new bits to the rods; another four got ready carts for hauling off the debris. No one was idle. Everything went like clockwork. There was no need for any orders. The crew's teamwork was superb.

The blasting itself was a skilled job. Four to six sticks of dynamite, depending on the length of the charge and the hardness of the rock, were rammed in place. After the insertion of the last charge, to which a detonator was attached, the hole was sealed with mud, leaving only the fuse showing. The more air-tight the sealing, the more powerful the blast. There were twenty-four fuses, and the order in which these were detonated had to be determined by the length of each.

When all the charges were in place, two men stayed to light the fuses while the rest of the crew took their tools round a bend in the passage. Three minutes later the other two joined them there. Another three minutes and there was a muffled explosion. The blast set them staggering. Blast followed blast, sometimes several exploding together. Smoke billowed out through the passage.

After all twenty-four charges had exploded, a young worker with an air-pump in one hand, a hose in the other, started forward.

"Wait!" Chang heard a familiar voice call. "The way those rocks fell didn't sound normal. It's risky. Let me go." Before the youngster had time to protest, the other had grabbed the air-pump and hose and dashed forward. Chang could not see this man for the smoke, but he recognized his voice. It was Sung Tieh-pao.

Sung had gone to drive away the fumes and clear off any hanging rocks. Intent on this task, he leaned against the wall and trained his air-pump and hose on the work-face. Gradually the smoke thinned out sufficiently for him to see large segments of broken rock. He looked up at the ceiling and turned his hose on some loosened rocks up there. From time to time he put down the hose and knocked down overhanging stones with a long rod.

As Sung was examining one danger spot, a rock weighing a good two tons started hurtling down from above. If it struck him, he would be crushed to death. Since there was no other shelter, quick as

thought Sung leapt into the old sump. Crash! The rock smashed down smack over the sump, sending sparks flying with a roar which reverberated through the passage.

The men waiting round the corner were appalled. It sounded as if the whole roof had collapsed. They rushed forward, regardless of danger, calling Sung's name.

Little by little, the smoke cleared. At top speed they removed the fallen rocks and debris. There was no sign of Sung. Again and again they shouted his name, but the only answer was the mocking echo rebounding from the walls. The youngster whose place Sung had taken burst into tears as he searched the rocks in vain. Others advised him to give up, yet their own faces were equally desperate. Finally they decided that Sung must be in the sump pinned under the big rock. They clustered around it, frantically calling his name, but still there was no answer. Tears had gathered in the eyes of the older men, while the younger workers were unashamedly sobbing.

The air-pump dropped on the ground was still chugging away. The hose lying on the rocks was still spurting water. More and more water was gathering in the sump. Chang thought back to the time when Sung's company had arrived here, how he had accused them of having powerful backers, what Yao had told him, and how he had come today to pass on some of his skill to Sung's company. . . . A lump came into his throat and in a hoarse voice he too started calling Sung. Only then did the other men wake up to his presence.

"Is that Company Leader Chang?" asked a faint voice from under the boulder. At this the men cheered, their faces lit up with joy. The youngsters started leaping in delight. Apparently Sung had merely been stunned. When he came to, his ears were still deafened by the blast. The first thing he heard after recovering his hearing was Chang's booming voice.

At once they tried to extricate Sung, but the rock was too heavy to be moved. The youngsters were frantic. Chang grabbed hold of a pneumatic drill and quickly drilled a hole in the side of the rock, then picked up Sung's long rod to use as a lever. Four other men joined him to help prize up the rock. But they failed to budge it, only bending the rod. Another rod was fetched and the whole crew

pitched in, straining with their hands and shoulders, or lying flat with their feet clamped against the wall. When Chang gave the word, all heaved together. This time they made an opening the size of a man's fist between rock and sump. Hard as they strained, this was the best they could do.

"I'm not hurt, don't worry," called Sung. "Get on with the job. When you're through you can fetch some more crowbars."

Nobody would hear of this, of course. They were determined to get Sung out at once.

Chang and another worker dashed off and fairly flew back to the surface. Chang raced to the store-room, grabbed half a dozen rods and a working outfit, then descended the shaft again, the other man, holding more tools, at his heels.

"Here are more crowbars!" yelled Chang.

The workers flocked round. Chang picked one of the stoutest bars and inserted it in the gap. The others followed suit. This time, when they heaved together, they shifted the boulder further to the left.

The water was steadily rising in the sump. Sung trapped there in a squatting position could barely keep his head above water. As Chang pulled him out and handed him the dry outfit, Sung grasped his hand and thanked him warmly.

Now all gathered round Sung talking at the top of their voices.

"That was a near thing!"

"Yes. If not for the sump..."

"Even without the sump I'd have been all right," cut in Sung. Seeing their bewilderment he explained: "Some people say no other job is as dangerous as mining. Actually, that's not the case. Just ask Old Kuo here — he knows. I learned the ropes from him. Whether work's dangerous or not depends on how well you know your job and what precautions you take. Some work may not be really dangerous, yet ignorance or carelessness can lead to accidents. Take this big overhead rock for instance. As soon as I came I had a good look round to see what hazards there were and how to avoid them. With the sump there, I was not afraid even if the roof caved in. If there hadn't been that sump, I'd have kept clear of that over-

hanging rock and tackled it some other way. Of course, that would have been more troublesome."

As soon as Sung had changed into dry clothes, he picked up the air-pump and hose to get back to work. Chang took over from him saying: "Old Yao told me to come and learn from you. Well, I've learned a good lesson today. Now I need some practice." Although Sung protested, Chang took his place with the crew. And at noon he had his meal with them by the mouth of the shaft. Then they went back to work. In one shift they completed four blasting operations and excavated 6.4 metres of tunnel. In the process, Chang picked up a good many tips; while in the afternoon, when a patch of hard rock kept jamming their drills, Chang passed on his experience in dealing with this situation. So Sung's men learned something useful from Chang too.

When Chen Kuang-yao arrived with another crew for the next shift, he was astounded to find Chang in the tunnel.

"Company Leader Chang, are you here to take a look at the tunnel?" he asked belligerently. "Are your men going to take the job over from us?"

Sung gave Chen a nudge. "What way is that to talk? Comrade Chang has been giving us tremendous help."

"Yes?" said Chen. "Who knows what's really in his mind?"

Normally this would have set Chang raging. Today, however, he simply smiled and said nothing.

Young Lu, who had overheard Chen's remarks, said gravely: "Master Chen, today let me give you some ideological help for a change. No investigation, no right to speak. Isn't that so?"

At last it dawned on Chen that things had changed. He scratched his stubbled chin and grunted with a sidelong glance at Chang, now leaving with Sung. He then pulled a face at Young Lu to show that he accepted the criticism. After that, taking up a drill, he led the others to launch an attack on the rocks.

Chen's way of working was quite different from Sung's. The more noise he could make the better he felt, the more energy he seemed to have. When in high spirits he would bellow out some opera tune using words he had made up himself, such as "Whirl faster, my fine

drill!..." Nobody could join in these songs of his because he sang completely out of tune, repeating the same line over and over again. Now, judging by the fact that Chang had not flared up and that Sung and Young Lu had ticked him off, Chen guessed that Chang had changed his attitude. Good! So he kept on roaring: "Whirl faster, my fine drill!..."

Young Lu asked: "Can't you make up another line, Master Chen? Why keep repeating the same one?"

"When I'm working I have no time to make up new songs. When I'm not working I forget about it. This one line is enough for me." Then he bellowed at the top of his voice: "Comrades, I have a proposal. Company Leader Chang is working better now with our Tieh-pao. To celebrate, let's break another record. How about it?"

The men roared their approval.

When Sung reached the surface he started shivering. Chang went with him to the dressing-room to put on more clothes, after which they set off to headquarters for a meeting. And on the way they chatted like old friends.

Chang disliked using formal titles and had stopped addressing Sung as "company leader". He said: "Old Sung, I want to send a few men from our company to learn from you, from your method of work as well as from your spirit. Just take the job of clearing up after blasting: it takes us half an hour to dispel the smoke and clear away the debris, but you did it in five minutes." Then he told Sung of his conversation with Yao and how he had thought No. 1 Company was tops but now realized they were a long way behind Sung's outfit. He spoke frankly, from his heart.

"Don't just talk about our good points, Old Chang," urged Sung. "Point out our weaknesses too."

"I haven't noticed any yet," replied Chang. "If I do, I'll let you know. At the meeting today I want to propose that all the companies send some of their best men to the tunnel to learn from you. If we get all our crews as well-trained as yours, we'll have the mine working by spring — no doubt about it."

On the Threshing Ground (coloured woodcut) by Chao Hsiao-mo ►



"The set-up here seems rather complicated," rejoined Sung soberly. "Apart from improving our technical skill, we must pay attention to the class struggle and the struggle between two lines."

Remembering what Yao had said to him, Chang nodded.

Chang had decided to dismantle the skip hoist and take it back to the branch shaft, but Sung would not hear of this. He explained that Yao had sent someone to the factory to expedite the dispatch of another hoist, and he reckoned it should arrive soon. To dismantle the old one and then install it again would simply waste time in the long run. Only then did Chang give up.

Sung was very pleased to be getting to know Chang better and felt a respect for his sterling qualities. He had expected this hot-headed company leader to gun for him. But that cave-in in the tunnel had cleared up the misunderstanding between them, sweeping aside what could have proved an obstacle to the work. However, if Chang was being used by someone, it would probably take time for him to realize this and turn his gun on that hidden enemy. For it seemed to Sung that under normal conditions Chang could distinguish between right and wrong, but that in a complicated situation he might be slow to wake up to the truth.

(to be continued)

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Li Lung-yun

Green Tents

The first green tent has been pitched in the desert. . . .

You desert so vast!
Who says your frozen wastes
Are barred to spring,
Doomed to eternal winter,
As sunk in sleep
You dream away the centuries?

See! Banners stream
Across the storm-racked sky;
The steps of pioneers
Shatter the desert's dreams
And tents dot the snow
Like green stars in a silver sea.

The first curl of cooking smoke
Dispels the cold of ages;
The crackle of campfires, blazing,
Breaks the age-old silence of the wilderness.

These green tents imbued
With the youth and aspirations of fighting men
Are scattered like seeds
Across the rolling desert.

Come back again in summer —
Crops, emerald green, will stretch to the horizon.
Come back again in autumn —
Red sorghum will border rippling golden wheat.

Come back tomorrow
And see our tall rampart of green
Soon, soon to turn
Into a new steel bastion for our land!



Li Lung-yun

The Caravan

Some youngsters in the wasteland reclamation corps attached
a trailer to a tractor and christened this their "caravan".

The trailer is fitted with poles
And a canvas awning;
Planks serve as a bed,
The trailer's sides as windows.

Wind blows — what more refreshing?
What illumination brighter than the lightning?
Their good companion, this small caravan
Is canteen, hostel, repair shop all in one.

In the steps of pioneers
The tractor penetrates the veil of moonlight,

Drawing the caravan behind
Over the whole wide wasteland.

At dusk as the sun sinks west,
Smoke drifts up from the caravan
Where a savoury meal is cooking:
Rice, shallots and paprika sauce.

At night the sky glitters with stars
And an oil lamp glimmers in the caravan
While the stirring strains of a flute
Draw hosts of stars to the window.

The trail they blaze is stretching
Further and further towards the distant horizon,
Surmounting every obstacle and danger;
And where the caravan has passed
There will spring up a sea of golden wheat.



Chun Chan

Back from Ploughing at Night

The wind has dropped,
The night is still,
Their petrol tanks are nearly dry,
But our keen tractor-drivers
Are reluctant to call it a day.
The moon hanging before their windscreens
Has bathed the road in silver,
Stars on the distant hill-tops
Smile their greetings.
After a hard day's work
The fighters are ready to drop,
But the sight of well-ploughed acres
Warms their hearts.

Late at night
When the moon has set
They come back to camp
And not stopping to shake
The dew from their clothes
First groom their "iron oxen".
Their minds on tomorrow's battle,
Fully dressed they lie down
Under sheepskin overcoats
And at once are heartily snoring —
So sweet are our fighters' dreams.



Kuo Hsiao-lin

The Lumbermen

The north wind howls,
Snow whirls,
Ice-packs block the river,
Silver cloaks the mountains.

Eyebrows and lashes are frosted,
Breath forms white vapour;
Saws sear at a touch
And rip the skin from our hands.

Though hell itself freeze over,
Our axes never falter;
Above the howling wind
Our saws rasp on.

Sweat drenches our backs
But with spring in every heart
We are drunk with melted snow,
So fair, so glorious is our borderland.

Our shock teams, bolder than tigers,
Fell timber deep in the mountains;
Our shouts set the welkin ringing,
Loud as spring thunder.

Sky-kissing poplars
Wreathed with clouds
Fall with silver birches
In a spray of snowflakes.

Grab hooks clatter
As huge trees are hauled away;
Sorted by size
The logs fall into line.

Are beams needed for building?
We have them.
Sleepers for railways?
We can supply them.

Who says winter scenes are bleak?
We lumbermen are painting a new landscape:
Red flags floating in the wind
Bring life and colour to this border region.

Dear motherland, lovely
With ten thousand blossoms,
The lumber we fell for you
Makes fresh red flowers burst into bloom!



Egg Production Soars (coloured woodcut)
by Liu Ying-hai and Chao Jen ►



Chou Miao

The Peasant Cadre

The longer the drought lasted, the harder the commune members fought it. Although there had not been a good soaking rain for months, the crops on the plain were still an enchanting green and growing steadily under the blazing sun. The air was suffocatingly hot.

A middle-aged stalwart man, kit-bag slung over one shoulder, wearing a straw hat, his white shirt soaked with sweat, walked along a dirt path flanked by green crops where the chugging of pumps and squeaking of windlasses drowned out the chirr of the insects. Here and there the path was intersected by ditches. At one of these he halted to plug a hole through which water was running out and then stepped into a sorghum field to examine the young shoots. When he reached some commune members resting at one end of the field he chatted with them about the fight against drought and took a turn at the windlass. Wherever he went he was greeted with smiles and the work went with a swing. For all he said and did showed that he was a seasoned cadre and among themselves people referred to him as a "real peasant cadre".

From his accent, which was not the local one, the commune members judged he was from the county; so naturally they kept asking him about the new county Party secretary Liang.

This new secretary had been transferred from another county recently just at a critical time when the commune members were beginning to fight the drought. He went straight to Nanhsiang, the commune hardest hit by drought, where the irrigation facilities were poor, the young corn was wilting and some of the local people had lost heart. Picking up a carrying pole and a pair of buckets, Secretary Liang encouraged them by saying: "Since the sky won't give us any rain, let's fetch water ourselves to irrigate the fields!"

Soon the news that Party Secretary Liang had taken the lead in carrying water to the fields and that he could race many younger men spread far and wide through the county. Secretary Liang battled day and night, covered with mud and soaked with sweat, his shoulders rubbed raw from the carrying pole. Whether in the fields, in the ditches or at the wells, he would spur the commune members on, telling them about the excellent revolutionary situation both at home and abroad. The fight against the drought went extremely well at Nanhsiang Commune and set a fine example for the entire district.

So Secretary Liang's fame had spread and the commune members felt as close to him as if he were the Party secretary of their own production brigade. They asked anyone who came from Nanhsiang for news about him and the arrival of a cadre from the county only gave them the chance to ask more questions. However, instead of satisfying their curiosity about Secretary Liang, the peasant cadre only told them how heroically the people in other parts of the county were combating the drought and how well their crops were growing. This boosted the morale of all who heard him.

The peasant cadre continued on his way. Coming to a big ditch crossing the path he stopped, untied a towel from his kit-bag and wiped the perspiration from his face. Then he went across a field, pushing his way through the man-high corn stalks towards a humming water-wheel.

Beyond the corn lay a large plot covered with green water-melons, in the centre of which there was a well beside a big willow tree.

A sorrel horse, its coat glossy as red silk in the sunshine, was turning a wheel to pump water from the well. The sturdy melon vines crept all over the soil and among the large leaves there were many tender young melons. An old man was busy hoeing and pruning the vines. As the peasant cadre watched, admiring his skill, the old man straightened up and called out a cheerful greeting.

The peasant cadre smiled and stepped forward. While talking with the old peasant he squatted down by a ditch to wash his sweaty towel.

"Don't wash your face there! This water's for the melons, comrade." This high-pitched order came from south of the willow.

The peasant cadre stood up, his towel in his hands, and saw a girl of sixteen or seventeen coming towards the melon plot. Bare-footed, her trouser legs rolled up to the knee, she carried a spade on her shoulder. Her eyes sparkled like stars in the clear night sky.

"Melons are delicate plants," she explained, drawing nearer. "They can't stand dirty water, don't you know that?"

"Don't jump on people like that, lass," the old man put in. "It won't matter if this comrade just washes his face."

"Of course it matters. These—" the girl swung her spade to indicate the melons, "—are collective property."

The peasant cadre gave an apologetic smile. "There's obviously lots I don't know about watering melons. Well, I won't wash here then." Skirting the horse he made for the pipe from which water was running, intending to take a drink. But before he reached it the girl ran over and with a shout halted the horse. At once the water stopped flowing. The peasant cadre raised his head in amazement. Holding the horse's bridle she turned to look back with a smile.

Walking towards them from the melon plot the old man began to laugh heartily. "Comrade," he said, "this barefoot doctor of ours doesn't allow anyone to drink water that hasn't been boiled." He picked up a teapot from under the willow tree and brought it over.

Not standing on ceremony the peasant cadre took the teapot and quenched his thirst. Then glancing from the girl's medical kit to her serious face he grinned.

"What's so funny?" the girl asked sternly. "Do you want to drink water that's not been boiled and fall ill, eh?"

The peasant cadre wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and said jokingly to the old man: "Your barefoot doctor takes her job seriously even if she is a bit pernickety."

"Pernickety? Me? I'm not as pernickety as the salesman in our store." The girl leaned over the well to look down it as she spoke, so that a deep echo sounded from the well.

The old man sat down in the shade and took out his pipe. The shrilling of the cicadas seemed louder now that the water-wheel had stopped. Not knowing what the girl meant the peasant cadre sat on a stump beside the old man and fanned himself with his wide-brimmed straw hat. Looking at the water-wheel he asked: "Why don't you start that again?"

"How can I?" she retorted without raising her head.

In growing bewilderment the peasant cadre walked over to the well and looked into it. The deep brick-lined shaft was covered with moss and weeds. As the ripples raised by drips from the pipe subsided, the blue sky, the over-hanging willow branches and the girl's face were reflected in the water. Perplexed, he asked again: "There's plenty of water, isn't there?"

"You don't see the problem, comrade." The old man pointed to the pipe in the well. "Look, it doesn't reach the water. After pumping a while we have to stop and wait until the water rises. We need more piping."

"It's hard enough to fill the ditches without these stoppages." The girl sounded indignant. "This wastes both time and water."

The peasant cadre stopped fanning to ask: "Aren't there any pipes in the store? The workers sent over all kinds of equipment and spare parts weeks ago to help fight the drought."

"You'd better not mention that, comrade." The old man laughed with a glance at the girl seated, pouting, on the water-wheel. "It's all that equipment that's made her hopping mad."

The peasant cadre was still puzzled. Before he could speak the girl began firing questions at him. "Tell me comrade, is our store in business just to make money?"

"Who says so?"

"Is there any rule against supporting agriculture and helping the peasants?"

Looking at the straightforward outspoken girl, the peasant cadre smiled encouragingly. "If you have an opinion or criticism," he suggested, "you must raise it."

"That's right." The old man removed his pipe to say, "Tell this comrade about it and ask him to report it to Secretary Liang."

As a matter of fact this district on the plain had done a good deal in the way of water conservancy during the movement to learn from Tachai. They had already mechanized irrigation. But the present drought was the worst for many years. The irrigation equipment on hand just wasn't sufficient. Led by the county Party committee, the commune members had gone all out in fighting the drought and learned from the experience of Nanhxiang Commune. Not waiting for rain, not relying on the weather, they had used carrying poles and buckets, basins and water-wheels in addition to their pumps. However, as the drought continued the water-table sank so low that the pipes in the wells could barely reach the water. This was a new contradiction. But when they went to the store to buy additional lengths of piping, most of the salesmen were out delivering goods to the other production brigades. The only man left in charge was Spectacles Wang. And he refused to dismantle the new piping and sell separate sections on the grounds that there would be some pieces left over which nobody would buy and the store would lose money. Although many people protested, he insisted, saying that this was a rule and in the manager's absence it couldn't be changed.

"Who made this rule?" asked the girl, flushed with irritation. "The fact is he can't be bothered. He's afraid to take the responsibility. Agriculture's the base of our economy but he couldn't care less about it..."

The peasant cadre nodded thoughtfully. The girl's anger mounted as she talked, as if it were Spectacles Wang in front of her. Suddenly, realizing that this was no way to speak to a stranger, she turned her face away with a rueful laugh.

"There's something you've overlooked, lass." The old man shook his head. "We mustn't lump all salesmen into one category. Since we poor and lower-middle peasants took charge of the store the comrades there have improved their style of work. Take Young Chen and Old Sun for example. Chen goes from village to village with his carrying pole and baskets; Sun delivers goods in his push cart to our doors, doing repair work for people along the way..."

"I was talking about Spectacles Wang," the girl put in.

"Before Liberation Spectacles Wang was cashier in a big shop in town," the old man told her.

The peasant cadre nodded.

"According to that broadcast speech of Secretary Liang's," said the girl as she jumped down from the water-wheel, "Spectacles Wang is off the track — he's taken a wrong line. Do you agree, comrade?" She fixed her eyes on the cadre.

The peasant cadre beamed. To the old melon-keeper he said: "This barefoot doctor of yours goes to the heart of a problem." Raising a powerful hand he went on, "She's right. When we tackle any question we must grasp the key point — the line. Some problems that have cropped up during the drought seem to be material ones, but in essence they are ideological..."

The old man nodded, eyeing the cadre intently, feeling that every word he spoke voiced his own views. The girl picked some grass for the horse and listened to them. When she heard the peasant cadre say he was from the county she cocked her head to one side and asked: "Do you work with Secretary Liang?" The moment she learned that he had come to do some work in their commune she said seriously, "You must help solve this problem I've raised."

When the talk reverted to the water-melon plot, the old man explained the brigade's production plan and how they were learning from Tachai. The peasant cadre emphasized the need to **"take grain as the key link and ensure an all-round development"**, and to carry on the struggle between the socialist and capitalist roads. The longer they chatted the happier the old man felt. Stroking his bearded chin he beamed, his grey eyebrows twitching as he smiled.

The weather was just right for spraying the melons, he said, but he was too busy to go and buy insecticide.

The water-wheel started again. As the peasant cadre rose to leave, the old man picked up his hoe and said earnestly: "Comrade, when you see Secretary Liang, tell him this from an old poor peasant: With Chairman Mao's revolutionary line to guide us and cadres who stick to that line as firmly as he does, the collective strength of our commune can prop up the sky if it falls, to say nothing of overcoming a little drought."

With obvious pleasure the peasant cadre grasped his hands. "I'll certainly relay what you say to the county Party committee," he promised.

After he left the old man and the girl talked appreciatively of the new working style of cadres tempered in the cultural revolution. She said that the close link between them and the masses was part of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. When the old man scolded her for speaking so sharply to a county cadre, she insisted: "I'll criticize all those who have wrong ideas." She believed that in the peasant cadre's estimation there was something wrong with Spectacles Wang's thinking.

After this they went on with their work, neither of them giving any more thought to the pipe. At sunset when they stopped the wheel to wait for the water to rise the peasant cadre suddenly came back, a bundle of pipes on his shoulder, all in a sweat. The old man and the girl were amazed. The girl looked at him wide-eyed, not knowing what to say. The cadre put the bundle down and untied his bag, taking from it a parcel of insecticide which he handed to the old man. Then fishing out spanners and pliers he started installing the new section of pipe, while telling the old man that the commune was going to call a meeting in their brigade that evening when leaders of other brigades would come to exchange experience in fighting the drought. He had come back to make arrangements for it. He asked the old man to speak at the meeting. As for the pipes and insecticide, he said jokingly: "They're just a sideline I've picked up."



"You're really a good peasants' cadre, comrade." The old man was very impressed. "If you want me to speak at the meeting this evening I'll tell about you."

"No," the peasant cadre smiled, waving the spanner in his capable hand. "I'm not worth talking about. Tell them about the poor and lower-middle peasants and their determination to lick the drought."

As they worked and kept up a lively conversation, Spectacles Wang arrived with his push cart loaded with goods. He stopped at the edge of the fields and called to the girl: "I've changed the old rules. From today on I'm going out among the villagers."

"It's not enough to change the rules." The girl pointed to her head. "It's more important to change what's in here and get your thinking straight."

In no time at all the pipe was lengthened and the wheel set going. Rubbing his greasy hands the peasant cadre looked at Spectacles Wang and the girl. "Agriculture is the base," he said. "This is what Chairman Mao has taught us. That means all trades and professions must support it. Whether you do this in your work or not depends on which line you follow."

Eager to go to the brigade office to make arrangements for the evening meeting, he put his bag on his shoulder and said goodbye. Pointing to him the girl said to Spectacles Wang: "See how well this comrade does his work. You must learn from him!"

Spectacles Wang adjusted his spectacles and with obvious emotion exclaimed: "Yes! Secretary Liang is a fine example to me. I shan't forget the lesson he's taught me today."

With happiness and wonder in their eyes the old man and the girl gazed after the tall figure hurrying along the road in the glow of sunset till he disappeared at last behind the green crops.

Illustrated by Weng Ju-lan

A Summer Holiday Spent with My Uncles

When my summer holiday started, I went to southern Anhwei to stay with my uncle's family. They live in a little village surrounded by mountains and behind a stream. Green pines and emerald firs cast their reflection in the limpid water, and the songs of orioles and larks float through the green valley, interrupted now and then by the cry of wild pheasants.

My uncle Chin-kuei is the leader of his production team. His younger brother Chin-ao who has just finished middle school has come home to work in the team. My cousin Lan-lan is still a Little Red Soldier.

One day as my aunt and I were preparing a meal, she told me proudly about Uncle's work in the team and the tremendous victory they had achieved in only one year. The land here had been very sandy, but my uncle led his team to improve the soil, working round the clock, until they succeeded last year in reaping a record harvest of a thousand catties of rice per *mu*. This year, they're aiming at an even higher yield.

"Uncle's really terrific, isn't he!" I exclaimed.

"Don't praise him," said my aunt. "He couldn't have achieved anything if not for Chairman Mao's leadership and the drive of the others in our team." After a pause she said, "Your uncle works well. But he's just like the Dragon King who floods his own temple, he never thinks of his own family."

Chuckling at this comparison, I asked her what she meant.

"Last summer," said Auntie, "a little earlier on than this, I sold a pig and meant to use the money to buy some cloth. The whole family needed summer things, particularly Chin-ao. A young man's got to look presentable, I think. I can't let him go round looking shabby. But before I could go shopping, the money disappeared. I soon learned that your uncle had used it to buy chemical fertilizer for the team. I flared up of course and blamed him for not thinking of the family. Then he lectured me on the necessity of correctly handling the relationship between the state, the collective and individuals. He said we should set an example in the campaign to learn from Tachai. He really went for me — left me no face at all."

"Ma's to blame, ma's to blame," Lan-lan teased. "Dad did right, shouldn't try to save face."

Auntie glared at Lan-lan. "Since when have you started to lecture me too?" But she laughed as she continued, "After thinking it over I realized your uncle was right. Still, why make me lose face like that? Of course, I understand things better now. This year, they've elected me to be a women's team leader." Poking a finger at Lan-lan's forehead, she told her daughter, "Don't think your father's the only progressive one in our family."

After supper, we all sat in the yard to enjoy the cool of the evening. The air was fresh and scented. Stars twinkled overhead in a clear sky. Across the stream the hazy woods were bathed in shimmering moonlight, hills faint in the distance were quietly slumbering. Though Chin-ao had been transplanting rice shoots for several days now, there seemed no end to his energy and he was still playing on his mouth-organ a little way from us. Lan-lan, her chin cupped in one hand, sat on a stool watching her uncle.

"He doesn't know what it's like to be tired," said Auntie busily doing the dishes. "He's just like his brother." My grandmother on my mother's side died early and Chin-ao was practically brought up by my aunt who still likes to mother him. Half in fun and half in earnest, people use the old feudal expression and call my aunt a "virtuous" sister-in-law.

"He should be more sensible," Uncle was saying as he sucked at his pipe. "He's too fond of coming out on top and that makes him quick but sloppy in his work."

"Come now, you should be fair," Auntie remonstrated indignantly. "Ever since the lad came back from school he's gone all out. He gave the lead in setting up the night school, in starting scientific experiments and in organizing the youngsters into a shock-team. You've every reason to be proud of him."

"Well, you've got to make strict demands on him, you know," said my uncle. "Let's not argue any more. There're only seven more days before Autumn Begins* and we've not yet finished transplanting the late rice. In addition it's our job to help other teams. We'll have to put in some extra work tonight." My uncle stood up.

Chin-ao promptly stopped playing. "Are we transplanting tonight?" he asked, coming towards us eagerly.

"No. The transplanting and the turning up of the stubble are going fast enough but the reaping of the early rice is lagging behind. Let's all concentrate on that tonight. We'll reap one patch each and make a contest of it." He looked at his young brother speculatively. "You've been transplanting for days. Must be pretty fagged out. Do a smaller patch tonight and turn in as soon as you finish. You've got to be up early tomorrow morning."

Chin-ao's eyes flashed. "A smaller patch? Me? I can reap with the best of you!"

I insisted on going too. Since I was a guest they let me have my way. But when Lan-lan wanted to join us she was told off by her uncle. "What's the use of tots like you going out at night? Stay home and help your mother with the washing. You can join in the reaping tomorrow during the day."

*One of the twenty-four solar terms which falls approximately on August 7.

Uncle went ahead first to see to things. When Chin-ao had sharpened two sickles, he and I set off. The frogs croaked lustily in the evening breeze and the stream and paddy fields seemed sprinkled with stars. The rustle of poplars was music in our ears.

As we strode along, Chin-ao fingered the blade of his sickle. "We're having a contest tonight, Liang-tzu, did you hear? Well, no one's going to outstrip this sickle of mine. You'll see when the rice is reaped and the figures totted up. I'm going to come out on top, that's a certainty."

When we reached the fields, we saw my uncle again. He told me to work on the patch assigned to Chin-ao and to be sure to place the sheaves so that the paddy-ears rested on the stubble clear of the mud. Chin-ao was to look after me. The two of us were reaping a fairly large patch.

In the moonlit paddy fields the heavy drooping ears of grain, brushed against each other by the breeze, swayed and swished. I pitched in with my sickle.

The other commune members were coming to the fields in twos and threes. Soon, lively voices rang out all around us. Some whistled merrily, others hummed a tune and there was music from a transistor radio someone had brought along.

"Get a move on, Chin-ao! Let's see which of us is the winner tomorrow morning." More than one person called out a challenge to Chin-ao.

"All right, I'll take you on. Get cracking," was Chin-ao's reply.

His sickle flew like the wind, his swinging arm setting up a rhythmic whirr. When he paused to wipe his brow, I noticed the gleam of his sickle in the moonlight. Soon he had left me far behind. When I reached the end of my row, I found that he'd finished two rows and was starting on a third.

Chin-ao drove me home to bed as soon as I finished three rows. Though I refused to budge at first, he pushed me up the narrow path between two paddy fields leading to his home. Once back, I had a bath and went to bed.

Presently I heard Chin-ao's voice, low but triumphant: "I've finished our patch, a large one too, but the rest of them are still reaping."

"Look at you, all soaked through. Hurry now and have a wash. You must go to bed at once," said Auntie. As I didn't hear my uncle's voice, presumably he was still out.

The next morning when the crowing of the cocks was still floating through the mist, someone shook me out of sleep. It was Lan-lan.

"Dad's giving my uncle such a dressing-down. Quick, Cousin Liang-tzu, go and have a look."

Rubbing the sleep from my eyes, I made for the paddy fields. Round the patch which we had reaped the previous night stood half a dozen people besides my aunt and Chin-ao. My uncle was stamping across the field in anger, stooping now and then to pluck the ears of rice left hanging on stray stalks.

"Just look!" he bellowed. "Call this reaping? Look at all the plants you've missed, and allowing the ears to fall into the water. Don't you know you can't thresh rice once it's wet?"

"I . . . uh . . . was too hasty last night in the contest. . . ." Chin-ao muttered, hanging his head, his face flushed.

"A contest's so as to get the work done better, not to do a sloppy job."

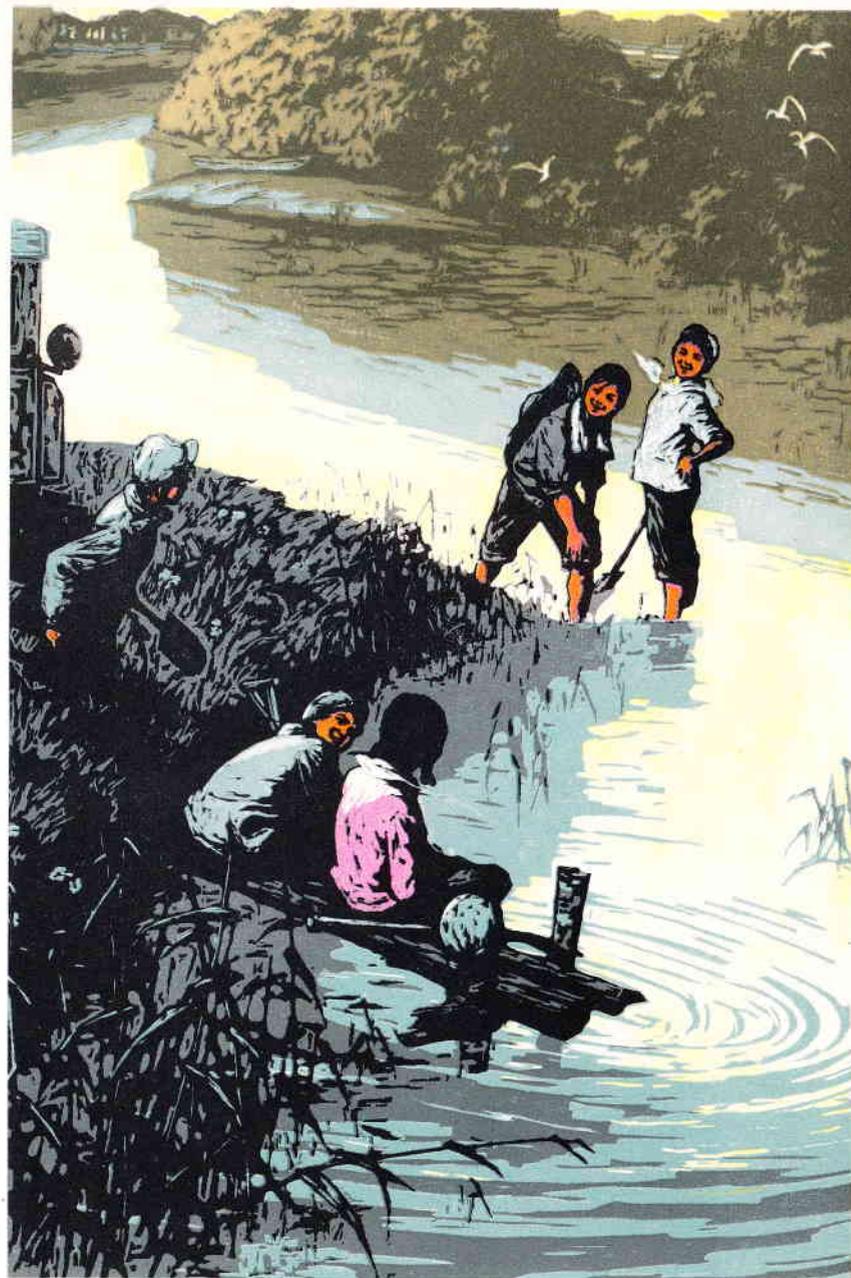
"I . . . was wrong," Chin-ao said in a low voice. "Deduct from my workpoints."

"Deducting workpoints isn't as important as learning from mistakes. I expect you to criticize yourself at the mass meeting this noon." Uncle's voice had softened a little.

"It's only natural for a youngster to want to come out the winner. He'll learn soon enough. Don't make him lose face," Auntie urged.

"Face? What do you mean by face?" Uncle exploded. "Find out your mistakes, admit them and correct them. That's the only way not to lose face. What's the use of trying to cover up instead of learning your lesson? You're the sort of 'virtuous' sister-in-law who shields her brother-in-law when he's in the wrong. My advice to you is to drop that kind of 'virtue'. It's virtue of a new kind that's needed today. Help a comrade to correct his mistake, that's real virtue."

After Hours (coloured woodcut)
by Chen Yi-min ►



That noon, Chin-ao criticized himself at the team's mass meeting. He also voiced his determination to correct his mistakes. His words were greeted by thunderous applause. I clapped with all my might until my palms smarted, for I was applauding both my uncles at the same time. What wonderful uncles I've got!

That evening Uncle came home beaming broadly. "Chin-ao worked well today," he told my aunt.

Chin-ao, who was washing, turned to make a face at me.

"It seems your criticism has helped him to improve," said my aunt, very much in earnest. "Well, I'm going to turn over a new leaf too."

"Good for ma, good for ma!" cried Lan-lan. A burst of laughter from all of us set the roof ringing. There was a special happiness in the air.

Fishing Through the Ice

Our sledge darted along on the smooth ice. Old Uncle Water, straddling the tail end of the runners, was poling us over frozen Lake Paiyangtien. His tall spare figure stooping then straightening up resembled a bow drawn and loosed by a skilled archer. Biting wind and whirling snowflakes buffeted our sledge.

There was not a soul to be seen on the lake. A few glimmering lights in the distance and some faint stars overhead were all that could be made out in the darkness.

"It can't be later than midnight," I said, scanning the murky sky to locate the Dipper.

"D'you think it's still too early?" asked Old Uncle Water after several more hard shoves. "If not for the fact that I wanted you to have some more sleep, I'd have been here long before this."

Old Uncle Water is over fifty but doesn't look it. Ruddy-cheeked with a pitch-black beard, he seems brimming with energy and vitality. He began fishing in the lake while still a boy and his fame as a fisher-

man has spread far and near. Now a member of the Party branch committee and the leader of Team One, he stays up late and gets up before dawn every day, working devotedly for the revolution.

The members of Team One live by the lake at the west end of the village. Most of them are fisher-folk and boatmen or raise ducks. But our Team Two is different. The majority of our members are farmers, carters, or shepherds, for we live at the east end of the village close to the long dyke with a large stretch of land beyond it.

On the basis of Chairman Mao's directive to take grain as the key link and ensure an all-round development of the rural economy, our Team Two also formed a fishing squad this winter. But for several days owing to our inexperience we had been drawing in empty nets most of the time. Every day we went out as early as Team One, yet their catch weighed several hundred catties while ours never even reached a hundred. As the leader of Team Two I was worried and went several times with my mates to the west end of the village to seek help. No matter how busy or tired Old Uncle Water was he always received us warmly, giving us detailed advice on the best way to fish. The night before he had come out in the dark to see if our nets were properly tied and in several cases had retied them for us. Finding something wrong with some of our ice-picks, he fetched us several good ones from his own team. And finally he offered to go out with us himself for a few days.

This was our first time out with Old Uncle Water as our guide. To find a good place to cast our net he was taking me round Lake Paiyangtien in the darkness. The key to a fine catch, he told me, lies in finding the right place.

"Give me that pole now, uncle, and have a rest," I urged him time and again.

"It's a light sledge, I'm not tired," he said, skilfully poling on. "You turned in late last night. Lie down and have some more sleep."

We kept moving on. After a while I noticed what looked like a strip of water glimmering not far away.

"Uncle, there's a break ahead."

"I've seen it."

He continued forward calmly until a break in the ice about two yards wide was clearly visible. The glittering water there was shrouded in vapour. These natural fissures in the ice make crossing the lake a very hazardous business.

"Let's go round it, uncle," I suggested nervously. "As the saying goes: Rather take ten steps to be safe than take one risky step."

"This isn't risky." He fixed his eyes on the cleft in the ice, poling hard.

Our sledge shot forward like an arrow released from the bow. As we neared the edge of the water, the old man gave a vigorous push and stepped hard on the tail of the runners. The sledge tipped upward and we flew easily over the gap.

"Good for you! But that was close!" I exclaimed, my heart thumping.

As if nothing had happened he said placidly, "I've crossed many a cleft in the ice safely. Only once in my life —"

"— you fell in?" I put in.

"That was during the War of Resistance Against Japan."

Immediately I recalled the story I'd heard. One morning on his way back from taking a wounded Eighth Router to a safe place, Old Uncle Water had come across Donkey Face, a Japanese squad leader, emerging from the watch-tower by the village with his interpreter, a traitor. Pistols in hand, they ordered him to ferry them to town at once. There was a heavy fog. One could hardly make out a man's face a few feet away. "A good opportunity!" Old Uncle Water said to himself. "I'll take them."

He deliberately headed the sledge towards a wide gap in the ice. The two scoundrels kept barking at him, "Faster, damn you, faster!" Suppressing his hatred he made the sledge fly while the two villains huddled in their overcoats lolled back and smoked in comfort. About twenty feet from the gap, Old Uncle Water put on a great spurt. With a yell "To hell with you!" he gave a last powerful shove which drove the sledge into the water, where it sank to the bottom carrying the two bastards with it.

"And what about you?" I asked.

"I'd jumped clear a second before," he said cheerfully. "I gave them time to swallow plenty of water and report to the King of Hell before hauling the swine out and taking their pistols. . . ."

Our sledge flew on in the teeth of a cutting wind.

"We've come a long way," I remarked as I looked round.

He brought the sledge to a halt. "You've got better eyesight. What's the colour underneath?" he asked, making a hole in the ice.

"Black," I told him after taking a careful look.

"Right. Know why? Because there're rotten reeds below. D'you think fish like that stink? It would be a waste of time to cast nets here." With that he got on the sledge again. "We must go farther and look for some better place. It's worth the trouble."

The wind was rising. I took his place and we went on against the wind. Sand and withered leaves mixed with snow and splinters of ice stung our faces. Very soon I could not carry on any longer.

"The wind's too strong," I said, panting. "Let's take a rest."

"How can we?" He was anxious. "It'll soon be light and we haven't found a good place yet. Your men will be joining us any time with the net. We mustn't hold them up."

We jumped off the sledge to push it. It was hard walking on the slippery ice in our heavy boots padded with straw. However, one pushing and the other pulling, we managed to make fresh headway.

Once we reached the northern bay my companion began to pick his way carefully, searching from side to side. Sometimes he stopped to look round, sometimes he turned back. Perhaps we had reached a fishing ground, I thought. The ice here was pale green, quite different in colour from that near the village.

"See a small dyke anywhere?" asked Old Uncle Water, trying to determine his position.

I scanned all sides and observed not far from us a line of humps in the ice.

"Fine!" he cried after taking a close look himself. "That's the dyke I'm looking for. It was quite a height to begin with, but as

time went by the water eroded it." He walked about a hundred yards west from the dyke and, pointing down at the ice, said, "Below here there's an old river-bed. It's been silted up over the years but it's still a favourite feeding ground for fish. When I was a nipper I often came with my grandad to fish here, and we always got a fine catch."

My admiration for the old man increased. I had heard say that he could see through water and tell how many fish there were under any given patch of ice. "Gimlet-eyed," they called him. He could also predict the presence or absence of fish by the taste of the water. In summer, by watching the way the wind blew he knew by which shore the fish were gathering. . . . No wonder our villagers dubbed him a fishing expert. But he was very modest. He used to say, "I've no special skill. I've just seen a lot in my time, so I know the lake well, and I use my head." That was no idle boast. He analysed each catch and found out the reasons for his success or failure. In this way he had grasped the laws governing the movements of fish.

A satisfactory spot was finally found. We were both in high spirits. As Old Uncle Water sat down and produced his pipe I saw steam rising from his unbuttoned coat and noticed beads of sweat on his forehead.

Now another sledge approached swiftly from the north.

"You're out early!" the newcomer hailed us.

Seeing that it was a stranger I asked him: "Which village are you from? And where are you going?"

"I'm from Tungkou Brigade, going to South River Mouth to look for a fishing place," he replied as he passed.

"Hey! Come back!" the old man stood up and shouted.

When the man turned back my companion stepped forward and said, "You won't find any fish there. We've just been there. So many teams have fished there the last few days, they've scared the fish away."

The man hesitated, not knowing what to do.

"Stay and fish here with us," Old Uncle Water suggested. "There are plenty of fish here. Why look any further?"

"Won't I be in your way?" The man was still uncertain.

"Of course not." The old man chuckled. "We're all fishing for the revolution, aren't we?"

With a grateful look on his face, the man brought his sledge alongside.

By now the east was light, the wind was dropping. My squad came with a dozen sledges like flying chargers. The Tungkou Brigade's team also arrived.

Old Uncle Water began to direct operations like a commander on a battlefield. He showed us how to cast our nets, from which direction to haul and where to empty our catch.

Our two fishing teams lined up back to back, then fanned out in semi-circles, our group facing south, theirs north.

Clang — crash! . . . We set to breaking holes in the ice, using big ice-picks. Raising our T-shaped picks high, we smashed down with all our might at the ice, hard as steel, driving cracks half a foot deep. Chips of ice danced in the air.

The youngsters started a work chant:

We raise our ice-picks, *yo — bai!*
To break the ice — *bai!*
Break the ice cover, *bai!*
To let golden carp leap out, *bu — hai!*

Lake Paiyangtien hummed with activity. Shouts, work chants and the clang of ice-picks mingled in a gay chorus.

Soon we began to cast our net. Dividing into two groups we hauled the net forward, treading in step like towmen. When we closed the semi-circle, white-bellied fish, leaping and thrashing, set spray flying. They jostled each other in their wild attempts to flounder out of the net. Beside myself with excitement I scooped them out. Each scoop weighed dozens of catties. The silvery fish were a delight to the eye.

Rushed off our feet to handle the catch, we were beaming.

"Whew, what whoppers! Wonderful!"

"Old Uncle Water is really smart! His reputation is well deserved."

Near by the Tungkou group was also landing fish. We could hear them saying:

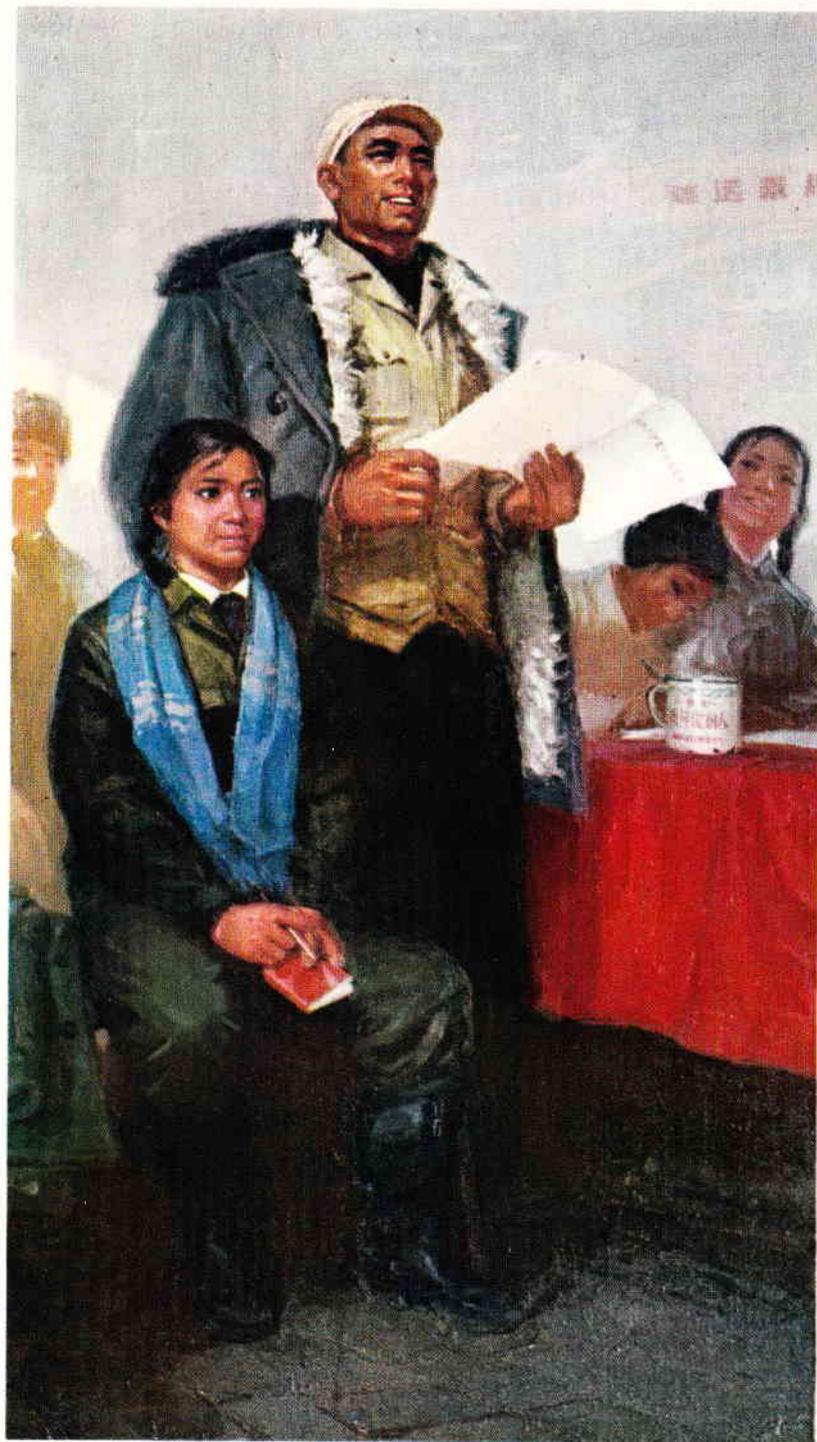
“This is our best catch this season.”

“It was generous of that old fellow to let us stay. A good work style. . . .”

“We’ve much to learn from him. . . .”

As the sun rose high above the horizon our two teams’ sledges started home, fully laden.

Joining the Party (oil-painting)
by Li Pin ▶



Hsu Huai-ching

Productive Labour and Art

— *Introducing new art works by educated youngsters working in the northeast*

On a far-stretching green plain a girl in a red tunic and apron is sounding a gong to call the tractor-drivers who have been working all night back for breakfast, while another girl brings water for them to wash in. This scene depicted in the woodcut *Morning Gong* shows one facet of the life of educated young people who have come to the "Northern Wilderness" to do reclamation work.

In the old days this "Northern Wilderness" in the north part of Heilungkiang Province was a huge, sparsely populated marshland. Since Liberation many pioneers have come to bring this great waste under cultivation. From 1968 on, their numbers have been swelled by several hundred thousand school-leavers from such cities as Peking, Shanghai and Tientsin, who have responded to Chairman Mao's call to go to the countryside to receive re-education by the poor and lower-middle peasants. Together with the veteran pioneers, they have plunged into this new battle to transform nature. In the past few years, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and helped

by the veterans, these youngsters have settled down among the poor and lower-middle peasants and learned a great deal from them. They are becoming steeled and matured in the arduous struggle to build up this border region.

All works of art are reflections of life in human society. The vigorous life of struggles in the "Northern Wilderness" provides a great wealth of material for artists. And these youngsters who have embarked on a new life are recording their experiences through art. Guided by Chairman Mao's line on literature and art, they have organized amateur art groups and produced several hundred woodcuts, paintings in the traditional style, oil-paintings, serial pictures and other works.

These artists depict scenes of hard, intensive work, conveying the optimism and heroism of pioneers determined to conquer nature. The woodcut *Surveying* shows a team of girls carrying surveying instruments and doing their job in a world of ice and snow where the virgin forest covered with snow and frost seems like a pear orchard in blossom. The woodcut *On the Threshing Ground* presents a scene of even greater zest and enthusiasm: groups of cheerful youngsters bronzed by the sun are threshing wheat which piles up like golden sand-dunes, while the grain flying through the air seems leaping waves. Another woodcut *Egg Production Soars* shows a poultry farm shaded by green trees where the poultry-keepers are collecting baskets of eggs and flocks of free-range pullets are pecking their food from the ground. *After Hours* is a woodcut showing a tractor parked by the river bank where several girls, their day's labour done, while cleaning their spades and washing their feet in the stream are gaily chatting and singing. All these works express the youngsters' love for their pioneering life and their resolve to build up this border region.

Life is the sole source for the creation of art. Good works of revolutionary art can only be created by taking part in class struggle, in productive labour and in scientific experiment. Most of these amateur artists came to understand this through their own experience here. As Chao Hsiao-mo who made the woodcut *On the Threshing Ground* puts it: "Before the cultural revolution I studied in the middle school attached to the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Peking. Though

I learned some technique in this school, owing to the revisionist line on education I was cut off from the real struggles of the workers and peasants, so that my life and mind were empty. Naturally the paintings I produced at that time were lifeless and insipid. After I came to the 'Northern Wilderness' I joined in sowing, threshing and other work. I saw other youngsters like me opening up this wasteland, sowing their first seeds and reaping their first harvest, building highways, putting up electric wires, constructing more and more new villages — in a word, transforming the region with their own hands — and then I really felt the joy that comes from productive labour. This is what I have tried to convey in *On the Threshing Ground*."

Lacking a correct world outlook, lacking the thoughts and feelings of the working class, one cannot produce a work of art imbued with the spirit of our age. This is another conclusion reached by these young amateur artists. Chang Chao-yang who made the woodcut *Heroes Everywhere* came up here some years ago fresh from school and has since worked as a farm-hand, lumberman, accountant and signalman. He made a point of steeling himself through hard work and of emulating the fine qualities of the poor and lower-middle peasants. In his spare time he jotted down notes about outstanding people and exemplary deeds besides making more than six hundred drawings for lantern slides reflecting the life of the pioneers. *Heroes Everywhere* is based on one of his sketches. It depicts a girl watching the wheat harvesting and intently writing a piece of reportage. Her face is radiant with admiration, for wherever she looks she sees heroes. Chang Chao-yang chose this theme after his own long experience of work on the land.

Of course, rich experience and correct ideas are not in themselves enough to create good works of art. A work of art should be higher than actual life, more concentrated and more typical, and the content must be expressed in a suitable form. Most of these amateur artists have never studied art, but they feel the urge to express their new life and their aspirations. One of these youngsters told me: "I have never studied in an art school. When I first came here I didn't know how to draw, but by watching others and trying my own hand at drawing I mastered certain rudimentary techniques. In fact, I learn-

ed by doing.” This simple statement implies that art must be created in the thick of the masses and by dint of practice. All these amateur artists spare no pains to learn; they carry pads with them and make use of every spare moment to practise sketching; they do drawings and woodcuts for the blackboard news, exhibitions and lantern slides, accumulating experience and skill for the creation of more mature works of art. They also discuss their sketches and drafts with the leadership and with their fellow-workers. Sometimes they co-operate with older, more experienced artists. For instance, when a young woodcut artist has a good idea but is not skilled in technique, he enlists the help of an older man. *Surveying* is an example of such co-operation. And after a work is finished it is displayed in the unit where the artist works, so that he can collect opinions from his colleagues to help him improve it further.

By working hard and getting help from the masses these youngsters have produced many works on moving themes. The woodcut *The Night of the Festival* was conceived as a harvest scene on the night of National Day. As a result of help and suggestions from others, the artist revised it to make the lights on the threshing floor and the grain sprayed from the thresher conjure up the lights and fireworks at Tien An Men in Peking on the evening of National Day. The angle from which the threshing is portrayed affords a vivid contrast between the golden grain and the blue night sky, enhancing the festive atmosphere and giving the whole scene much greater depth. The oil-painting *Joining the Party* shows an old Party member sponsoring a girl who has applied to join the Party, reflecting the growing to maturity of the younger generation of revolutionaries. The artist Li Pin's idea was to express the eagerness of veterans to help young people. Having talked with many youngsters who had recently joined the Party and learned how they had raised their political consciousness, he placed the veteran worker in the centre of the picture, reading out the girl's application for Party membership. The girl sitting beside him is listening quietly to the voice of her beloved teacher, and holds a notebook and pen ready to put down the advice and encouragement of other Party members which she will always keep in mind. Many young people in the “Northern Wilderness” have joined the Youth

League and the Chinese Communist Party in this way; so this painting is true to life and typical.

Many works by these amateur artists breathe revolutionary romanticism. The range of their vision and their gay, exuberant colouring convey the atmosphere of the border region, the special features of life there, and the artists' own outlook. These characteristics are best seen in the coloured woodcuts. Revolutionary realism alone could not produce works with this jubilant spirit. Nor could the young artists develop such breadth of vision except by opening up the vast border region. Again, only by vivid contrasts of colours can they reflect the speed and drive of our socialist construction, the magnificence of our motherland and the transformation of the “Northern Wilderness”.

In 1955, speaking of China's educated young people, Chairman Mao said: **“Our countryside is vast and has plenty of room for them to develop their talents to the full.”** And this is just what these young artists are doing in the “Northern Wilderness”.

Chinese Acrobatics

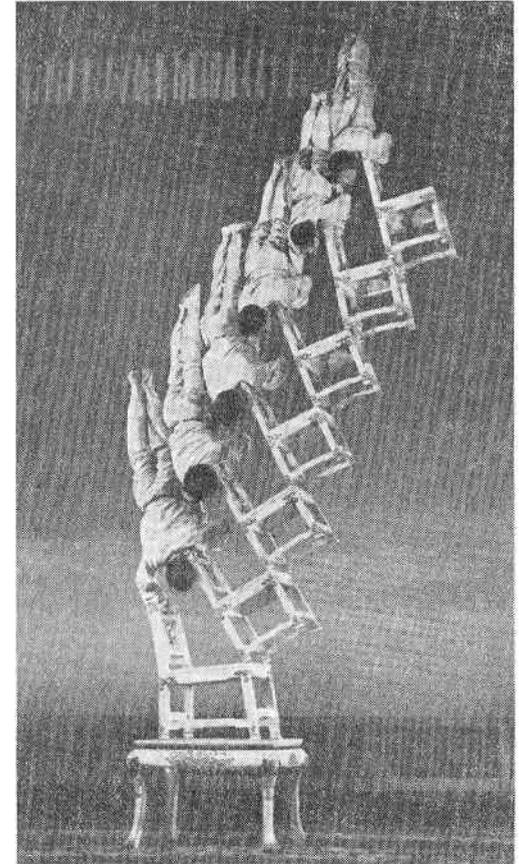
Chinese acrobatics have a long history and are highly spectacular. This folk art loved by the working people of China is now becoming known abroad as well. In recent years Chinese acrobats have improved on the traditional repertoire and evolved many new and exciting items.

Through years of hard practice and scientific training our acrobats are able to perform well-nigh incredible gymnastic feats. Their acts not only call for consummate skill but display great sculptural beauty. An example of this is "Balancing on Chairs". Whereas formerly one artiste balanced upside down or adopted various poses on the back of a chair, now six artistes balance on seven chairs piled one on top of another, creating a tableau reminiscent of an eagle with outstretched wings. In addition to great muscular strength and agility, these six equilibrists must have good team work and perfect co-ordination of their movements.

In "Balancing with Bowls" the artiste piles a dozen porcelain bowls on her head, then balances on both hands on a scaffolding of five

benches, and with her feet removes the bowls from her head. A new, improved version of this act is performed by two artistes. A young man raises a girl balancing bowls on her head on to his shoulder where she stands on one leg with the other raised high, moves the bowls from her head to her foot, then suddenly balances herself on her hands, after which she slowly lowers the bowls from her foot back to her head. Balancing on a partner's shoulder and hands is more difficult than balancing on tables and benches, and this adds suspense and variety to the act.

Tight-rope dancing is popular in many countries. In China this act has special national features and dates back at least two thousand years, for in Han-dynasty tombs are stone reliefs depicting acrobatics: three men balancing on one leg and turning head over heels on a tight-rope. In the Tang Dynasty (618-907) there are records of two tight-rope dancers who passed each other in the middle of the rope. In the Ching Dynasty (1664-1911) there was dancing on copper wire similar to the present-day dancing on steel cables. Since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, tight-rope artistes all over



the country have improved on their traditional acts, and now perform sword dances and other dances, do juggling tricks, turn somersaults, stand on their heads and balance on one arm on the rope. A recent most exciting innovation is an act in which a girl leaps high into the air and turns a somersault, then lands with perfect balance on the springy steel wire.

“Juggling with Jars” is another traditional act. According to Ching-dynasty records a juggler named Wang could toss a large porcelain jar through his legs, pass it round his back and balance it on his head, rotating the jar on his forehead; he could juggle standing upright or upside-down, whirling the jar on its base or on its side, and catching it with his head, shoulder, waist, knee or foot. Young jugglers

today still perform these difficult feats and have further developed the act by having two people pass the jar to each other. Two big jars about half a metre in diameter, each weighing seven or eight kilograms, are tossed lightly to and fro like balloons from the heads and fists of these two artistes. They balance the jar on its rim, make it stand at an angle, then send it flying unerringly to the head of their partner, who has just tossed over his own jar in the same way. The skill of these jugglers has to be seen to be believed.



The lion dance often performed in Chinese acrobatic shows is a traditional dance with men masquerading as lions. In A.D. 87 it was recorded that lions were sent as gifts to China by emissaries from present-day Iran along the old Silk Route. The Chinese people considered the lion a symbol of courage and good fortune. The famous Tang-dynasty poet Po Chu-yi (772-846) wrote a poem about a lion dance performed during a feast by some national minority artistes. This contained the following lines:

Masked Hun and a mock lion
With head of carved wood and silk tail,
With golden eyes and teeth of silver tinsel,
It shakes its shaggy coat and flaps its ears.

This traditional act has undergone many changes, greatly improving both its content and form. Now we see two young actors dressed as peasant lads carrying a big coloured ball on to the stage and leading two lions, each played by two men. To the accompaniment of gongs and drums, the peasant boys and the lions together leap, turn somersaults and walk on poles; the lions even stand on the big ball and teeter over a see-saw. The perfect co-ordination of boys and lions adds fresh colour to this traditional item, conveying something of the zest of the new Chinese countryside.

Innovations have also been made both in form and technique in such other favourite acts as "Juggling with Dishes" in which the artiste executes dance movements while spinning a dish on the tip of a supple bamboo wand; "Juggling with Bowls of Water", in which glass bowls filled with water are tied to both ends of a rope some three metres in length which the juggler whirls round him till it seems like a golden serpent writhing in the air, and yet not a single drop of water is spilt; "The Pyramid" in which many artistes balance on each other



striking various poses; or "Acrobatics on Poles" in which two men climb up two iron poles and perform gymnastic feats. The stage choreography and musical accompaniment have also been improved.

Acrobatic shows in China have a history of more than two millennia. They were popular as early as the Warring States Period (403-221 B.C.). By the Han

Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), according to ancient records, such shows were known as the "hundred entertainments" and included tight-rope dancing, climbing poles, conjuring and impersonations of beasts. Archaeologists have discovered old stone reliefs, frescoes and terracotta figurines depicting acrobatics. Among these is a set of more than twenty Early Han figurines performing acrobatics to the accompaniment of music. This



shows the high level reached by Chinese acrobatics in those early times. The Tang Dynasty saw a fresh flowering of this art: for example, it was recorded that five boy acrobats performed stunts on one high pole. In the Sung Dynasty (960-1279) nearly forty different kinds of acrobatic acts were listed. By the Ching Dynasty there were further developments in the trident dance, juggling with the diablo, juggling with jars and jumping through hoops . . . while the props and costumes became more elaborate. Acrobatic shows were popular in folk fairs and at festivals during this period.

Before Liberation, acrobatics were considered vulgar and acrobats, being looked down upon, had a hard life. Since the establishment of the People's Republic, the Party and the people's government have encouraged these arts and shown concern for the artistes. Now in factories, villages and army units one can find many amateur acrobats. In Hopei Province, for instance, there is a village of some three hundred families only which has several hundred amateur acrobats. Many cities have professional acrobatic companies, some of which have paid friendly visits to other countries as envoys of the Chinese people.

Like all other arts, acrobatics come from the life of the labouring people. The props used are everyday articles and utensils such as



chairs, bowls, jars, dishes and vases. Some acts are derived from popular gymnastics and children's games. Our acrobats pay frequent visits to factories, villages and army units to take part in manual labour and to learn from the fine qualities of the workers, peasants and soldiers. By going into the midst of the working people they find inspiration for their art and are able to perfect it from year to year.

A New Novel "On the March"

On the March, a novel describing educated young people in the countryside, was published recently by the Shanghai People's Publishing House.

Totalling 460,000 Chinese characters, *On the March* tells the story of a group of Shanghai school-leavers who, in response to Chairman Mao's call, go in 1969 to settle down and do farm work in a border region. Through the portrayal of a series of heroes such as production brigade Party secretary Li Teh-chiang, young intellectual Chung Wei-hua and old poor peasant Kuan Tung-hai, it presents a vivid picture of complicated struggles and seething construction work in this remote rural area. It shows how educated young people in China who were tempered in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution are marching forward along the revolutionary road.

More New Books for Children

In the first half of this year, a number of children's books were published in Peking and other parts of the country. Covering a wide range of themes and written in simple, lively language, these stories are warmly acclaimed by young readers.

Among the new publications are *Red-tasselled Spears on the Battlefield*, the story of how a daring boy with hatred for the enemy and

love for the people turned out a hero under the loving care of the Party and the people during the War of Liberation (1946-1949) in northeast China; *Red Rain*, a novel describing a young barefoot doctor who, educated by the poor and lower-middle peasants, studies hard to acquire medical skill and serves his patients heart and soul; *Young Shoots*, a collection of twenty short stories by Hao Jan which show the eager efforts made by young people in the countryside to master culture and science and to learn from the poor and lower-middle peasants, whose love of the collective and fine attitude to work are vividly portrayed. There are several other collections of short stories about children including *Two Children by the Beacon Tower*, *Daughter of the Sea*, *Coloured Shells* and *Locust Flowers Bloom in July*.

Performances for Peasants and Herdsmen in Tibet

The Lhasa Art Troupe in the Tibet Autonomous Region is a small propaganda team made up of twenty-seven Tibetan artists. To enable the peasants and herdsmen living in remote mountain areas to enjoy revolutionary art, the artists of this troupe left the city of Lhasa to tour the countryside. Last year they travelled more than 8,000 kilometres in ten counties and gave more than seventy performances to audiences amounting to 50,000. They performed out in the open — on river banks, on plains and slopes or beside villages and sheep-folds.

While giving performances, the artists also collected local folk songs and dances on the basis of which they created many new songs, dances and operas to portray the splendid spirit of the emancipated peasants and herdsmen and their determination to build socialism. These art works with their distinctively Tibetan flavour praise the wise leadership of the Party and Chairman Mao and the new life in socialist Tibet.

Ox-Horn Pictures

Ox-horn pictures are a new art in China, the first example of this work having been produced in 1964 by Liu Pao-shu, a skilled craftsman in



the Harbin Arts and Crafts Factory. The natural colours and markings of the horns are turned to good advantage in these pictures which also adopt certain features of traditional Chinese painting.

Following Chairman Mao's teaching: **"Let a hundred flowers blossom; weed through the old to bring forth the new,"** the Harbin craftsmen have worked hard ever since the cultural revolution to produce works reflecting our new socialist life. Their meticulous work has a style all its own, combining the charm of handicraft art with the artistic effect of Chinese brush painting. *Laughing at the Snowstorm on the Grassland*, which appeared in a newly-published album of reproductions of works chosen from the National Exhibition of Arts and Crafts is a typical example. Made of orange, crimson, white and pale green ox-horn it shows Chang Yung, a young intellectual, braving a snowstorm to save the collective's sheep and successfully conveys the heroine's noble spirit.

Now the art of ox-horn pictures is developing rapidly in our country and is drawing more attention at home and abroad.

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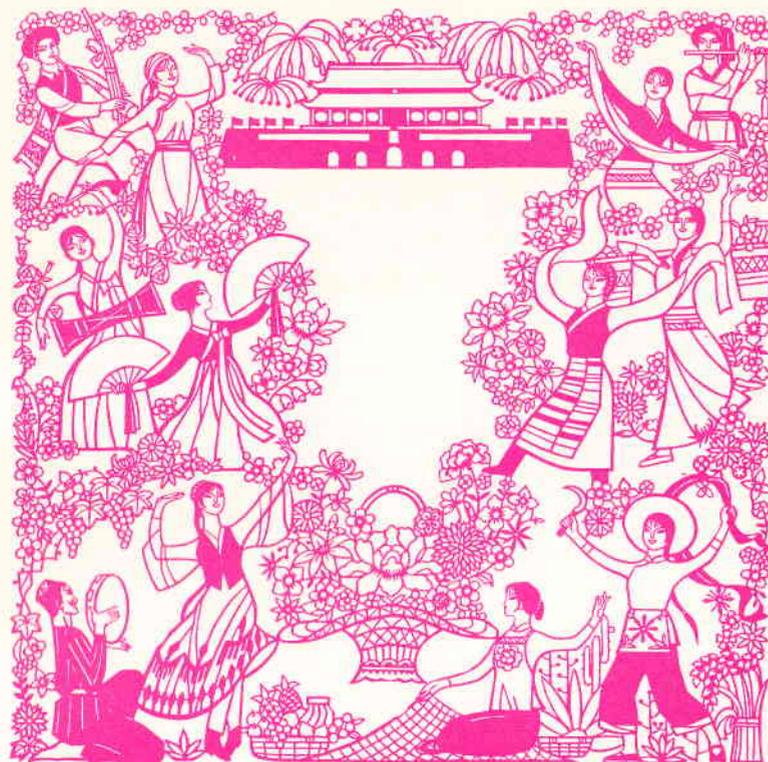
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