

# CHINESE LITERATURE



Lu Hsun: The True Story of Ah Q (story)

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## LU HSUN'S WRITINGS

### The True Story of Ah Q

Chairman Mao's recently published brilliant work *On the Ten Major Relationships* refers to *The True Story of Ah Q* by Lu Hsun. Chairman Mao said: "*The True Story of Ah Q* is a fine story. I would recommend comrades who have read it before to reread it and those who haven't to read it carefully. In this story Lu Hsun writes mainly about a peasant who is backward and politically unawakened. He devotes a whole chapter, 'Barred from the Revolution', to describing how a Bogus Foreign Devil bars Ah Q from the revolution. Actually, all Ah Q understands by revolution is helping himself to a few things just like some others. But even this kind of revolution is denied him by the Bogus Foreign Devil. It seems to me that in this respect some people are quite like that Bogus Foreign Devil. They barred from the revolution those who had committed errors, drawing no distinction between the making of mistakes and counter-revolution, and went so far as to kill a number of people who were guilty only of mistakes. We must take this lesson to heart. It is bad either to bar people outside the Party from the revolution or to prohibit erring comrades inside the Party from making amends."

We are therefore republishing this famous story of Lu Hsun's in this issue.

— The Editors

## Introduction

For several years now I have been meaning to write the true story of Ah Q. But while wanting to write I was in some trepidation too, which goes to show that I am not one of those who achieve glory by writing; for an immortal pen has always been required to record the deeds of an immortal man, the man becoming known to posterity through the writing and the writing known to posterity through the man — until finally it is not clear who is making whom known. But in the end, as though possessed by some fiend, I always came back to the idea of writing the story of Ah Q.

And yet no sooner had I taken up my pen than I became conscious of tremendous difficulties in writing this far-from-immortal work. The first was the question of what to call it. Confucius said, “If the name is not correct, the words will not ring true”; and this axiom should be most scrupulously observed. There are many types of biography: official biographies, autobiographies, unauthorized biographies, legends, supplementary biographies, family histories, sketches . . . but unfortunately none of these suited my purpose. “Official biography”? This account will obviously not be included with those of many eminent people in some authentic history. “Autobiography”? But I am obviously not Ah Q. If I were to call this an “unauthorized biography”, then where is his “authenticated biography”? The use of “legend” is impossible because Ah Q was no legendary figure. “Supplementary biography”? But no president has ever ordered the National Historical Institute to write a “standard life” of Ah Q. It is true that although there are no “lives of gamblers” in authentic English history, the well-known author Conan Doyle nevertheless wrote *Rodney Stone*;<sup>\*</sup> but while this is permissible for a well-known author it is not permissible for such as I. Then there is “family history”; but I do not know whether I belong to the same family as Ah Q or not, nor have his children or grand-

<sup>\*</sup>In Chinese this title was translated as *Supplementary Biographies of the Gamblers*.



children ever entrusted me with such a task. If I were to use "sketch", it might be objected that Ah Q has no "complete account". In short, this is really a "life", but since I write in vulgar vein using the language of hucksters and pedlars, I dare not presume to give it so high-sounding a title. So I will take as my title the last two words of a stock phrase of the novelists, who are not reckoned among the Three Cults and Nine Schools,\* "Enough of this digression, and back to the *true story*"; and if this is reminiscent of the *True Story of Calligraphy*\*\* of the ancients, it cannot be helped.

The second difficulty confronting me was that a biography of this type should start off something like this: "So-and-so, whose other name was so-and-so, was a native of such-and-such a place"; but I don't really know what Ah Q's surname was. Once, he seemed to be named Chao, but the next day there was some confusion about the matter again. This was after Mr. Chao's son had passed the county examination and, to the sound of gongs, his success was announced in the village. Ah Q, who had just drunk two bowls of yellow wine, began to prance about declaring that this reflected credit on him too, since he belonged to the same clan as Mr. Chao and by an exact reckoning was three generations senior to the successful candidate. At the time several bystanders even began to stand slightly in awe of Ah Q. But the next day the bailiff summoned him to Mr. Chao's house. When the old gentleman set eyes on him his face turned crimson with fury and he roared:

"Ah Q, you miserable wretch! Did you say I belonged to the same clan as you?"

Ah Q made no reply.

The more he looked at him the angrier Mr. Chao became. Advancing menacingly a few steps he said, "How dare you talk such nonsense! How could I have such a relative as you? Is your surname Chao?"

Ah Q made no reply and was planning a retreat, when Mr. Chao darted forward and gave him a slap on the face.

\*The Three Cults were Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The Nine Schools included the Confucian, Taoist, Legalist, Moist, and other schools.

\*\*A book by Feng Wu of the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911).

"How could *you* be named Chao? Are you worthy of the name Chao?"

Ah Q made no attempt to defend his right to the name Chao but rubbing his left cheek went out with the bailiff from whom, once outside, he had to listen to another torrent of abuse. He then by way of atonement paid him two hundred cash. All who heard this said Ah Q was a great fool to ask for a beating like that. Even if his surname *were* Chao — which wasn't likely — he should have known better than to boast like that when there was a Mr. Chao living in the village. After this no further mention was made of Ah Q's ancestry, thus I still have no idea what his surname really was.

The third difficulty I encountered in writing this work was that I don't know how Ah Q's personal name should be written either. During his lifetime everybody called him Ah Kuei, but after his death not a soul mentioned Ah Kuei again; for he was obviously not one of those whose name is "preserved on bamboo tablets and silk".\* If there is any question of preserving his name, this essay must be the first attempt at doing so. Hence I am confronted with this difficulty at the outset. I have given the question careful thought. Ah Kuei — would that be the "Kuei" meaning fragrant osmanthus or the "Kuei" meaning nobility? If his other name had been Moon Pavilion, or if he had celebrated his birthday in the month of the Moon Festival, then it would certainly be the "Kuei" for fragrant osmanthus.\*\* But since he had no other name — or if he had, no one knew it — and since he never sent out invitations on his birthday to secure complimentary verses, it would be arbitrary to write Ah Kuei (fragrant osmanthus). Again, if he had had an elder or younger brother called Ah Fu (prosperity), then he would certainly be called Ah Kuei (nobility). But he was all on his own; thus there is no justification for writing Ah Kuei (nobility). All the other, unusual characters with the sound *kuei* are even less suitable. I once put this question

\*A phrase used before paper was invented when bamboo and silk served as writing material in China.

\*\*The fragrant osmanthus blooms in the month of the Moon Festival. And according to Chinese folklore, the shadow on the moon is an osmanthus tree.

to Mr. Chao's son, the successful county candidate, but even such a learned man as he was baffled by it. According to him, however, the reason why this name could not be traced was that Chen Tu-hsiu had brought out the magazine *New Youth* advocating the use of the Western alphabet, hence the national culture was going to the dogs. As a last resort, I asked someone from my district to go and look up the legal documents recording Ah Q's case, but after eight months he sent me a letter saying that there was no name anything like Ah Kuei in those records. Although uncertain whether this was the truth or whether my friend had simply done nothing, after failing to trace the name this way I could think of no other means of finding it. Since I am afraid the new system of phonetics has not yet come into common use, there is nothing for it but to use the Western alphabet, writing the name according to the English spelling as Ah Kuei and abbreviating it to Ah Q. This approximates to blindly following *New Youth*, and I am thoroughly ashamed of myself; but since even such a learned man as Mr. Chao's son could not solve my problem, what else can I do?

My fourth difficulty was with Ah Q's place of origin. If his surname were Chao, then according to the old custom which still prevails of classifying people by their district, one might look up the commentary in *The Hundred Surnames*\* and find "Native of Tienshui in Kansu". But unfortunately this surname is open to question, with the result that Ah Q's place of origin must also remain uncertain. Although he lived for the most part in Weichuang, he often stayed in other places, so that it would be wrong to call him a native of Weichuang. It would, in fact, amount to a distortion of history.

The only thing that consoles me is the fact that the character "Ah" is absolutely correct. This is definitely not the result of false analogy, and is well able to stand the test of scholarly criticism. As for the other problems, it is not for such unlearned people as myself to solve them, and I can only hope that disciples of Dr. Hu Shih, who has such "a passion for history and research", may be able in future to throw

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\*A school primer in which surnames were written into verse.

new light on them. I am afraid, however, that by that time my *True Story of Ah Q* will have long since passed into oblivion.

The foregoing may be considered as an introduction.

## CHAPTER 2

### A Brief Account of Ah Q's Victories

In addition to the uncertainty regarding Ah Q's surname, personal name, and place of origin, there is even some uncertainty regarding his "background". This is because the people of Weichuang only made use of his services or treated him as a laughing-stock, without ever paying the slightest attention to his "background". Ah Q himself remained silent on this subject, except that when quarrelling with someone he might glare at him and say, "We used to be much better off than you! Who do you think you are?"

Ah Q had no family but lived in the Tutelary God's Temple at Weichuang. He had no regular work either, being simply an odd-job-man for others: when there was wheat to be cut he would cut it, when there was rice to be hulled he would hull it, when there was a boat to be punted he would punt it. If the work lasted for any length of time he might stay in the house of his temporary employer, but as soon as it was finished he would leave. Thus whenever people had work to be done they would remember Ah Q, but what they remembered was his service and not his "background". By the time the job was done even Ah Q himself was forgotten, to say nothing of his "background". Once indeed an old man remarked, "What a worker Ah Q is!" Ah Q, bare-backed scrawny sluggard, was standing before him at the time, and others could not tell whether the remark was serious or derisive, but Ah Q was overjoyed.

Ah Q, again, had a very high opinion of himself. He looked down on all the inhabitants of Weichuang, thinking even the two young "scholars" not worth a smile, though most young scholars were likely

to pass the official examinations. Mr. Chao and Mr. Chien were held in great respect by the villagers, for in addition to being rich they were both the fathers of young scholars. Ah Q alone showed them no exceptional deference, thinking to himself, "My sons may be much greater."

Moreover, after Ah Q had been to town several times he naturally became even more conceited, although at the same time he had the greatest contempt for townspeople. For instance, a bench made of a wooden plank three feet by three inches the Weichuang villagers called a "long bench". Ah Q called it a "long bench" too; but the townspeople called it a "straight bench", and he thought, "This is wrong. Ridiculous!" Again, when they fried large-headed fish in oil the Weichuang villagers all added shallots sliced half an inch thick, whereas the townspeople added finely shredded shallots, and he thought, "This is wrong too. Ridiculous!" But the Weichuang villagers were really ignorant rustics who had never seen fish fried in town.

Ah Q who "used to be much better off", who was a man of the world and a "worker", would have been almost the perfect man had it not been for a few unfortunate physical blemishes. The most annoying were some patches on his scalp where at some uncertain date shiny ringworm scars had appeared. Although these were on his own head, apparently Ah Q did not consider them as altogether honourable, for he refrained from using the word "ringworm" or any words that sounded anything like it. Later he improved on this, making "bright" and "light" forbidden words, while later still even "lamp" and "candle" were taboo. Whenever this taboo was disregarded, whether intentionally or not, Ah Q would fly into a rage, his ringworm scars turning scarlet. He would look over the offender, and if it were someone weak in repartee he would curse him, while if it were a poor fighter he would hit him. Yet, curiously enough, it was usually Ah Q who was worsted in these encounters, until finally he adopted new tactics, contenting himself in general with a furious glare.

It so happened, however, that after Ah Q had taken to using this furious glare, the idlers in Weichuang grew even more fond of making

jokes at his expense. As soon as they saw him they would pretend to give a start and say:

"Look! It's lighting up."

Ah Q rising to the bait as usual would glare in fury.

"So there is a paraffin lamp here," they would continue, unafraid.

Ah Q could do nothing but rack his brains for some retort. "You don't even deserve. . . ." At this juncture it seemed as if the bald patches on his scalp were noble and honourable, not just ordinary ringworm scars. However, as we said above, Ah Q was a man of the world: he knew at once that he had nearly broken the "taboo" and refrained from saying any more.

If the idlers were still not satisfied but continued to pester him, they would in the end come to blows. Then only after Ah Q had to all appearances been defeated, had his brownish queue pulled and his head bumped against the wall four or five times, would the idlers walk away, satisfied at having won. And Ah Q would stand there for a second thinking to himself, "It's as if I were beaten by my son. What is the world coming to nowadays. . . ." Thereupon he too would walk away, satisfied at having won.

Whatever Ah Q thought he was sure to tell people later; thus almost all who made fun of Ah Q knew that he had this means of winning a psychological victory. So after this anyone who pulled or twisted his brown queue would forestall him by saying: "Ah Q, this is not a son beating his father, it is a man beating a beast. Let's hear you say it: A man beating a beast!"

Then Ah Q, clutching at the root of his queue, his head on one side, would say: "Beating an insect — how about that? I am an insect — now will you let me go?"

But although he was an insect the idlers would not let him go until they had knocked his head five or six times against something nearby, according to their custom, after which they would walk away satisfied that they had won, confident that this time Ah Q was done for. In less than ten seconds, however, Ah Q would walk away also satisfied that he had won, thinking that he was the "Number One self-belittler", and that after subtracting "self-belittler" what remained was "Number One". Was not the highest successful candidate in the official

examination also "Number One"? "And who do you think *you* are?"

After employing such cunning devices to get even with his enemies, Ah Q would make his way cheerfully to the tavern to drink a few bowls of wine, joke with the others again, quarrel with them again, come off victorious again, and return cheerfully to the Tutelary God's Temple, there to fall asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. If he had money he would gamble. A group of men would squat on the ground, Ah Q sandwiched in their midst, his face streaming with sweat; and his voice would shout the loudest: "Four hundred on the Green Dragon!"

"Hey — open there!"

The stake-holder, his face streaming with sweat too, would open the box and chant: "Heavenly Gate! — Nothing for the Corner! . . . No stakes on Popularity Passage! Pass over Ah Q's coppers!"

"The Passage — one hundred — one hundred and fifty."

To the tune of this chanting, Ah Q's money would gradually vanish into the pockets of other sweating players. Finally he would be forced to squeeze his way out of the crowd and watch from the back, taking a vicarious interest in the game until it broke up, when he would return reluctantly to the Tutelary God's Temple. The next day he would go to work with swollen eyes.

However, the truth of the proverb "Misfortune may prove a blessing in disguise" was shown when Ah Q was unfortunate enough to win and almost suffered defeat in the end.

This was the evening of the Festival of the Gods in Weichuang. According to custom there was an opera; and close to the stage, also according to custom, were numerous gambling tables. The drums and gongs of the opera sounded miles away to Ah Q who had ears only for the stake-holder's chant. He staked successfully again and again, his coppers turning into silver coins, his silver coins into dollars, and his dollars mounting up. In his excitement he cried out, "Two dollars on Heavenly Gate!"

He never knew who started the fight, nor for what reason. Curses, blows, and footsteps formed a confused medley of sound in his head, and by the time he clambered to his feet the gambling tables had van-

ished and so had the gamblers. Several parts of his body seemed to be aching as if he had been kicked and knocked about, while a number of people were looking at him in astonishment. Feeling as if something were amiss he walked back to the Tutelary God's Temple, and by the time he had calmed down again he realized that his pile of dollars had gone. Since most of the people who ran gambling tables at the Festival were not natives of Weichuang, where could he look for the culprits?

So white and glittering a pile of silver! All of it his . . . but now it had disappeared. Even to consider this tantamount to being robbed by his son did not comfort him. To consider himself as an insect did not comfort him either. This time he really tasted something of the bitterness of defeat.

But presently he changed defeat into victory. Raising his right hand he slapped his own face hard, twice, so that it tingled with pain. After this slapping his heart felt lighter, for it seemed as if the one who had given the slap was himself, the one slapped some other self, and soon it was just as if he had beaten someone else — in spite of the fact that his face was still tingling. He lay down satisfied that he had gained the victory.

Soon he was asleep.

## CHAPTER 3

### A Further Account of Ah Q's Victories

Although Ah Q was always gaining victories, it was only after he was favoured with a slap in the face by Mr. Chao that he became famous.

After paying the bailiff two hundred cash he lay down angrily. Then he said to himself, "What is the world coming to nowadays, with sons beating their fathers. . . ." And then the thought of the prestige of Mr. Chao, who was now his son, gradually raised his spirits. He scrambled up and made his way to the tavern singing *The Young Widow*

*at Her Husband's Grave.\** At that time he did feel that Mr. Chao was a cut above most people.

After this incident, strange to relate, it was true that everybody seemed to pay him unusual respect. He probably attributed this to the fact that he was Mr. Chao's father, but actually such was not the case. In Weichuang, as a rule, if the seventh child hit the eighth child or Li So-and-so hit Chang So-and-so, it was not taken seriously. A beating had to be connected with some important personage like Mr. Chao before the villagers thought it worth talking about. But once they thought it worth talking about, since the beater was famous the one beaten enjoyed some of his reflected fame. As for the fault being Ah Q's, that was naturally taken for granted, the reason being that Mr. Chao could do no wrong. But if Ah Q were wrong, why did everybody seem to treat him with unusual respect? This is difficult to explain. We may put forward the hypothesis that it was because Ah Q had said he belonged to the same family as Mr. Chao; thus, although he had been beaten, people were still afraid there might be some truth in his assertion and therefore thought it safer to treat him more respectfully. Or, alternatively, it may have been like the case of the sacrificial beef in the Confucian temple: although the beef was in the same category as the pork and mutton, being of animal origin just as they were, later Confucians did not dare touch it since the sage had enjoyed it.

After this Ah Q prospered for several years.

One spring, when he was walking along in a state of happy intoxication, he saw Whiskers Wang sitting stripped to the waist in the sunlight at the foot of a wall, catching lice; and at this sight his own body began to itch. Since Whiskers Wang was scabby and bewhiskered, everybody called him "Ringworm Whiskers Wang". Although Ah Q omitted the word "Ringworm", he had the greatest contempt for the man. To Ah Q, while scabs were nothing to take exception to, such hairy cheeks were really too outlandish and could excite nothing but scorn. So Ah Q sat down by his side. Had it been any other idler, Ah Q would never have dared sit down so casually; but what

\*A local opera popular in Shaohsing.

had he to fear by the side of Whiskers Wang? In fact, his willingness to sit down was doing the fellow an honour.

Ah Q took off his tattered lined jacket and turned it inside out; but either because he had washed it recently or because he was too clumsy, a long search yielded only three or four lice. He saw that Whiskers Wang, on the other hand, was catching first one and then another in swift succession, cracking them between his teeth with a popping sound.

Ah Q felt first disappointed, then resentful: the despicable Whiskers Wang had so many, he himself so few — what a great loss of face! He longed to find one or two big ones, but there were none, and when at last he managed to catch a middle-sized one, stuffed it fiercely between his thick lips and bit hard, the resultant pop was again inferior to the noise made by Whiskers Wang.

All Ah Q's ringworm patches turned scarlet. He flung his jacket on the ground, spat, and swore, "Hairy worm!"

"Mangy dog, who are you calling names?" Whiskers Wang looked up contemptuously.

Although the relative respect accorded him in recent years had increased Ah Q's pride, he was still rather timid when confronted by those loafers accustomed to fighting. But today he was feeling exceptionally pugnacious. How dare a hairy-cheeked creature like this insult him?

"If the cap fits wear it," he retorted, standing up and putting his hands on his hips.

"Are your bones itching?" demanded Whiskers Wang, standing up too and draping his jacket over his shoulders.

Thinking that the fellow meant to run away, Ah Q lunged forward to punch him. But before his fist reached the target, his opponent seized him and gave him a tug which sent him staggering. Then Whiskers Wang seized his queue and started dragging him towards the wall to knock his head in the time-honoured manner.

"A gentleman uses his tongue but not his hands!" protested Ah Q, his head on one side.

Apparently Whiskers Wang was no gentleman, for without paying the slightest attention to what Ah Q said he knocked his head against

the wall five times in succession, then with a great push shoved him two yards away, after which he walked off in triumph.

As far as Ah Q could remember, this was the first humiliation of his life, because he had always scoffed at Whiskers Wang on account of his ugly bewhiskered cheeks, but had never been scoffed at, much less beaten by him. And now, contrary to all expectations, Whiskers Wang had beaten him. Could it really be true, as they said in the market-place: "The Emperor has abolished the official examinations, so that scholars who have passed them are no longer in demand"? This must have undermined the Chao family's prestige. Was this why people were treating him contemptuously too?

Ah Q stood there irresolutely.

From the distance approached another of Ah Q's enemies. This was Mr. Chien's eldest son whom Ah Q thoroughly despised. After studying in a foreign-style school in the city, it seemed he had gone to Japan. When he came home half a year later his legs were straight\* and his queue had disappeared. His mother wept bitterly a dozen times, and his wife tried three times to jump into the well. Later his mother told everyone, "His queue was cut off by some scoundrel when he was drunk. By rights he ought to be a big official, but now he'll have to wait till it's grown again." Ah Q, however, did not believe this, and insisted on calling him a "Bogus Foreign Devil" or "Traitor in Foreign Pay". At sight of him he would start cursing under his breath.

What Ah Q despised and detested most in him was his false queue. When it came to having a false queue, a man could scarcely be considered human; and the fact that his wife had not attempted to jump into the well a fourth time showed that she was not a good woman either.

Now this "Bogus Foreign Devil" was approaching.

"Baldhead! Ass. . . ." In the past Ah Q had just cursed under his breath, inaudibly; but today, because he was in a rage and itching for revenge, the words slipped out involuntarily.

Unfortunately this Baldhead was carrying a shiny brown cane which looked to Ah Q like the "staff carried by a mourner". With

\*The stiff-legged stride of many foreigners led some Chinese to believe that their knees had no joints.

great strides he bore down on Ah Q who, guessing at once that a beating was in the offing, hastily flexed his muscles and hunched his shoulders in anticipation. Sure enough, *Thwack!* something struck him on the head.

"I meant him!" explained Ah Q, pointing to a nearby child.

*Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!*

As far as Ah Q could remember, this was the second humiliation of his life. Fortunately after the thwacking stopped it seemed to him that the matter was closed, and he even felt somewhat relieved. Moreover, the precious "ability to forget" handed down by his ancestors stood him in good stead. He walked slowly away and by the time he approached the tavern door he was quite cheerful again.

Just then, however, a small nun from the Convent of Quiet Self-Improvement came walking towards him. The sight of a nun always made Ah Q swear; how much more so, then, after these humiliations? When he recalled what had happened, his anger flared up again.

"I couldn't think what made my luck so bad today — so it's meeting you that did it!" he fumed to himself.

Going towards her he spat noisily. "Ugh! . . . Pah!"

The small nun paid not the least attention but walked on with lowered head. Ah Q stepped up to her and shot out a hand to rub her newly shaved scalp, then with a guffaw cried, "Baldhead! Go back quick, your monk's waiting for you. . . ."

"Who are you pawing? . . ." demanded the nun, flushing all over her face as she quickened her pace.

The men in the tavern roared with laughter. This appreciation of his feat added to Ah Q's elation.

"If the monk paws you, why can't I?" He pinched her cheek.

Again the men in the tavern roared with laughter. More bucked than ever, and eager to please his admirers, Ah Q pinched her hard again before letting her go.

This encounter had made him forget Whiskers Wang and the Bogus Foreign Devil, as if all the day's bad luck had been avenged. And strange to relate, even more completely relaxed than after the thwacking, he felt as light as if he were walking on air.

"Ah Q, may you die sonless!" wailed the little nun already some distance away.

Ah Q roared with delighted laughter.

The men in the tavern joined in, with only a shade less gusto in their laughter.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Tragedy of Love

There are said to be some victors who take no pleasure in a victory unless their opponents are as fierce as tigers or eagles: in the case of foes as timid as sheep or chickens they find their triumph empty. There are other victors who, having carried all before them, with the enemy slain or surrendered, utterly cowed, realize that now no foe, no rival, no friend is left—none but themselves, supreme, lonely, lost, and forlorn. Then they find their triumph a tragedy. But not so our hero: he was always exultant. This may be a proof of the moral supremacy of China over the rest of the world.

Look at Ah Q, elated as if he were walking on air!

This victory was not without strange consequences, though. For after walking on air for quite a time he floated into the Tutelary God's Temple, where he would normally have started snoring as soon as he lay down. This evening, however, he found it very hard to close his eyes, being struck by something odd about his thumb and first finger, which seemed to be smoother than usual. It is impossible to say whether something soft and smooth on the little nun's face had stuck to his fingers, or whether his fingers had been rubbed smooth against her cheek.

"Ah Q, may you die sonless!"

These words sounded again in Ah Q's ears, and he thought, "Quite right, I should take a wife; for if a man dies sonless he has no one to sacrifice a bowl of rice to his spirit . . . I ought to have a wife." As

the saying goes, "There are three forms of unfilial conduct, of which the worst is to have no descendants",\* and it is one of the tragedies of life that "spirits without descendants go hungry".\*\* Thus his view was absolutely in accordance with the teachings of the saints and sages, and it is indeed a pity that later he should have run amok.

"Woman, woman! . . ." he thought.

" . . . The monk paws . . . Woman, woman! . . . Woman!" he thought again.

We shall never know when Ah Q finally fell asleep that evening. After this, however, he probably always found his fingers rather soft and smooth, and always remained a little light-headed. "Woman . . ." he kept thinking.

From this we can see that woman is a menace to mankind.

The majority of Chinese men could become saints and sages, were it not for the unfortunate fact that they are ruined by women. The Shang Dynasty was destroyed by Ta Chi, the Chou Dynasty was undermined by Pao Szu; as for the Chin Dynasty, although there is no historical evidence to that effect, if we assume that it fell on account of some woman we shall probably not be far wrong. And it is a fact that Tung Cho's death was caused by Tiao Chan.\*\*\*

Ah Q, too, was a man of strict morals to begin with. Although we do not know whether he was guided by some good teacher, he had always shown himself most scrupulous in observing "strict segregation of the sexes", and was righteous enough to denounce such heretics as the little nun and the Bogus Foreign Devil. His view was, "All nuns must carry on in secret with monks. If a woman walks alone on the street, she must want to seduce bad men. When a man and a woman talk together, it must be to arrange to meet." In order to correct such people, he would glare furiously, pass loud, cutting

\*A quotation from Mencius (372-289 B.C.).

\*\*A quotation from the old classic *Tso Chuan*.

\*\*\*Ta Chi, in the twelfth century B.C., was the concubine of the last king of the Shang Dynasty. Pao Szu, in the eighth century B.C., was the concubine of the last king of the Western Chou Dynasty. Tiao Chan was the concubine of Tung Cho, a powerful warlord at the end of the Han Dynasty.

remarks, or, if the place were deserted, throw a small stone from behind.

Who could tell that close on thirty, when a man should "stand firm",\* he would lose his head like this over a little nun? Such light-headedness, according to the classical canons, is most reprehensible; thus women certainly are hateful creatures. For if the little nun's face had not been soft and smooth, Ah Q would not have been bewitched by her; nor would this have happened if the little nun's face had been covered by a cloth. Five or six years before, when watching an open-air opera, he had pinched the leg of a woman in the audience; but because it was separated from him by the cloth of her trousers he had not had this light-headed feeling afterwards. The little nun had not covered her face, however, and this is another proof of the odiousness of the heretic.

"Woman. . . ." thought Ah Q.

He kept a close watch on those women who he believed must "want to seduce men", but they did not smile at him. He listened very carefully to those women who talked to him, but not one of them mentioned anything relevant to a secret rendezvous. Ah! This was simply another example of the odiousness of women: they all assumed a false modesty.

One day when Ah Q was grinding rice in Mr. Chao's house, he sat down in the kitchen after supper to smoke a pipe. If it had been anyone else's house, he could have gone home after supper, but they dined early in the Chao family. Although it was the rule that you must not light a lamp but go to bed after eating, there were occasional exceptions to the rule. Before Mr. Chao's son passed the county examination he was allowed to light a lamp to study the examination essays, and when Ah Q went to do odd jobs he was allowed to light a lamp to grind rice. Because of this latter exception to the rule, Ah Q still sat in the kitchen smoking before going on with his work.

When Amah Wu, the only maidservant in the Chao household, had finished washing the dishes, she sat down on the long bench too and started chatting to Ah Q:

\*Confucius said that at thirty he "stood firm". The phrase was later used to indicate that a man was thirty years old.

"Our mistress hasn't eaten anything for two days, because the master wants to get a concubine. . . ."

"Woman. . . Amah Wu. . . this little widow," thought Ah Q.

"Our young mistress is going to have a baby in the eighth moon. . . ."

"Woman. . . ." thought Ah Q.

He put down his pipe and stood up.

"Our young mistress —" Amah Wu chattered on.

"Sleep with me!" Ah Q suddenly rushed forward and threw himself at her feet.

There was a moment of absolute silence.

"Aiya!" Dumbfounded for an instant, Amah Wu suddenly began to tremble, then rushed out shrieking and could soon be heard sobbing.

Ah Q kneeling opposite the wall was dumbfounded too. He grasped the empty bench with both hands and stood up slowly, dimly aware that something was wrong. In fact, by this time he was in rather a nervous state himself. In a flurry, he stuck his pipe into his belt and decided to go back to grind rice. But — *Bang!* — a heavy blow landed on his head, and he spun round to see the successful county candidate standing before him brandishing a big bamboo pole.

"How dare you . . . you. . . ."

The big bamboo pole came down across Ah Q's shoulders. When he put up both hands to protect his head, the blow landed on his knuckles, causing him considerable pain. As he escaped through the kitchen door it seemed as if his back also received a blow.

"Turtle's egg!" shouted the successful candidate, cursing him in mandarin from behind.

Ah Q fled to the hulling-floor where he stood alone, his knuckles still aching and still remembering that "Turtle's egg!" because it was an expression never used by the Weichuang villagers but only by the rich who had seen something of official life. This made it the more alarming, the more impressive. By now, however, all thought of "Woman. . ." had flown. After this cursing and beating it seemed as if something were done with, and quite light-heartedly he began to grind rice again. Soon this made him hot, and he stopped to take off his shirt.



While taking off his shirt he heard an uproar outside, and since Ah Q was all for excitement he went out in search of the sound. Step by step he traced it into Mr. Chao's inner courtyard. Although it was dusk he could see many people there: all the Chao family including the mistress who had not eaten for two days. In addition, their neighbour Mrs. Chou was there, as well as their relatives Chao Pai-yen and Chao Szu-chen.

The young mistress was leading Amah Wu out of the servants' quarters, saying as she did so:

"Come outside . . . don't stay brooding in your own room."

"Everybody knows you are a good woman," put in Mrs. Chou from the side. "You mustn't think of committing suicide."

Amah Wu merely wailed, muttering something inaudible.

"This is interesting," thought Ah Q. "What mischief can this little widow be up to?" Wanting to find out, he was approaching Chao Szu-chen when suddenly he caught sight of Mr. Chao's eldest son rushing towards him with, what was worse, the big bamboo pole in his hand. The sight of this big bamboo pole reminded him that he had been beaten by it, and he realized that apparently he was connected in some way with all this excitement. He turned and ran, hoping to escape to the hulling-floor, not foreseeing that the bamboo pole would cut off his retreat. When it did, he turned and ran in the other direction, leaving without further ado by the back gate. Soon he was back in the Tutelary God's Temple.

After Ah Q had been sitting down for a time, he broke out in goose-flesh and felt cold, because although it was spring the nights were still chilly and not suited to bare backs. He remembered that he had left his shirt in the Chaos' house but was afraid that if he went to fetch it he might get another taste of the successful candidate's bamboo pole.

Then the bailiff came in.

"Curse you, Ah Q!" said the bailiff. "So you can't even keep your hands off the Chao family servants, you rebel! You've made me lose my sleep, damn it! . . ."

Under this torrent of abuse Ah Q naturally had nothing to say. Finally, since it was night-time, he had to pay the bailiff double: four hundred cash. Because he happened to have no ready money by him, he gave his felt hat as security, and agreed to the following five terms:

1. The next morning Ah Q must take a pair of red candles, weighing one pound each, and a bundle of incense sticks to the Chao family to atone for his misdeeds.

2. Ah Q must pay for the Taoist priests whom the Chao family had called to exorcize evil spirits.

3. Ah Q must never again set foot in the Chao household.
4. If anything unfortunate should happen to Amah Wu, Ah Q must be held responsible.
5. Ah Q must not go back for his wages or shirt.

Ah Q naturally agreed to everything, but unfortunately he had no ready money. Luckily it was already spring, so it was possible to do without his padded quilt which he pawned for two thousand cash to comply with the terms stipulated. After kowtowing with bare back he still had a few cash left, but instead of using these to redeem his felt hat from the bailiff, he spent them all on drink.

Actually, the Chao family burned neither the incense nor the candles, because these could be used when the mistress worshipped Buddha and were put aside for that purpose. Most of the ragged shirt was made into diapers for the baby which was born to the young mistress in the eighth moon, while the tattered remainder was used by Amah Wu to make shoe-soles.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Problem of Making a Living

After Ah Q had kowtowed and complied with the Chao family's terms, he went back as usual to the Tutelary God's Temple. The sun had gone down, and he began to feel that something was wrong. Careful thought led him to the conclusion that this was probably because his back was bare. Remembering that he still had a ragged lined jacket, he put it on and lay down, and when he opened his eyes again the sun was already shining on the top of the west wall. He sat up, saying, "Curse it. . ."

After getting up he loafed about the streets as usual, until he began to feel that something else was wrong, though this was not to be compared to the physical discomfort of a bare back. Apparently, from that day onwards all the women in Weichuang fought

shy of Ah Q: whenever they saw him coming they took refuge indoors. In fact, even Mrs. Chou who was nearing fifty retreated in confusion with the rest, calling her eleven-year-old daughter to go inside. This struck Ah Q as very strange. "The bitches!" he thought. "All of a sudden they're behaving like young ladies. . ."

A good many days later, however, he felt even more forcibly that something was wrong. First, the tavern refused him credit; secondly, the old man in charge of the Tutelary God's Temple made some uncalled-for remarks, as if he wanted Ah Q to leave; and thirdly, for many days — how many exactly he could not remember — not a soul had come to hire him. To be refused credit in the tavern he could put up with; if the old man kept urging him to leave, he could just ignore his complaints; but when no one came to hire him he had to go hungry, and this was really a "cursed" state to be in.

When Ah Q could stand it no longer he went to his former employers' homes to find out what was the matter — it was only Mr. Chao's threshold that he was not allowed to cross. But he met with a strange reception. The one to appear was always a man looking thoroughly annoyed who waved him away as if he were a beggar, saying:

"There's nothing for you, get out!"

Ah Q found it more and more extraordinary. "These people always needed help in the past," he thought. "They can't suddenly have nothing to be done. This looks fishy." After making careful inquiries he found out that when they had any odd jobs they all called in Young D. Now this Young D was a thin and weakly pauper, even lower in Ah Q's eyes than Whiskers Wang. Who could have thought that this low fellow would steal his living from him? So this time Ah Q's indignation was greater than usual, and going on his way, fuming, he suddenly raised his arm and sang: "Steel mace in hand I shall trounce you. . ."\*

A few days later he did indeed meet Young D in front of Mr.

\*A line from *The Battle of the Dragon and the Tiger*, an opera popular in Shaohsing.

Chien's house. "When two focs meet, there is no mistaking each other." As Ah Q advanced upon him, Young D stood his ground.

"Beast!" spluttered Ah Q, glaring.

"I'm an insect — will that do?..." rejoined Young D.

Such modesty only enraged Ah Q even more, but since he had no steel mace in his hand all he could do was rush forward to grab at Young D's queue. Young D, protecting his own queue with one hand, grabbed at Ah Q's with the other, whereupon Ah Q also used his free hand to protect his own queue. In the past Ah Q had never considered Young D worth taking seriously, but owing to his recent privations he was now as thin and weak as his opponent, so that they presented a spectacle of evenly matched antagonists, four hands clutching at two heads, both men bending at the waist, casting a blue, rainbow-shaped shadow on the Chien family's white wall for over half an hour.

"All right! All right!" exclaimed some of the onlookers, probably by way of mediation.

"Good, good!" exclaimed others, but whether to mediate, applaud the fighters, or spur them on to further efforts, is not certain.

The two combatants turned deaf ears to them all, however. If Ah Q advanced three paces, Young D would recoil three paces, and there they would stand. If Young D advanced three paces, Ah Q would recoil three paces, and there they would stand again. After about half an hour — Weichuang had few clocks, so it is difficult to tell the time; it may have been twenty minutes — when steam was rising from their heads and sweat pouring down their cheeks, Ah Q let fall his hands, and in the same second Young D's hands fell too. They straightened up simultaneously and stepped back simultaneously, pushing their way out through the crowd.

"Just you wait, curse you!..." called Ah Q over his shoulder.

"Curse you! Just you wait!..." echoed Young D, also over his shoulder.

This epic struggle had apparently ended in neither victory nor defeat, and it is not known whether the spectators were satisfied or not, for none of them expressed any opinion. But still not a soul came to hire Ah Q for odd jobs.

One warm day, when a balmy breeze seemed to give some foretaste of summer, Ah Q actually felt cold; but he could put up with this — his greatest worry was an empty stomach. His cotton quilt, felt hat, and shirt had long since disappeared, and after that he had sold his padded jacket. Now nothing was left but his trousers, and these of course he could not take off. He had a ragged lined jacket, it is true; but this was certainly worthless, unless he gave it away to be made into shoe-soles. He had long been dreaming of finding some money on the road, but hitherto he had not come across any; he had also been hoping he might suddenly discover some money in his tumble-down room, and had frantically ransacked it, but the room was quite, quite empty. Then he made up his mind to go out in search of food.

As he walked along the road "in search of food" he saw the familiar tavern and the familiar steamed bread, but he passed them by without pausing for a second, without even hankering after them. It was not these he was looking for, although what exactly he was looking for he did not know himself.

Since Weichuang was not a big place, he soon left it behind. Most of the country outside the village consisted of paddy fields, green as far as the eye could see with the tender shoots of young rice, dotted here and there with round black, moving objects — peasants cultivating their fields. But blind to the delights of country life, Ah Q simply went on his way, for he knew instinctively that this was far removed from his "search for food". Finally, however, he came to the walls of the Convent of Quiet Self-Improvement.

The convent too was surrounded by paddy fields, its white walls standing out sharply in the fresh green, and inside the low earthen wall at the back was a vegetable garden. Ah Q hesitated for a time, looking around him. Since there was no one in sight he scrambled on to the low wall, holding on to some milkwort. The mud wall started crumbling, and Ah Q shook with fear; however, by clutching at the branch of a mulberry tree he managed to jump over it. Within was a wild profusion of vegetation, but no sign of yellow wine, steamed bread, or anything edible. A clump of bamboos by the west wall had put forth many young shoots, but unfortunately these

were not cooked. There was also rape which had long since gone to seed, mustard already about to flower, and some tough old cabbages.

Resentful as a scholar who has failed the examinations, Ah Q walked slowly towards the gate of the garden. Suddenly, however, he gave a start of joy, for what did he see there but a patch of turnips! He knelt down and had just begun pulling when a round head appeared from behind the gate, only to be promptly withdrawn. This was no other than the little nun. Now though Ah Q had always had the greatest contempt for such people as little nuns, there are times when "Discretion is the better part of valour". He hastily pulled up four turnips, tore off the leaves, and stuffed them under his jacket. By this time an old nun had already come out.

"May Buddha preserve us, Ah Q! How dare you climb into our garden to steal turnips! . . . Mercy on us, what a wicked thing to do! Aiya, Buddha preserve us! . . ."

"When did I ever climb into your garden and steal turnips?" retorted Ah Q as he started off, keeping his eyes on her.

"Now — aren't you?" The old nun pointed at the bulge in his jacket.

"Are these yours? Will they come when you call? You. . ."

Leaving his sentence unfinished, Ah Q took to his heels as fast as he could, followed by a huge fat black dog. Originally this dog had been at the front gate, and how it reached the back garden was a mystery. With a snarl the black dog gave chase and was just about to bite Ah Q's leg when most opportunely a turnip fell from his jacket, and the dog, taken by surprise, stopped for a second. During this time Ah Q scrambled up the mulberry tree, scaled the mud wall, and fell, turnips and all, outside the convent. He left the black dog still barking by the mulberry tree, and the old nun saying her prayers.

Fearing that the nun would let the black dog out again, Ah Q gathered together his turnips and ran, picking up a few small stones as he went. But the black dog did not reappear. Ah Q threw away the stones and walked on, eating as he went, thinking to himself: "There is nothing to be had here: better go to town. . ."

By the time the third turnip was finished he had made up his mind to go to town.

## CHAPTER 6

### From Resurgence to Decline

Weichuang did not see Ah Q again till just after the Moon Festival that year. Everybody was surprised to hear of his return, and this made them think back and wonder where he had been all that time. In the past Ah Q had usually taken great pleasure in announcing his few visits to town; but since he had not done so this time, his going had passed unnoticed. He may have told the old man in charge of the Tutelary God's Temple, but according to the custom of Weichuang only a trip to town by Mr. Chao, Mr. Chien, or the successful county candidate counted as important. Even the Bogus Foreign Devil's going was not talked about, much less Ah Q's. This would explain why the old man had not spread the news for him, with the result that the villagers remained in the dark.

Ah Q's return this time was very different from before, and in fact quite enough to occasion astonishment. The day was growing dark when he showed up, bleary-eyed, at the tavern door, walked up to the counter, and tossed down on it a handful of silver and coppers produced from his belt. "Cash!" he announced. "Bring the wine!" He was wearing a new lined jacket and at his waist hung a large purse, the great weight of which caused his belt to sag in a sharp curve.

It was the custom in Weichuang that anyone in any way unusual should be treated with respect rather than disregarded, and now, although they knew quite well that this was Ah Q, still he was very different from the Ah Q of the ragged coat. The ancients say, "A scholar who has been away three days must be looked at with new eyes." So the waiter, tavern-keeper, customers, and passers-by

all quite naturally expressed a kind of suspicion mingled with respect. The tavern-keeper started off by nodding, following this up with the words:

"So you're back, Ah Q!"

"Yes, I'm back."

"Made a pretty packet, eh? . . . Where . . .?"

"I've been in town."

By the next day this piece of news had spread through Weichuang. And since everybody wanted to hear the success story of this Ah Q of the ready money and the new lined jacket, in the tavern, tea-house, and under the temple eaves, the villagers gradually ferreted out the news. The result was that they began to treat Ah Q with a new deference.

According to Ah Q, he had been a servant in the house of a successful provincial candidate. This part of the story filled all who heard it with awe. This successful provincial candidate was named Pai, but because he was the only successful provincial candidate in the whole town there was no need to use his surname: whenever anyone spoke of the successful provincial candidate, it meant him. And this was so not only in Weichuang, for almost everyone within a radius of thirty miles imagined his name to be Mr. Successful Provincial Candidate. To have worked in the household of such a man naturally called for respect; but according to Ah Q's further statements, he was unwilling to go on working there because this successful candidate was really too much of a "turtle's egg". This part of the story made all who heard it sigh, but with a sense of pleasure, because it showed that Ah Q was unworthy to work in the household of such a man, yet not to work there was a pity.

According to Ah Q, his return was also due to his dissatisfaction with the townspeople because they called a long bench a straight bench, used shredded shallots to fry fish, and — a defect he had recently discovered — the women did not sway in a very satisfactory manner as they walked. However, the town had its good points too; for instance, in Weichuang everyone played with thirty-two bamboo counters and only the Bogus Foreign Devil could play mah-jong, but in town even the street urchins excelled at mah-jong. You had

only to place the Bogus Foreign Devil in the hands of these young rascals in their teens for him straightway to become like "a small devil before the King of Hell". This part of the story made all who heard it blush.

"Have you seen an execution?" asked Ah Q. "Ah, that's a fine sight. . . . When they execute the revolutionaries. . . . Ah, that's a fine sight, a fine sight. . . ." He shook his head, sending his spittle flying on to the face of Chao Szu-chen who was standing opposite him. This part of the story made all who heard it tremble. Then with a glance around, he suddenly raised his right hand and dropped it on the neck of Whiskers Wang who, craning forward, was listening with rapt attention.

"Off with his head!" shouted Ah Q.

Whiskers Wang gave a start, and jerked back his head as fast as lightning or a spark struck from a flint, while the bystanders shivered with pleasurable apprehension. After this, Whiskers Wang went about in a daze for many days and dared not go near Ah Q, nor did the others.

Although we cannot say that in the eyes of the inhabitants of Weichuang Ah Q's status at this time was superior to that of Mr. Chao, we can at least affirm without any danger of inaccuracy that it was approximately equivalent.

Not long after, Ah Q's fame suddenly spread into the women's apartments of Weichuang too. Although the only two families of any pretensions in Weichuang were those of Chien and Chao, and nine-tenths of the rest were poor, still women's apartments are women's apartments, and the way Ah Q's fame spread into them was quite miraculous. When the womenfolk met they would say to each other, "Mrs. Chou bought a blue silk skirt from Ah Q. Although it was old, it only cost ninety cents. And Chao Pai-yen's mother (this has yet to be verified, because some say it was Chao Szu-chen's mother) bought a child's costume of crimson foreign calico which was nearly new for only three hundred cash, less eight per cent discount."

Then those who had no silk skirt or needed foreign calico were most anxious to see Ah Q in order to buy from him. Far from avoid-

ing him now, they sometimes followed him when he passed, calling to him to stop.

"Ah Q, have you any more silk skirts?" they would ask. "No? We want foreign calico too. Do you have any?"

This news later spread from the poor households to the rich ones, because Mrs. Chou was so pleased with her silk skirt that she took it to Mrs. Chao for her approval, and Mrs. Chao told Mr. Chao, speaking very highly of it.

Mr. Chao discussed the matter that evening at dinner with his son the successful county candidate, suggesting that there was certainly something strange about Ah Q and that they should be more careful about their doors and windows. They did not know, though, what if anything Ah Q had left — he might still have something good. Since Mrs. Chao happened to want a good cheap fur jacket, after a family council it was decided to ask Mrs. Chou to find Ah Q for them at once. For this a third exception was made to the rule, special permission being given that evening for a lamp to be lit.

A considerable amount of oil had been burned, but still there was no sign of Ah Q. The whole Chao household was yawning with impatience, some of them resenting Ah Q's casualness, others blaming Mrs. Chou for not making a greater effort. Mrs. Chao was afraid that Ah Q dared not come because of the terms agreed upon that spring, but Mr. Chao did not think this anything to worry about because, as he said, "This time *I* sent for him." Sure enough, Mr. Chao proved himself a man of insight, for Ah Q finally arrived with Mrs. Chou.

"He keeps saying he has nothing left," panted Mrs. Chou as she came in. "When I told him to come and tell you so himself he kept talking back. I told him..."

"Sir!" cried Ah Q with an attempt at a smile, coming to a halt under the eaves.

"I hear you did well for yourself in town, Ah Q," said Mr. Chao, going up to him and looking him over carefully. "Very good. Now... they say you have some old things... Bring them all here for us to look at. This is simply because I happen to want..."

"I told Mrs. Chou — there's nothing left."

"Nothing left?" Mrs. Chao could not help sounding disappointed. "How could they go so quickly?"

"They belonged to a friend, and there wasn't much to begin with. People bought some..."

"There must be something left."

"Only a door curtain."

"Then bring the door curtain for us to see," said Mrs. Chao hurriedly.

"Well, tomorrow will do," said Mr. Chao without much enthusiasm. "When you have anything in future, Ah Q, you must bring it to us first..."

"We certainly won't pay less than other people!" said the successful county candidate. His wife shot a hasty glance at Ah Q to see his reaction.

"I need a fur jacket," said Mrs. Chao.

Although Ah Q agreed, he slouched out so carelessly that they did not know whether he had taken their instructions to heart or not. This so disappointed, annoyed and worried Mr. Chao that he even stopped yawning. The successful candidate was also far from satisfied with Ah Q's attitude. "People should be on their guard against such a turtle's egg," he said. "It might be best to order the bailiff to forbid him to live in Weichuang."

Mr. Chao did not agree, saying that then Ah Q might bear a grudge, and that in a business like this it was probably a case of "the eagle does not prey on its own nest": his own village need not worry so long as they were a little more watchful at night. The successful candidate, much impressed by this parental instruction, immediately withdrew his proposal for banishing Ah Q but cautioned Mrs. Chou on no account to repeat what had been said.

The next day, however, when Mrs. Chou took her blue skirt to be dyed black she repeated these insinuations about Ah Q, although not actually mentioning what the successful candidate had said about driving him away. Even so, it was most damaging to Ah Q. In the first place, the bailiff appeared at his door and took away the door curtain. Although Ah Q protested that Mrs. Chao wanted to see it, the bailiff would not give it back and even demanded monthly

hush money. In the second place, the villagers' respect for Ah Q suddenly changed. Although they still dared not take liberties, they avoided him as much as possible. While this differed from their previous fear of his "Off with his head!" it closely resembled the attitude of the ancients to spirits: they kept a respectful distance.

Some idlers who wanted to get to the bottom of the business went to question Ah Q carefully. And with no attempt at concealment Ah Q told them proudly of his experiences. They learned that he had merely been a petty thief, not only unable to climb walls but even unable to go through openings: he simply stood outside an opening to receive the stolen goods.

One night he had just received a package and his chief had gone in again, when he heard a great uproar inside and took to his heels as fast as he could. He fled from the town that same night, back to Weichuang; and after this he dared not return to do any more thieving. This story, however, was even more damaging to Ah Q, since the villagers had been keeping a respectful distance because they did not want to incur his enmity; for who could have guessed that he was only a thief who dared not steal again? Now they knew he was really too low to inspire fear.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Revolution

On the fourteenth day of the ninth moon of the third year in the reign of Emperor Hsuan Tung\* — the day on which Ah Q sold his purse to Chao Pai-yen — at midnight, after the fourth stroke of the third watch, a large boat with a big black awning arrived at the Chao family's landing-place. This boat floated up in the darkness while the villagers were sound asleep, so that they knew nothing

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\*November 4, 1911, the day on which Shaohsing was freed in the 1911 Revolution.

about it; but it left again about dawn, when quite a number of people saw it. Investigation revealed that this boat actually belonged to the successful provincial candidate!

This incident caused great uneasiness in Weichuang, and before midday the hearts of all the villagers were beating faster. The Chao family kept very quiet about the errand of the boat, but according to gossip in the tea-house and tavern, the revolutionaries were going to enter the town and the successful provincial candidate had come to the country to take refuge. Mrs. Chou alone thought otherwise, maintaining that the successful candidate merely wanted to deposit a few battered cases in Weichuang, but that Mr. Chao had sent them back. Actually the successful provincial candidate and the successful county candidate in the Chao family were not on good terms, so that it was scarcely logical to expect them to prove friends in adversity; moreover, since Mrs. Chou was a neighbour of the Chao family and had a better idea of what was going on, she ought to have known.

Then a rumour spread to the effect that although the scholar had not come in person, he had sent a long letter tracing some distant relationship with the Chao family; and since Mr. Chao after thinking it over had decided it could after all do him no harm to keep the cases, they were now stowed under his wife's bed. As for the revolutionaries, some people said they had entered the town that night in white helmets and white armour — in mourning for Emperor Chung Chen.\*

Ah Q had long since known of revolutionaries and this year with his own eyes had seen revolutionaries decapitated. But since it had occurred to him that the revolutionaries were rebels and that a rebellion would make things difficult for him, he had always detested and kept away from them. Who could have guessed that they could strike such fear into a successful provincial candidate renowned for thirty miles around? In consequence, Ah Q could not help feeling rather fascinated, the terror of all the villagers only adding to his delight.

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\*Chung Chen, the last emperor of the Ming Dynasty, reigned from 1628 to 1644. He hanged himself before the insurgent peasant army under Li Tzu-cheng entered Peking.

"Revolution is not a bad thing," thought Ah Q. "Finish off the whole lot of them . . . curse them! . . . I'd like to go over to the revolutionaries myself."

Ah Q had been hard up recently, which no doubt made him rather dissatisfied; moreover he had drunk two bowls of wine at noon on an empty stomach. Consequently he became drunk very quickly; and as he walked along thinking to himself, he seemed again to be treading on air. Suddenly, in some curious way, he felt as if he were a revolutionary and all the people in Weichuang were his captives. Unable to contain himself for joy, he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Rebellion! Rebellion!"

All the villagers stared at him in consternation. Ah Q had never seen such pitiful looks before; they refreshed him as much as a drink of iced water in summer. So he walked on even more happily, shouting:

"Fine! . . . I shall take what I want! I shall like whom I please!

*"Tra la tra la!*

*Alas, in my cups I have slain my sworn brother Cheng.*

*Alas, ya-ya-ya . . .*

*Tra la, tra la, tum ti tum tum!*

*Steel mace in hand I shall trounce you."*

Mr. Chao and his son were standing at their gate with two relatives discussing the revolution. Ah Q did not see them as he passed with his head thrown back, singing, "*Tra la la, tum ti tum!*"

"Q, old fellow!" called Mr. Chao timidly in a low voice.

"*Tra la,*" sang Ah Q, unable to imagine that his name could be linked with those words "old fellow". Sure that he had heard wrongly and was in no way concerned, he simply went on singing, "*Tra la la, tum ti tum!*"

"Q, old fellow!"

"Alas, in my cups. . . ."

"Ah Q!" The successful candidate had no choice but to name him outright.

Only then did Ah Q come to a stop. "Well?" he asked with his head on one side.

"Q, old fellow . . . now. . . ." But Mr. Chao was at a loss for words again. "Are you well off now?"

"Well off? Of course. I get what I want. . . ."

"Ah Q, old man, poor friends of yours like us are of no consequence. . . ." faltered Chao Pai-yen, as if sounding out the revolutionaries' attitude.

"Poor friends? You're richer anyway than I am." With this Ah Q walked away.

This left them in speechless dismay. Back home that evening Mr. Chao and his son discussed the question until it was time to light the lamps. And Chao Pai-yen once home took the purse from his waist and gave it to his wife to hide for him at the bottom of a chest.

For a while Ah Q walked upon air, but by the time he reached the Tutelary God's Temple he had come down to earth again. That evening the old man in charge of the temple was also unexpectedly friendly and offered him tea. Then Ah Q asked him for two flat cakes, and after eating these demanded a four-ounce candle that had been lighted once and a candlestick. He lit the candle and lay down alone in his little room feeling inexpressibly refreshed and happy, while the candlelight leaped and flickered as if this were the Lantern Festival and his imagination soared with it.

"Revolt? It would be fine. . . . A troop of revolutionaries would come, all in white helmets and white armour, with swords, steel maces, bombs, foreign guns, sharp-pointed double-edged knives, and spears with hooks. When they passed this temple they would call out, 'Ah Q! Come along with us!' And then I would go with them. . . ."

"Then the fun would start. All the villagers, the whole lousy lot, would kneel down and plead, 'Ah Q, spare us!' But who would listen to them! The first to die would be Young D and Mr. Chao, then the successful county candidate and the Bogus Foreign Devil. . . . But perhaps I would spare a few. I would once have spared Whiskers Wang, but now I don't even want him. . . ."

"Things . . . I would go straight in and open the cases: silver ingots, foreign coins, foreign calico jackets. . . . First I would move the Ningpo bed of the successful county candidate's wife to the temple,

as well as the Chien family tables and chairs — or else just use the Chao family's. I wouldn't lift a finger myself, but order Young D to move the things for me, and to look smart about it if he didn't want his face slapped. . . .

"Chao Szu-chen's younger sister is very ugly. In a few years Mrs. Chou's daughter might be worth considering. The Bogus Foreign Devil's wife is willing to sleep with a man without a queue, hah! She can't be a good woman! The successful county candidate's wife has scars on her eyelids. . . . I haven't seen Amah Wu for a long time and don't know where she is — what a pity her feet are so big."

Before Ah Q had reached a satisfactory conclusion, there was a sound of snoring. The four-ounce candle had burned down only half an inch, and its flickering red light lit up his open mouth.

"Ho, ho!" shouted Ah Q suddenly, raising his head and looking wildly around. But at sight of the four-ounce candle, he lay back and fell asleep again.

The next morning he got up very late, and when he went out into the street everything was the same as usual. He was still hungry, but though he racked his brains he did not seem able to think of anything. All of a sudden, however, an idea struck him and he walked slowly off until, either by design or accident, he reached the Convent of Quiet Self-Improvement.

The convent was as peaceful as it had been that spring, with its white wall and shining black gate. After a moment's reflection he knocked at the gate, whereupon a dog on the other side started barking. He hastily picked up some broken bricks, then went back again to knock more heavily, knocking until the black gate was pitted with pock-marks. At last he heard someone coming to open up.

Clutching a brick, Ah Q straddled there prepared to do battle with the black dog. The convent gate opened a crack, but no black dog rushed out. When he looked in all he could see was the old nun.

"What are you here for again?" she asked with a start.

"There's a revolution . . . didn't you know?" said Ah Q vaguely.

"Revolution, revolution . . . we've already had one." The old nun's eyes were red. "What more do you want to do to us?"

"What?" demanded Ah Q, dumbfounded.

"Didn't you know? The revolutionaries have already been here!"

"Who?" demanded Ah Q, still more dumbfounded.

"The successful county candidate and the Foreign Devil."

This completely took the wind out of Ah Q's sails. When the old nun saw there was no fight left in him she promptly shut the gate, so that when Ah Q pushed it again he could not budge it, and when he knocked again there was no answer.

It had happened that morning. The successful county candidate in the Chao family was quick to learn the news. As soon as he heard that the revolutionaries had entered the town that night, he wound his queue up on his head and went out first thing to call on the Bogus Foreign Devil in the Chien family, with whom he had never been on very good terms. Because this was a time for all to work for reforms, they had a most satisfactory talk and on the spot became comrades who saw eye to eye and pledged themselves to make revolution.

After racking their brains for some time, they remembered that in the Convent of Quiet Self-Improvement there was an imperial tablet inscribed "Long live the Emperor" which ought to be done away with immediately. Thereupon they lost no time in going to the convent to carry out their revolutionary activities. Because the old nun tried to stop them and passed a few remarks, they considered her as the Ching government and gave her quite a few knocks on the head with a stick and with their knuckles. The nun, pulling herself together after they had gone, made an inspection. Naturally the imperial tablet had been smashed into fragments on the ground and the valuable Hsuan Teh censer\* before the shrine of Kuanyin, the goddess of mercy, had also disappeared.

Ah Q only learned this later. He deeply regretted having been asleep at the time, and resented the fact that they had not come to call him. Then he said to himself, "Maybe they still don't know I have joined the revolutionaries."

\*Highly decorative bronze censers were made during the Hsuan Teh period (1426-35) of the Ming Dynasty.

## Barred from the Revolution

The people of Weichuang felt easier in their minds with each passing day. From the news brought they knew that although the revolutionaries had entered the town their coming had not made a great deal of difference. The magistrate was still the highest official, it was only his title that had changed; and the successful provincial candidate also had some post — the Weichuang villagers could not remember these names clearly — some kind of official post; while the head of the military was still the same old captain. The only cause for alarm was that, the day after their arrival, some bad revolutionaries made trouble by cutting off people's queues. It was said that the boatman Seven Pounder from the next village had fallen into their clutches, and that he no longer looked presentable. Still, the danger of this was not great, because the Weichuang villagers seldom went to town to begin with, and those who had been considering a trip there at once changed their minds in order to avoid this risk. Ah Q had been thinking of going to town to look up his old friends, but as soon as he heard the news he gave up the idea.

It would be wrong, however, to say that there were no reforms in Weichuang. During the next few days the number of people who coiled their queues on their heads gradually increased and, as has already been said, the first to do so was naturally the successful county candidate; the next were Chao Szu-chen and Chao Pai-yen, and after them Ah Q. If it had been summer it would not have been considered strange if everybody had coiled their queues on their heads or tied them in knots; but this was late autumn, so that this autumn observance of a summer practice on the part of those who coiled their queues could be considered nothing short of a heroic decision, and as far as Weichuang was concerned it could not be said to have had no connection with the reforms.

When Chao Szu-chen approached with the nape of his neck bare, people who saw him remarked, "Ah! Here comes a revolutionary!"

When Ah Q heard this he was greatly impressed. Although he had long since heard how the successful county candidate had coiled his queue on his head, it had never occurred to him to do the same. Only now when he saw that Chao Szu-chen had followed suit was he struck with the idea of doing the same himself. He made up his mind to copy them. He used a bamboo chopstick to twist his queue up on his head, and after some hesitation eventually summoned up the courage to go out.

As he walked along the street people looked at him, but without any comment. Ah Q, disgruntled at first, soon waxed indignant. Recently he had been losing his temper very easily. As a matter of fact he was no worse off than before the revolution, people treated him politely, and the shops no longer demanded payment in cash, yet Ah Q still felt dissatisfied. A revolution, he thought, should mean more than this. When he saw Young D, his anger boiled over.

Young D had also coiled his queue up on his head and, what was more, had actually used a bamboo chopstick to do so too. Ah Q had never imagined that Young D would also have the courage to do this; he certainly could not tolerate such a thing! Who was Young D anyway? He was greatly tempted to seize him then and there, break his bamboo chopstick, let down his queue and slap his face several times into the bargain to punish him for forgetting his place and for his presumption in becoming a revolutionary. But in the end he let him off, simply fixing him with a furious glare, spitting, and exclaiming, "Pah!"

These last few days the only one to go to town was the Bogus Foreign Devil. The successful county candidate in the Chao family had thought of using the deposited cases as a pretext to call on the successful provincial candidate, but the danger that he might have his queue cut off had made him defer his visit. He had written an extremely formal letter, and asked the Bogus Foreign Devil to take it to town; he had also asked the latter to introduce him to the Freedom Party. When the Bogus Foreign Devil came back he collected four dollars from the successful county candidate, after which the latter wore a silver peach on his chest. All the Weichuang villagers were overawed, and said that this was the badge of the Persimmon

Oil Party,\* equivalent to the rank of a Han Lin.\*\* As a result, Mr. Chao's prestige suddenly increased, far more so in fact than when his son first passed the official examination; consequently he started looking down on everyone else and when he saw Ah Q tended to ignore him a little.

Ah Q, disgruntled at finding himself cold-shouldered all the time, realized as soon as he heard of this silver peach why he was left out in the cold. Simply to say that you had gone over was not enough to make anyone a revolutionary; nor was it enough merely to wind your queue up on your head; the most important thing was to get into touch with the revolutionary party. In all his life he had known only two revolutionaries, one of whom had already lost his head in town, leaving only the Bogus Foreign Devil. His only course was to go at once to talk things over with the Bogus Foreign Devil.

The front gate of the Chien house happened to be open, and Ah Q crept timidly in. Once inside he gave a start, for there was the Bogus Foreign Devil standing in the middle of the courtyard dressed entirely in black, no doubt in foreign dress, and also wearing a silver peach. In his hand he held the stick with which Ah Q was already acquainted to his cost, while the foot-long queue which he had grown again had been combed out to hang loosely over his shoulders, giving him a resemblance to the immortal Liu Hai.\*\*\* Standing respectfully before him were Chao Pai-yen and three others, all of them listening with the utmost deference to what the Bogus Foreign Devil was saying.

Ah Q tiptoed inside and stood behind Chao Pai-yen, eager to pronounce some greeting, but not knowing what to say. Obviously he could not call the man "Bogus Foreign Devil", and neither "Foreigner" nor "Revolutionary" seemed quite the thing. Perhaps the best form of address would be "Mr. Foreigner".

But Mr. Foreigner had not seen him, because with eyes upraised he was holding forth with great gusto:

\*The Freedom Party was called Tzu Yu Tang. The villagers, not understanding the word "freedom", turned Tzu Yu into Shih Yu, which means persimmon oil.

\*\*Member of the Imperial Academy in the Ching Dynasty.

\*\*\*A figure in Chinese folk legend, portrayed with flowing hair.

"I am so impetuous that when we met I kept urging, 'Old Hung, let's get down to business!' But he always answered '*Nein!*' — that's a foreign word which you wouldn't understand. Otherwise we should have succeeded long ago. This just goes to show how cautious he is. Time and again he asked me to go to Hupeh, but I've not yet agreed. Who wants to work in a small district town? . . ."

"Er — well —" Ah Q waited for him to pause, then screwed up his courage to speak. But for some reason or other he still did not call him Mr. Foreigner.

The four men who had been listening gave a start and turned to stare at Ah Q. Mr. Foreigner too caught sight of him for the first time.

"What is it?"

"I . . ."

"Clear out!"

"I want to join. . ."

"Get out!" Mr. Foreigner raised the "mourner's stick".

Thereupon Chao Pai-yen and the others shouted, "Mr. Chien tells you to get out, don't you hear!"

Ah Q put up his hands to protect his head, and without knowing what he was doing fled through the gate; but this time Mr. Foreigner did not give chase. After running more than sixty steps Ah Q slowed down, and now his heart filled with dismay, because if Mr. Foreigner would not allow him to be a revolutionary, there was no other way open to him. In future he could never hope to have men in white helmets and white armour come to call him. All his ambitions, aims, hope, and future had been blasted at one fell swoop. The fact that gossips might spread the news and make him a laughing-stock for the likes of Young D and Whiskers Wang was only a secondary consideration.

Never before had he felt so flat. Even coiling his queue on his head now struck him as pointless and ridiculous. As a form of revenge he was very tempted to let his queue down at once, but he did not do so. He wandered about till evening, when after drinking two bowls of wine on credit he began to feel in better spirits, and

in his mind's eye saw fragmentary visions of white helmets and white armour once more.

One day he loafed about until late at night. Only when the tavern was about to close did he start to stroll back to the Tutelary God's Temple.

#### *Crash-bang!*

He suddenly heard an unusual sound, which could not have been firecrackers. Ah Q, always fond of excitement and of poking his nose into other people's business, headed straight for the noise in the darkness. He thought he heard footsteps ahead, and was listening carefully when a man fled past from the opposite direction. Ah Q instantly wheeled round to follow him. When that man turned, Ah Q turned too, and when having turned a corner that man stopped, Ah Q followed suit. He saw that there was no one after them and that the man was Young D.

"What's up?" demanded Ah Q resentfully.

"The Chao . . . Chao family has been robbed," panted Young D.

Ah Q's heart went pit-a-pat. After saying this, Young D went off. But Ah Q kept on running by fits and starts. However, having been in the business himself made him unusually bold. Rounding the corner of a lane, he listened carefully and thought he heard shouting; while by straining his eyes he thought he could see a troop of men in white helmets and white armour carrying off cases, carrying off furniture, even carrying off the Ningpo bed of the successful county candidate's wife. He could not, however, see them very clearly. He wanted to go nearer, but his feet were rooted to the ground.

There was no moon that night, and Weichuang was very still in the pitch darkness, as quiet as in the peaceful days of Emperor Fu Hsi.\* Ah Q stood there until his patience ran out, yet there seemed no end to the business, distant figures kept moving to and fro, carrying off cases, carrying off furniture, carrying off the Ningpo bed of the successful county candidate's wife . . . carrying until he could hardly believe his own eyes. But he decided not to go any closer, and went back to the temple.

\*One of the earliest legendary monarchs in China.

It was even darker in the Tutelary God's Temple. When he had closed the big gate he groped his way into his room, and only after he had been lying down for some time did he calm down sufficiently to begin thinking how this affected him. The men in white helmets and white armour had evidently arrived, but they had not come to call him; they had taken away fine things, but there was no share for him — this was all the fault of the Bogus Foreign Devil, who had barred him from the rebellion. Otherwise how could he have failed to have a share this time?

The more Ah Q thought of it the angrier he grew, until he was in a towering rage. "So no rebellion for me, only for you, eh?" he fumed, nodding furiously. "Curse you, you Bogus Foreign Devil — all right, be a rebel! That's a crime for which you get your head chopped off. I'll turn informer, then see you dragged off to town to have your head cut off — your whole family executed. . . . To hell with you!"

## CHAPTER 9

### The Grand Finale

After the Chao family was robbed most of the people in Weichuang felt pleased yet fearful, and Ah Q was no exception. But four days later Ah Q was suddenly dragged into town in the middle of the night. It happened to be a dark night. A squad of soldiers, a squad of militia, a squad of police, and five secret servicemen made their way quietly to Weichuang and, after posting a machine-gun opposite the entrance, under cover of darkness surrounded the Tutelary God's Temple. But Ah Q did not bolt for it. For a long time nothing stirred till the captain, losing patience, offered a reward of twenty thousand cash. Only then did two militiamen summon up courage to jump over the wall and enter. With their co-operation, the others rushed in and dragged Ah Q out. But not until he had been carried

out of the temple to somewhere near the machine-gun did he begin to wake up to what was happening.

It was already midday by the time they reached town, and Ah Q found himself carried to a dilapidated yamen where, after taking five or six turnings, he was pushed into a small room. No sooner had he stumbled inside than the door, in the form of a wooden grille, was slammed on his heels. The rest of the cell consisted of three blank walls, and when he looked carefully he saw two other men in a corner.

Although Ah Q was feeling rather uneasy, he was by no means depressed, because the room where he slept in the Tutelary God's Temple was in no way superior to this. The two other men also seemed to be villagers. They gradually fell into conversation with him, and one of them told him that the successful provincial candidate wanted to dun him for the rent owed by his grandfather; the other did not know why he was there. When they questioned Ah Q he answered quite frankly, "Because I wanted to revolt."

That afternoon he was dragged out through the grille and taken to a big hall, at the far end of which sat an old man with a cleanly shaven head. Ah Q took him for a monk at first, but when he saw soldiers standing guard and a dozen men in long coats on both sides, some with their heads clean-shaven like this old man and some with a foot or so of hair hanging over their shoulders like the Bogus Foreign Devil, all glaring furiously at him with grim faces, he knew that this man must be someone important. At once his knee-joints relaxed of their own accord, and he sank to his knees.

"Stand up to speak! Don't kneel!" shouted all the men in the long coats.

Although Ah Q understood, he felt quite incapable of standing up. He had involuntarily started squatting, improving on this finally to kneel down.

"Slave!..." exclaimed the long-coated men contemptuously. They did not insist on his getting up, however.

"Tell the truth and you will receive a lighter sentence," said the old man with the shaven head in a low but clear voice, fixing his eyes on Ah Q. "We know everything already. When you have confessed, we will let you go."

"Confess!" repeated the long-coated men loudly.

"The fact is I wanted... to join..." muttered Ah Q disjointedly after a moment's confused thinking.

"In that case, why didn't you?" asked the old man gently.

"The Bogus Foreign Devil wouldn't let me."

"Nonsense. It's too late to talk now. Where are your accomplices?"

"What?..."

"The gang who robbed the Chao family that night."

"They didn't come to call me. They moved the things away themselves." Mention of this made Ah Q indignant.

"Where are they now? When you have told me I will let you go," repeated the old man even more gently.

"I don't know... They didn't come to call me..."

Then, at a sign from the old man, Ah Q was dragged back through the grille. The following morning he was dragged out once more.

Everything was unchanged in the big hall. The old man with the clean-shaven head was still sitting there, and Ah Q knelt down again as before.

"Have you anything else to say?" asked the old man gently.

Ah Q thought, and decided there was nothing to say, so he answered, "Nothing."

Then a man in a long coat brought a sheet of paper and held a brush in front of Ah Q, which he wanted to thrust into his hand. Ah Q was now nearly frightened out of his wits, because this was the first time in his life that his hand had ever come into contact with a writing-brush. He was just wondering how to hold it when the man pointed out a place on the paper and told him to sign his name.

"I — I — can't write," said Ah Q, shamefaced, nervously holding the brush.

"In that case, to make it easy for you, draw a circle!"

Ah Q tried to draw a circle, but the hand with which he grasped the brush trembled, so the man spread the paper on the ground for him. Ah Q bent down and, as painstakingly as if his life depended on it, drew a circle. Afraid people would laugh at him, he determined to make the circle round; however, not only was that wretched brush

very heavy, but it would not do his bidding. Instead it wobbled from side to side; and just as the line was about to close it swerved out again, making a shape like a melon-seed.

While Ah Q was still feeling mortified by his failure to draw a circle, the man took back the paper and brush without any comment. A number of people then dragged him back for the third time through the grille.

By now he felt not too upset. He supposed that in this world it was the fate of everybody at some time to be dragged in and out of prison and to have to draw circles on paper; it was only his circle not being round that he felt a blot on his escutcheon. Presently, however, he regained composure by thinking, "Only idiots can make perfect circles." And with this thought he fell asleep.

That night, however, the successful provincial candidate was unable to sleep, because he had quarrelled with the captain. The successful provincial candidate had insisted that the main thing was to recover the stolen goods, while the captain said the main thing was to make a public example. Recently the captain had come to treat the successful provincial candidate quite disdainfully. So banging his fist on the table he said, "Punish one to awe one hundred! See now, I have been a member of the revolutionary party for less than twenty days, but there have been a dozen cases of robbery, none of them yet solved; think how badly that reflects on me. Now this one has been solved, you come and haggle. It won't do. This is my affair."

The successful provincial candidate, most put out, insisted that if the stolen goods were not recovered he would resign immediately from his post as assistant civil administrator.

"As you please," said the captain.

In consequence the successful provincial candidate did not sleep that night; but happily he did not hand in his resignation the next day after all.

The third time that Ah Q was dragged out of the grille-door was the morning following the night on which the successful provincial candidate had been unable to sleep. When he reached the hall, the old man with the clean-shaven head was sitting there as usual. And Ah Q knelt down as usual.

Very gently the old man questioned him: "Have you anything more to say?"

Ah Q thought, and decided there was nothing to say, so he answered, "Nothing."

A number of men in long coats and short jackets put on him a white vest of foreign cloth with some black characters on it. Ah Q felt most disconcerted, because this was very like mourning dress and to wear mourning was unlucky. At the same time his hands were bound behind his back, and he was dragged out of the yamen.

Ah Q was lifted on to an uncovered cart, and several men in short jackets sat down beside him. The cart started off at once. In front were a number of soldiers and militiamen shouldering foreign rifles, and on both sides were crowds of gaping spectators, while what was behind Ah Q could not see. Suddenly it occurred to him — "Can I be going to have my head cut off?" Panic seized him and everything turned dark before his eyes, while there was a humming in his ears as if he had fainted. But he did not really faint. Although he felt frightened some of the time, the rest of the time he was quite calm. It seemed to him that in this world probably it was the fate of everybody at some time to have his head cut off.

He still recognized the road and felt rather surprised: why were they not going to the execution ground? He did not know that he was being paraded round the streets as a public example. But if he had known, it would have been the same: he would only have thought that in this world probably it was the fate of everybody at some time to be made a public example of.

Then he realized that they were making a detour to the execution ground, so after all he must be going to have his head cut off. He looked round him regretfully at the people swarming after him like ants, and unexpectedly in the crowd by the roadside he caught sight of Amah Wu. So that was why he had not seen her for so long: she was working in town.

Ah Q suddenly became ashamed of his lack of spirit, because he had not sung any lines from an opera. His thoughts revolved like a whirlwind: *The Young Widow at Her Husband's Grave* was not heroic enough. The passage "Alas, in my cups" in *The Battle of the Dragon and the Tiger*

was too feeble. "Steel mace in hand I shall trounce you" was still the best. But when he wanted to raise his hands, he remembered that they were bound together; so he did not sing "Steel mace in hand" either.

"In twenty years I shall be another. . . ."\* In his agitation Ah Q uttered half a saying which he had picked up for himself but never used before. "Good!!!" The roar of the crowd sounded like the growl of a wolf.

The cart moved steadily forward. During the shouting Ah Q's eyes turned in search of Amah Wu, but she did not seem to have seen him for she was looking intently at the foreign rifles carried by the soldiers.

So Ah Q took another look at the shouting crowd.

At that instant his thoughts revolved again like a whirlwind. Four years before, at the foot of the mountain, he had met a hungry wolf which had followed him at a set distance, wanting to eat him. He had nearly died of fright, but luckily he happened to have a knife in his hand which gave him the courage to get back to Weichuang. He had never forgotten that wolf's eyes, fierce yet cowardly, gleaming like two will-o'-the-wisps, as if boring into him from a distance. Now he saw eyes more terrible even than the wolf's: dull yet penetrating eyes that having devoured his words still seemed eager to devour something beyond his flesh and blood. And these eyes kept following him at a set distance.

These eyes seemed to have merged into one, biting into his soul.

"Help, help!"

But Ah Q never uttered these words. All had turned black before his eyes, there was a buzzing in his ears, and he felt as if his whole body were being scattered like so much light dust.

As for the after-effects of the robbery, the most affected was the successful provincial candidate, because the stolen goods were never recovered. All his family lamented bitterly. Next came the Chao

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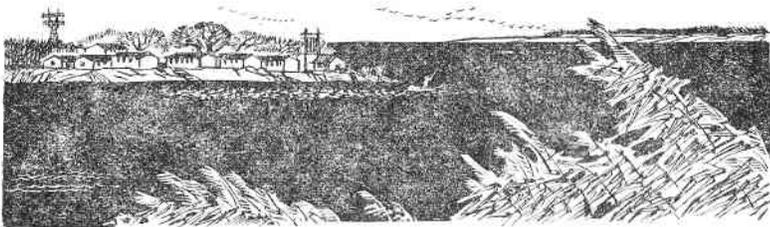
\*"In twenty years I shall be another stout young fellow" was a phrase often used by criminals before execution to show their scorn of death. Believing in transmigration, they thought that after death their souls would enter other living bodies.

household; for when the successful county candidate went into town to report the robbery, not only did he have his queue cut off by bad revolutionaries, but he had to pay a reward of twenty thousand cash into the bargain; so all the Chao family lamented bitterly too. From that day forward they gradually assumed the air of the survivors of a fallen dynasty.

As for any discussion of the event, no question was raised in Weichuang. Naturally all agreed that Ah Q had been a bad man, the proof being that he had been shot; for if he had not been bad, how could he have been shot? But the consensus of opinion in town was unfavourable. Most people were dissatisfied, because a shooting was not such a fine spectacle as a decapitation; and what a ridiculous culprit he had been too, to pass through so many streets without singing a single line from an opera. They had followed him for nothing.

*December 1921*

*Illustrated by Chiang Chao-ho  
and Ai Chung-hsin*



*Kuo Hsiao-chuan*

## Autumn in Tuanpowa

Soft as a feather brush the autumn breeze  
Sweeps over tranquil Tuanpowa;  
Autumn sunlight like glistening sweat  
Dapples the whole plain.

Watching the road, like children in their red scarves,  
Stands the sorghum, each stalk with its red tassel;  
Nodding and smiling the sunflowers turn  
Towards the horizon where the red sun rises.

Aged willows, gnarled and stunted,  
Caress the ripening crops with fluttering leaves;

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See the article on p. 73 about the poet Kuo Hsiao-chuan.

Tenderly the thick reeds protect the wild flowers  
That blossom among and around their sturdy feet.

The shrill rasping of cicadas lessens,  
On rooftops gossiping sparrows cease their twittering;  
No throaty frog croak disturbs the silence,  
Even the wild river flows with scarce a murmur.

Soon the wild geese will be streaming south;  
Ducks float subdued upon the water;  
The welcome coolness of autumn has come;  
Though in hospitable homes the sultry heat still lurks.

Tuanpowa in autumn  
Seems to slumber on in sweet dreams,  
Autumn in Tuanpowa  
Is like a young girl shy and inarticulate.

Ah, Tuanpowa! Are you really so quiet?  
But the whole world is in ferment;  
Everywhere else thunder rumbles  
And raging tempests roar.

In Tuanpowa too there's a swelling chorus,  
Listen to the people's quickening heartbeats;  
Just as elsewhere you'll hear  
A rustle and bustle, as in a market-place.

No third world war has started yet  
But you can hear gun-fire here;  
Already in the minds of the people  
Is there not the din of charging cavalry?

There is no flash of sword or flame,  
Yet the battle never ceases;  
Is there not hot blood coursing  
Through all the people's veins?

To Chairman Mao's great call, like elsewhere,  
Here there is a true response;  
The theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat  
Inspires every fighter's heart.

We hear the drumming of horses' hooves  
Constantly outside the PLA camp;  
Inside our cadre school on the TV screen,  
Films like *The Pioneers* and *Haihsia*\* are shown.

All day long in broad daylight,  
We hear criticism of revisionists;  
While at night within our red-brick dormitories,  
We chat happily of many things.

But the deepest feeling of our fighters  
Is too vast to be contained within such bounds;  
It is too potent, too compelling  
For any to give voice . . . so there is silence.

We fighters have our fighters' character:  
We fear neither threats nor slander;  
Cruel blows only make us stand firmer,  
Rekindling our youthful fire.

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\*Two feature films popular among the people but which were for some time suppressed by the anti-Party "gang of four".

We fighters have our fighters' high ideals;  
We'll always remould ourselves, starting from scratch;  
Loss of heart or shameful despondency  
Are enemies to be trampled underfoot.

We fighters have our fighters' courage;  
No rumours can deceive us;  
Baseless accusations, trumped up charges  
But sharpen our wits and clear our thinking.

We fighters have our fighters' feeling:  
Our loyalty ever fresh will never tarnish;  
Temptations, bribes and other evils  
Only sicken and disgust us.

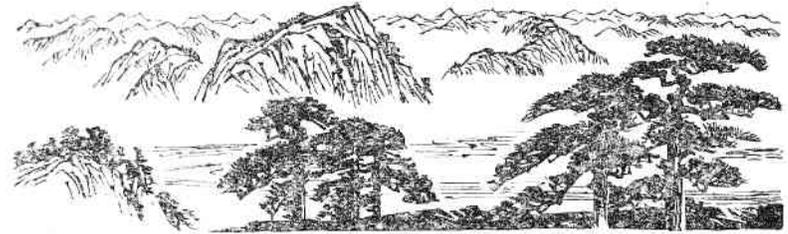
We fighters may rest awhile from singing,  
But our voices still retain their resonance;  
For a while we fighters may close our eyes  
But our sight remains crystal clear.

So, please listen to these words of mine,  
Every one is from a fighter's heart.  
Ah, Tuanpowa, Tuanpowa,  
Are you really so quiet?

Yes, it may appear quiet,  
Yet an explosion could come at any minute;  
For the whole place is in a ferment,  
Even this poem is full of sound and fury.

Come what may, let me bury below the dyke  
This poem so full of contradictions;  
It may not suit this autumn season,  
But when spring comes it will sprout and grow. . . .

*September 1975  
The Cadre School, Tuanpowa*



## Autumn Song

Once more the invigorating winds of autumn  
Wake me from my sleep;  
Once again fireworks at the festival  
Light the tinder in my heart.

This year the autumn winds seem fresher,  
As they stream into my heart;  
This year the fireworks excel  
Even the stars above.

Recalling former moments of confusion,  
My heart grieves.  
Remembering days of despair,  
Now I'm filled with remorse.

A fighter must never lay down arms,  
Not even for a brief moment.

A revolutionary must never halt or hesitate  
Even when facing a forest of swords.

To hell with all selfish ideas,  
Despondency and care for one's reputation!  
To hell with mercenary motives,  
Philistinism and cowardice.

If some people refuse to sing aloud,  
When all goes well and the future's bright,  
Even if they number ten thousand,  
They count as nought.

When monstrous revisionists are on the rampage,  
Some people refuse to fight,  
Even if they number five thousand,  
They carry no weight.

So let's sharpen up our weapons,  
And attack the strongholds of revisionism;  
Let's catch up with the worker-peasant-soldier masses,  
Using our pens to expose the enemy.

Let's clear our throats and once again  
Sing our rousing battle songs;  
Let us drink deep of the wine of life,  
And rekindle our smouldering revolutionary fire.

I was nourished by the people's milk,  
Brought up in the hands of the Party;  
People and Party have no use for shirkers,  
They expect me to participate in the great struggle.

Warmth my comrades have always given me,  
Love my dear ones have given me too;  
They don't expect me to sit idle,  
But to persist in continuing the revolution.

A fighter's life can only be  
One of battles;  
A fighter's style can only be  
A revolutionary one.

I know the day will surely come  
When I'll be old and infirm;  
But I only hope that I shall stay as young in heart  
As when I first joined the revolutionary ranks.

I know the day will also come  
When all that is left of me will end in smoke;  
But I hope it will have the acrid reek  
Of the strongest dynamite.

Listen to the snow-bound Liao River and storm-tossed Yangtze,  
Their turbulent waves still roll on;  
Listen, among the southern bamboo groves and northern pines  
The southing of the wind continues.

Look, tractors and trucks full of grain  
Follow one another with a loud rumble;  
Look, countless horses, millions of soldiers  
Are advancing in ever broadening ranks.

These invigorating winds of autumn  
Have lifted my spirits to the skies;

The fireworks at the festival  
Have fanned my smouldering heart into a blaze.

A simple man alone is very frail,  
Yet I seem filled with boundless strength,  
For the masses, resolute and strong,  
Are always helping me along.

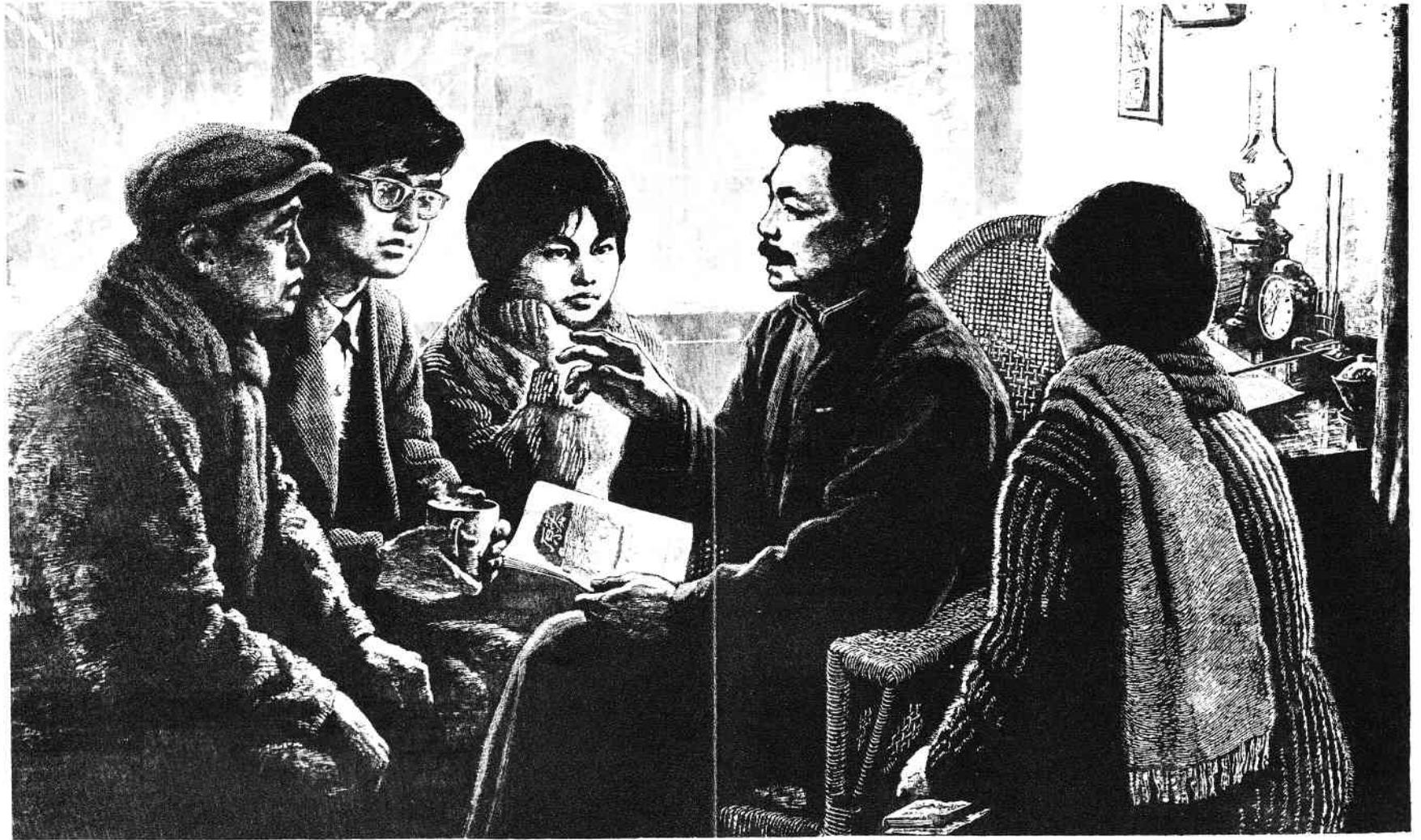
I was stupid and ignorant,  
Now I seem to have gained in wisdom,  
For our great leader Mao Tsetung, infinitely wise,  
Has always taught and guided me.

*Early October, 1975*



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**Lu Hsun with Young Writers and Artists**  
(woodcut) by *Chao Jui-chun* and *Wu Yung-liang*



*Chou Chien-jen*

## **Learn from Lu Hsun's Tenacity in Fighting and Forging Ahead**

A great age of revolutionary struggles produces great fighters. Such a one was Lu Hsun who lived and fought in the tumultuous period of China's transition from the old democratic revolution to the new democratic revolution.

In semi-feudal, semi-colonial old China our people were so cruelly exploited, oppressed and slaughtered by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism that they had no democracy or freedom. Undaunted, they launched a whole series of revolts and struggles; but though they won certain local and temporary victories, in the end they were suppressed again by the forces of reaction. After the 1911 Revolution, Lu Hsun went through many complex struggles.

In the thirties, Lu Hsun not only fought back against the Kuomintang campaigns to wipe out progressive culture, he also struggled

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The writer, younger brother of Lu Hsun whose real name was Chou Shu-jen, is a member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and a vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

resolutely against those double-dealers in the revolutionary camp whom he called "maggots". He kept advancing bravely along the arduous, tortuous path of the Chinese revolution. The introduction to China of Marxism-Leninism and the founding of the Chinese Communist Party initiated a new phase in the Chinese revolution. And Lu Hsun soldiered on, studying Marxism-Leninism, summing up his experience and striving to remould himself, so that finally he became a great communist fighter.

Our great leader and teacher Chairman Mao in *On New Democracy* made the most comprehensive and penetrating analysis of Lu Hsun's militant career, pointing out, "The chief commander of China's cultural revolution, he was not only a great man of letters but a great thinker and revolutionary. . . . Representing the great majority of the nation, Lu Hsun breached and stormed the enemy citadel; on the cultural front he was the bravest and most correct, the firmest, the most loyal and the most ardent national hero, a hero without parallel in our history. The road he took was the very road of China's new national culture." Chairman Mao also stressed, "Lu Hsun was a man of unyielding integrity, free from all sycophancy or obsequiousness; this quality is invaluable among colonial and semi-colonial peoples." These high tributes testify to Lu Hsun's revolutionary resolve and the way he kept forging ahead.

In *Thoughts on the League of Left-Wing Writers* Lu Hsun wrote, "By tenacity I mean that we must not be like those Ching Dynasty scholars who used the *paku* essays\* as bricks to open doors." Then referring to some men of letters of his own time he said, "After winning a greater or lesser amount of fame by publishing a couple of books, they become professors or find some other job. Since their name is made and they need not write any more, they then disappear for ever." Lu Hsun saw that people joined the revolution with very different motives. Those who were short-sighted and had no high ideals would give up after the first minor victory. Thus in *Unrevolutionary Eagerness for Revolution* he pointed out, "Some revolt

\*The stereotyped eight-section essays set for the Ching Dynasty examinations, success in which led to lucrative official posts.

for society, others for a clique, a woman, for themselves, or simply as a means of committing suicide." But a true, far-sighted revolutionary should aim at realizing a classless society. This was the ideological basis for Lu Hsun's tenacity. This is why he could fight on tenaciously no matter how tortuous the path or how great the obstacles in his way. As he declared in *Thoughts on the League of Left-Wing Writers*, "We must battle doggedly and continuously against the old order and old forces, and make the best use of our strength." He was critical of those who considered revolution as something easy and simple but grew disheartened and decadent as soon as they came up against difficulties.

Like a soldier who never laid down his arms, Lu Hsun persisted in fighting stubbornly against the reactionary forces. And his frugal way of life was in keeping with this revolutionary spirit of his. He always dressed very simply in a cloth gown and cheap shoes with rubber soles and black cloth uppers, which he wore even in the rain. He economized too on food. Even when badly ill with tuberculosis and in need of good nourishment, he went on eating the plain meals of Shaohsing peasants. He believed that "if life is too comfortable it interferes with work". He wanted to live like the labouring masses. This frugal style of life and disapproval of self-indulgence was an important factor in his persistence in fighting on and making continual progress.

Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers;  
Head bowed, like a willing ox I serve the children.

These famous lines are a true portrayal of his militant life. They also epitomize his tenacity both in his work and his study. He never yielded to any enemy, fighting doggedly to the end, but gave his whole life and strength to serving the people. And in order to put up a more effective fight, he made a serious study of Marxist theories and old historical records, learned the tactics used by the past ruling classes and the reactionaries of his day, exposed their true nature and summed up his experience. In every complex class struggle by grasping the essence of the problem he was able to deal the enemy mortal blows. Lu Hsun often sat up late studying and

writing polemical articles; sometimes, to clear up a problem or finish a militant essay, he would go on working all night. Once a burglar broke into his house and hid in the kitchen, but as Lu Hsun stayed up till dawn working the man was unable to steal anything except a slice from the kitchen. Lu Hsun had no idea at the time of this thief's presence, yet this incident typifies his whole hard-fighting life — class enemies could never catch him napping.

Because for long years he never spared himself, Lu Hsun contracted tuberculosis. As the struggle intensified his illness grew worse, but he displayed even more clearly the revolutionary spirit of a communist fighter. Good friends urged him to go to a sanatorium and made the necessary arrangements for him; some even made plans for him to go abroad for treatment. However, Lu Hsun declined all these offers and refused to the last to leave his fighting post. That time, just over forty years ago, was a time of crisis for China; it was also the turning-point in the Chinese revolution. The struggle needed him, the revolutionary people needed him; so as a loyal, selfless fighter how could he leave his post? When a doctor warned him that unless he got good treatment he would die within half a year, Lu Hsun retorted firmly, "Instead of living a few years more by not working, I prefer to live a few years less but work more now." This was the uncompromising revolutionary spirit of the proletariat, the invaluable quality of the Chinese people.

Lu Hsun's ideas developed with the revolution, keeping pace with the progress of the times. In his preface to *Two Hearts* he expressed his conviction that "the future belongs solely to the rising proletariat". In his *Reply to "International Literature"* he stated that the aim of his struggle was to realize a "classless society". Firmly convinced as he was that such a society would finally emerge, from being a revolutionary democrat he became a great communist fighter. Fixing his hopes on communism, he resolutely carried out and defended Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, the ideological basis of his revolutionary spirit which enabled him to fight on unflinchingly and keep making progress.

To understand how Lu Hsun acquired his revolutionary qualities we must consider his life. He was born in a well-to-do family, but

while he was still a child it was bankrupted. His relatives even referred to him as a "beggar". After his grandfather and father died, as the eldest son he had to support the rest of the family. This opened his eyes to the realities of that society and brought him closer to the toiling masses. He drew strength from the fine spirit of the labouring people. When he started to work for a living he saw more clearly that there were two different kinds of life in the China of those days, and he came to detest that society which separated him from such honest peasants as Jun-tu in his story *My Old Home*. Throughout his long revolutionary career, Lu Hsun did his utmost to remould his own ideology and stand. As he wrote in his postscript to *The Grave*, "It is true that I often dissect other people, but I dissect myself even more, and more ruthlessly." In *A Little Incident* he wrote that the labouring people "make me feel ashamed, spur me on to remould myself and increase my courage and hope". In the course of his revolutionary practice he constantly "dissected" himself with the scalpel of Marxism. He not only made a serious study of Marxism but also applied it correctly and "mastered the Marxist method of criticism" to carry on his fight. So we can say that Lu Hsun's thoroughgoing revolutionary spirit came from learning from the toiling masses, from studying Marxism-Leninism and from remoulding his own ideology.

Today when we learn from Lu Hsun, the first and foremost thing to learn is his tenacious revolutionary spirit. We should take him as our example in learning to differentiate between what is Marxist and what is revisionist in the complex class struggle and struggle between two lines. When we carry on the struggle against those who betray Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, alter Chairman Mao's instructions, engage in revisionism, splittism and conspiracies to seize power within the Party, we must emulate Lu Hsun's proletarian tenacity and resolve to keep making fresh headway and carry through to the end the proletarian revolutionary tasks begun by Chairman Mao.

## How Our Revolutionary Operas and Ballets Were Produced

During the Cultural Revolution, performances were given throughout the country of the “eight model theatrical works”: the Peking operas *The Red Lantern*, *Shachiapang*, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment* and *On the Docks*, the ballets *Red Detachment of Women* and *The White-Haired Girl* and the symphonic music *Shachiapang*. The careerist conspirator Chiang Ching who shamelessly styled herself “the standard-bearer of the revolution in literature and art” claimed the credit for all these works. This was a blatant fabrication and lie.

Most of these works first appeared round about 1964 when the All-China Modern Peking Opera Festival was held under the personal leadership and guidance of Chairman Mao and Premier Chou. Chairman Mao had always paid great attention to revolutionary literature and art. After the founding of our People's Republic, to help the development of our socialist literature and art he formulated a whole series of directives and policies such as **“Let a hundred flowers blossom; weed through the old to bring forth the new”**

and **“Make the past serve the present and foreign things serve China”**. On many occasions he sternly criticized the counter-revolutionary revisionist line on literature and art promoted by Liu Shao-chi. In 1962, he issued the great call **“Never forget class struggle”**, stressed the need to pay attention to class struggle in the ideological realm and gave many important instructions on literary and art work. In 1963, he again raised the problem of how to weed out the old to bring forth the new and stated explicitly that what was new must be socialist. Premier Chou, who always resolutely carried out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, in February 1963 passed on to literary and art workers the chairman's directive that they should produce more realistic works reflecting present-day life. Time and again he emphasized the need to keep expanding and consolidating the socialist position on the literary and art front by winning new victories. In response to these calls from Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee the revolution in literature and art made fresh headway.

In 1963, Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee adopted Comrade Ulanfu's proposal to hold a national festival of modern Peking operas the next year. Chiang Ching seized on this as a chance to further her own ambitions, promptly sending the scripts of the Shanghai operas *Sparks in the Reeds* and *The Red Lantern* to a few influential Peking opera companies. She had taken no part at all in writing or revising these scripts, yet she brazenly spoke of them as “my scripts”. After the opera troupes adapted and staged them she watched their performances, made some trifling changes, then claimed that she had produced these operas herself. Subsequently she spread word that she had “rushed to and fro agitating for this festival” so as to bring Peking opera “back to life”. She posed as the initiator and leader of this revolution in Peking opera, to seize the credit for it. To expose these lies we shall now briefly review how these revolutionary operas and ballets were produced.

*Shachiapang*, produced by the Peking Opera Company of Peking, was adapted from *Sparks in the Reeds* first performed in 1958, a popular Shanghai opera describing the heroic exploits of the New Fourth Army in the Yangtse Valley during the War of Resistance Against

Japan. The Peking Opera Company of Peking started adapting it in October 1963. In July 1964, Chairman Mao saw a performance of this opera and suggested a number of most important revisions. He approved the portrayal of the puppet commander Hu Chuan-kuei as well as that of Sister Ah-ching, an underground Party liaison agent, and the puppet chief-of-staff Tiao Teh-yi. However, Chairman Mao pointed out that the character of the New Fourth Army political instructor was not sufficiently well rounded out and his arias were inadequate; moreover the style of the whole opera was inconsistent, the second half being incongruously melodramatic. He suggested that the Party's underground work should be linked up with the armed struggle, and a better title would be *Shachiapang*, the name of the district where the action took place. As regards stage-effect, Chairman Mao took specific exception to the absence of tableaux, the fact that no poses were struck by the political instructor and his men. He approved of the fighting scenes as according with the reality of the Chinese people's struggle. So the second series of revisions in this opera were based on Chairman Mao's most penetrating and comprehensive instructions. Both the script writers and the actors studied these conscientiously and did their best to put them into practice. Thus the credit for the success of this opera should go in the first place to our great leader Chairman Mao.

*The Red Lantern* was adapted from a Shanghai opera of the same name based on the film *There Will Always Be Successors to the Cause*. The work of adaptation started at the end of 1963; in July 1964, when the new Peking opera was produced in the All-China Modern Peking Opera Festival, it was well received. Chiang Ching had no hand in its production and only saw a performance of it at the end of May. On November 6, 1964 and January 4, 1965, Chairman Mao saw this opera twice and approved of it. He gave directions that it should be shown to the delegates of the Third National People's Congress. Premier Chou En-lai who watched nine performances suggested a number of important revisions. He proposed, for instance, that when the young heroine took the secret codebook to the northern hills some guerrillas should go to meet her, to bring out the link between underground Party work and the armed struggle.

He suggested changing the railway strike in the northeast into the famous strike of workers on the Peking-Hankow Railway which was led by the Chinese Communist Party, to show the leadership given by the Party. He also urged that emphasis should be put on the close ties between the hero's family and the masses.

*On the Docks* was adapted from the Huai opera *Morning on the Docks* by the Shanghai Peking Opera Company. At the beginning of 1964, Premier Chou En-lai saw a performance of the Huai opera and commended it, pointing out that it raised the important question of how to educate the younger generation. Comrade Ko Ching-shih, then mayor of Shanghai, proposed having it made into a Peking opera. This was when Chiang Ching put in her oar. Although she attended a few rehearsals only, she made many contradictory suggestions, first urging the company to stick closely to the original Huai opera, then telling them to start again from scratch. At one point she even ordered Chang Chun-chiao to stop the adaptation. In spite of this obstruction by Chiang Ching and her gang, the Shanghai Peking Opera Company helped by Shanghai dock workers completed the adaptation in 1966. In June 1967, Chairman Mao saw this opera and gave important instructions on presenting the contradiction between ourselves and the enemy in it. For a long time the followers of the "gang of four" claimed that this was Chiang Ching's idea but continued to sabotage the further revision of this opera.

*Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* was adapted from a play based on the novel *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* in 1958 by the Shanghai Peking Opera Company. Chiang Ching took no part in its production but in April 1964 recommended that it should be shown at the Peking opera festival. Later a few alterations were made by the company. On July 17, 1964, Chairman Mao saw this opera and pointed out that the negative characters played too big a part, the positive characters should have more singing passages and the chief figure Yang Tzu-jung must not be depicted as an individual hero cut off from the masses. In June 1967, Chairman Mao saw it again and altered two lines himself, adding lustre to this opera. Premier Chou took a keen interest too in its production, watching many rehearsals and performances and suggesting a number of improvements. It was

he, for instance, who proposed that in the final mêlée Yang Tzu-jung should guard the entrance to the tunnel to prevent the bandit chief from escaping through it.

As for the other four works, Chiang Ching took no part in their production, not even attending rehearsals.

*Raid on the White Tiger Regiment* was created by the Peking Opera Troupe of the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea in 1958, on instructions from Premier Chou En-lai. After this troupe returned to China it was incorporated in the Peking Opera Company of Shantung Province; and after much further revision this new opera became one of the most popular items in their repertoire. On August 10, 1964, Chairman Mao saw it and approved of it, encouraging the company to produce more revolutionary modern operas. Chairman Mao commented that certain people claimed that militant themes were unsuited to modern Peking operas, but this performance had shown how appropriate they were, and he hoped the company would further improve both the singing and the acting. Premier Chou watched many performances during the All-China Modern Peking Opera Festival and urged the different companies to portray proletarian internationalism. The Shantung Peking Opera Company revised this opera in accordance with the instructions of Chairman Mao and Premier Chou. Chiang Ching did not see this opera before the festival, when she called it "an unexpected find".

The ballet *Red Detachment of Women* based on the film of the same title was produced by the Central Opera Company's ballet troupe. In November 1963, Premier Chou asked this troupe to produce new ballets with revolutionary themes. In January 1964, they decided to make a ballet based on this film and present it on the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. Members of the ballet troupe went to the old revolutionary base on Hainan Island to enrich their experience and set about their task with great enthusiasm. However, the Ministry of Culture then dominated by the counter-revolutionary revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi decided to recall their best dancers to perform scenes from classical ballets such as *Swan Lake* in Hongkong, on the pretext of earning foreign currency. Premier Chou sternly pointed out, "We want revolution,

not money!" He ordered the ministry to cancel this plan. The premier's support at this crucial moment expedited the production of this new ballet. On September 27, Premier Chou saw its dress rehearsal and was so pleased with it that he ordered that this revolutionary ballet should be shown immediately, and it was performed for foreign visitors coming to take part in our National Day celebrations. On October 8, Chairman Mao saw *Red Detachment of Women* and in a most significant comment affirmed that the orientation was correct, the revolutionization of the ballet successful and the artistic effect good. That is how our first modern revolutionary ballet was born. Chiang Ching did not watch any of its rehearsals until September 21, 1964. Prior to that she had ignored it completely.

The ballet *The White-Haired Girl* began to be adapted from the opera in 1964 by the Shanghai Dancing School and was virtually completed in 1965. Premier Chou took a great interest in this ballet and saw it ten times. On July 19, 1965 he signified his warm approval of it, pronouncing it a successful adaptation. Vice-premier Chen Yi also encouraged the school to do their best, to win honour for the proletariat, and made valuable suggestions on the basis of which the ballet was further revised. On April 24, 1967 Chairman Mao saw the ballet and commended it. Chiang Ching saw it only a few days before Chairman Mao. Hence her claim to have led the revolutionization of the ballet was yet another lie.

The symphonic music *Shachiapang* was composed by the Central Philharmonic Orchestra on the basis of the Peking opera. As early as 1956, Chairman Mao had issued important instructions on the need to revolutionize music, and in 1958 Chinese composers tried adapting western symphonic forms. In 1964, Premier Chou helped to direct and compose the impressive song-and-dance pageant *The East Is Red*. Its successful example encouraged our composers to start work in January 1965 on this new symphonic music *Shachiapang*, which was performed on National Day that year. Chiang Ching paid only one visit to the Central Philharmonic Orchestra while they were rehearsing to ask about the capabilities of the western instruments used in a symphonic orchestra, but she never sat through a single rehearsal.

So the successful production of the eight model theatrical works was the result of collective effort. With the exception of *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment* they were all adapted from earlier operas which supplied a good basis for them. The script writers and companies which had produced the prototypes gave generous help to those making the model works. Members of the audience also contributed good suggestions for revision and adaptation, as did such leading comrades as Kang Sheng and Ho Lung. These facts show that the model theatrical works were the products of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art. They owed much to the guidance and care lavished on them by Chairman Mao, Premier Chou and other members of the Central Committee, and were the fruits of the hard work of many revolutionary art workers. Chiang Ching and her gang who tried to take the credit for them were simply political pickpockets and swindlers.

**Yang Kuang-man**

## **His Songs Will Live On**

Last year we lost a popular Chinese poet — Kuo Hsiao-chuan.

During the last few years of his life the “gang of four” trumped up charges against Kuo Hsiao-chuan and deprived him of the right to publish his poems. It is only right and proper for a poet of socialist China to write in praise of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and of the Party and the masses. Kuo Hsiao-chuan was a veteran poet who had retained his revolutionary fervour and youthful spirit; if he wanted to write more poetry for the people during the Cultural Revolution, there was nothing criminal in that. Yet whenever he tried to publish his new work he was attacked by the gang. The outrageous inquisitors Chiang Ching and Yao Wen-yuan both opened fire on him and ordered him to be “investigated” in the hope of silencing him.

But although he was hounded like this, Kuo Hsiao-chuan never stopped writing poems to express his ideals, his love and hate and his trust in the revolution; he also lashed out at the gang's revisionist fallacies. At that time Chairman Mao's stern criticisms of the “gang of four” were not known to the masses; but many Party members

and other people, on the basis of their understanding of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, had long been suspicious of the gang and disgusted by the way they carried on. Kuo Hsiao-chuan, gaining strength and wisdom from the masses, firmly believed that the gang would not have the upper hand for long — they would soon be overthrown.

It was under these circumstances that he wrote *Autumn in Tuanpowa* and *Autumn Song*, two representative poems of his last ten years.

*Autumn in Tuanpowa* uses such images as "the autumn breeze", "autumn sunlight", "sorghum stalks" and "sunflowers" to conjure up a scene at once serene yet full of vitality. It was at Tuanpowa that the poet was being "investigated" on the instructions of the "gang of four"; but there is no pessimism, resentment or sense of isolation in his lines on autumn; instead, they show ardent love of life and a strong fighting spirit.

Ah, Tuanpowa! Are you really so quiet? . . .

Already in the minds of the people  
Is there not the din of charging cavalry?

Is there not hot blood coursing  
Through all the people's veins?

The autumn scene may be peaceful, but underlying it is a fierce struggle and it is directed against the "gang of four". Chairman Mao's directive on studying the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and his instructions regarding the film *The Pioneers*, as well as the encouragement Kuo Hsiao-chuan received from his comrades gave him the strength to fight on. And in this poem he expressed his revolutionary determination.

We fighters have our fighters' character:  
We fear neither threats nor slander;  
Cruel blows only make us stand firmer,  
Rekindling our youthful fire.

We fighters have our fighters' high ideals;  
We'll always remould ourselves, starting from scratch;  
Loss of heart or shameful despondency  
Are enemies to be trampled underfoot.

We fighters have our fighters' courage:  
No rumours can deceive us;  
Baseless accusations, trumped up charges  
But sharpen our wits and clear our thinking.

We fighters have our fighters' feeling:  
Our loyalty ever fresh will never tarnish;  
Temptations, bribes and other evils  
Only sicken and disgust us.

We fighters may rest awhile from singing,  
But our voices still retain their resonance;  
For a while we fighters may close our eyes  
But our sight remains crystal clear.

These vivid and powerful lines sum up the noble qualities which a revolutionary should have and evoke the splendid image of fighters who never cease to make progress and continue the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Yes, it may appear quiet,  
Yet an explosion could come at any minute.

These lines describe not only the cadre school at Tuanpowa but the whole situation in China. The "gang of four" was sitting on a volcano — the fury of the masses — and this volcano was bound to erupt before long. However, as the poet was persecuted in those days and could not publish his poems, he ended this poem with the poignant words:

Come what may, let me bury below the dyke  
This poem so full of contradictions;  
It may not suit this autumn season,  
But when spring comes it will sprout and grow.

And indeed, only a year later, this volcano erupted and destroyed the criminal "gang of four". The spring which Kuo Hsiao-chuan had longed for came.

*Autumn Song* was written slightly later than *Autumn in Tuanpowa*. At that time, certain responsible members of the Central Committee who persisted in carrying out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and resolutely resisted the "gang of four" had rehabilitated Kuo Hsiao-

chuan. In this poem he makes a self-analysis to determine in what way he falls short of the requirements of the revolution, in order to summon up his fighting spirit. He exults over the excellent situation, attacks revisionist ideas and expresses his determination to join forces with the workers, peasants and soldiers to storm the revisionist stronghold.

Let's clear our throats and once again  
Sing our rousing battle songs;  
Let us drink deep of the wine of life  
And rekindle our smouldering revolutionary fire.

.....

A fighter's life can only be  
One of battles;  
A fighter's style can only be  
A revolutionary one.

I know the day will surely come  
When I'll be old and infirm;  
But I only hope that I shall stay as young in heart  
As when I first joined the revolutionary ranks.

I know the day will also come  
When all that is left of me will end in smoke;  
But I hope it will have the acrid reek  
Of the strongest dynamite.

These lines showed the attitude to life and death of a revolutionary fighter. His persecution at the hands of the "gang of four" put his resolution to a stern test and made him think seriously about life and death; but he reached the conclusion that even if he turned into smoke it would reek of dynamite. He was determined to fight the gang to the end.

While in the cadre school Kuo Hsiao-chuan took an active part in farm work and wrote many songs in praise of the movement to learn from Tachai. Like many veterans steeled in the years of revolutionary war, he regained his revolutionary enthusiasm and youthful zest in the cadre school. Though over fifty, he worked hard in the paddy fields even when the weather was very hot. In his poem *To a Friend* he wrote:

We wade through brimming paddy fields  
In the sweltering heat — forty degrees above —

Weaving with our muddy hands  
A lovely tapestry for our motherland.

Unwilling to lag behind the younger people in his company, he became one of the most adept at transplanting rice shoots. And this revolutionary enthusiasm of his made him eager to go wherever there were new socialist things and advanced workers from whom he could learn. As he wrote of Huawen Commune, "Only painting and singing can convey our joy here."

In the autumn of 1975 he went to Honan and lived in Linhsien and Huihsien, two counties which had made rapid progress by following the example of Tachai. When the "gang of four" tried to sabotage the movement to learn from Tachai, he wrote to defend it and in the poems *Huihsien Is a Fine Place* and *Ascending the Nine Hills* he praised the splendid achievements of the Huihsien peasants.

The hills are being transformed,  
The land is being transformed. . . .  
The people are being transformed,  
Their outlook too. . . .  
They have turned their difficulties  
Into assets.

Elsewhere he praised the Paishihtou commune members who had "kneaded stones into bread". All such poems described the headway made by the people's communes during the movement to learn from Tachai, and expressed his love for our country and our peasants.

Many of Kuo Hsiao-chuan's poems also have important political themes and clearly express his revolutionary enthusiasm. *Swimming the Yangtse* describes how the revolutionary masses respond to Chairman Mao's call to temper themselves by braving wind and waves. *The Cadre School by the Yangtse* is about cadres taking part in farm labour. The sad news of Premier Chou's death overwhelmed Kuo Hsiao-chuan with grief and in a few days he wrote a long poem mourning the premier. When our great leader Chairman Mao died, he wept till his eyes were swollen and set about writing another long poem, but unfortunately died before this was finished.

Years of persecution at the hands of the "gang of four" undermined Kuo Hsiao-chuan's health. In mid-October last year when he heard

of their downfall he was jubilant and loud in his praise of Chairman Hua's brilliant action. However, he died in an accident before he could return to Peking to join in the mass denunciation of the gang.

Kuo Hsiao-chuan joined the revolution in the thirties and worked and studied in Yen-an for many years. After Liberation he wrote many good poems praising the Party and the people. He was a poet well-known to the Chinese people, the trusted adviser and friend of many young poets. He was loyal to his comrades, who will long remember his integrity. Towards the end of his life, after being tempered by the Cultural Revolution and the struggle against the "gang of four", he wrote more powerfully; and his serious study of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tsetung's works further clarified his thinking, so that his later works show more strength and depth than his earlier ones. He was never satisfied with his achievements but kept on exploring new modes of expression, evolving a style of poetry that was forceful, concise, smooth and evocative. He paid careful attention as well to the rhythm and musical qualities of his lines, thus many of his verses are often recited.

Kuo Hsiao-chuan has left us, but his songs will live on.



Keep the Men's Welfare in Mind (oil painting)

by Liu Ching

## National Art Exhibition

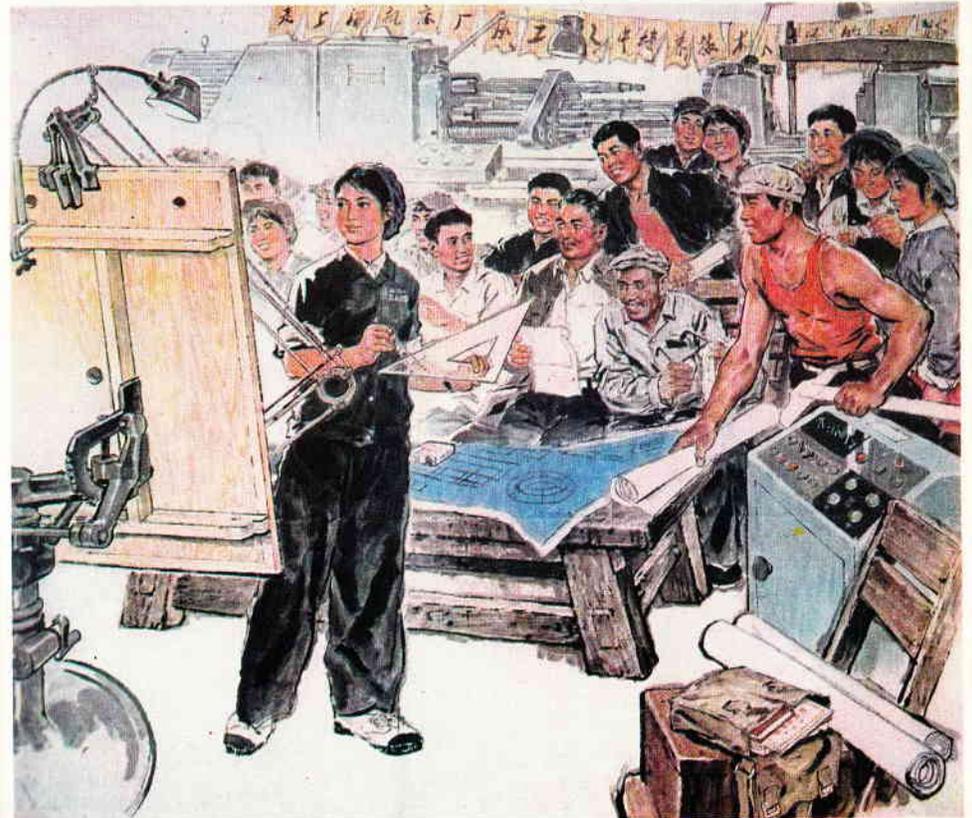


The People's Victory (traditional Chinese painting)

by Wang Wei-poo

Training Worker Technicians (traditional Chinese painting)

by Chang Shao-cheng



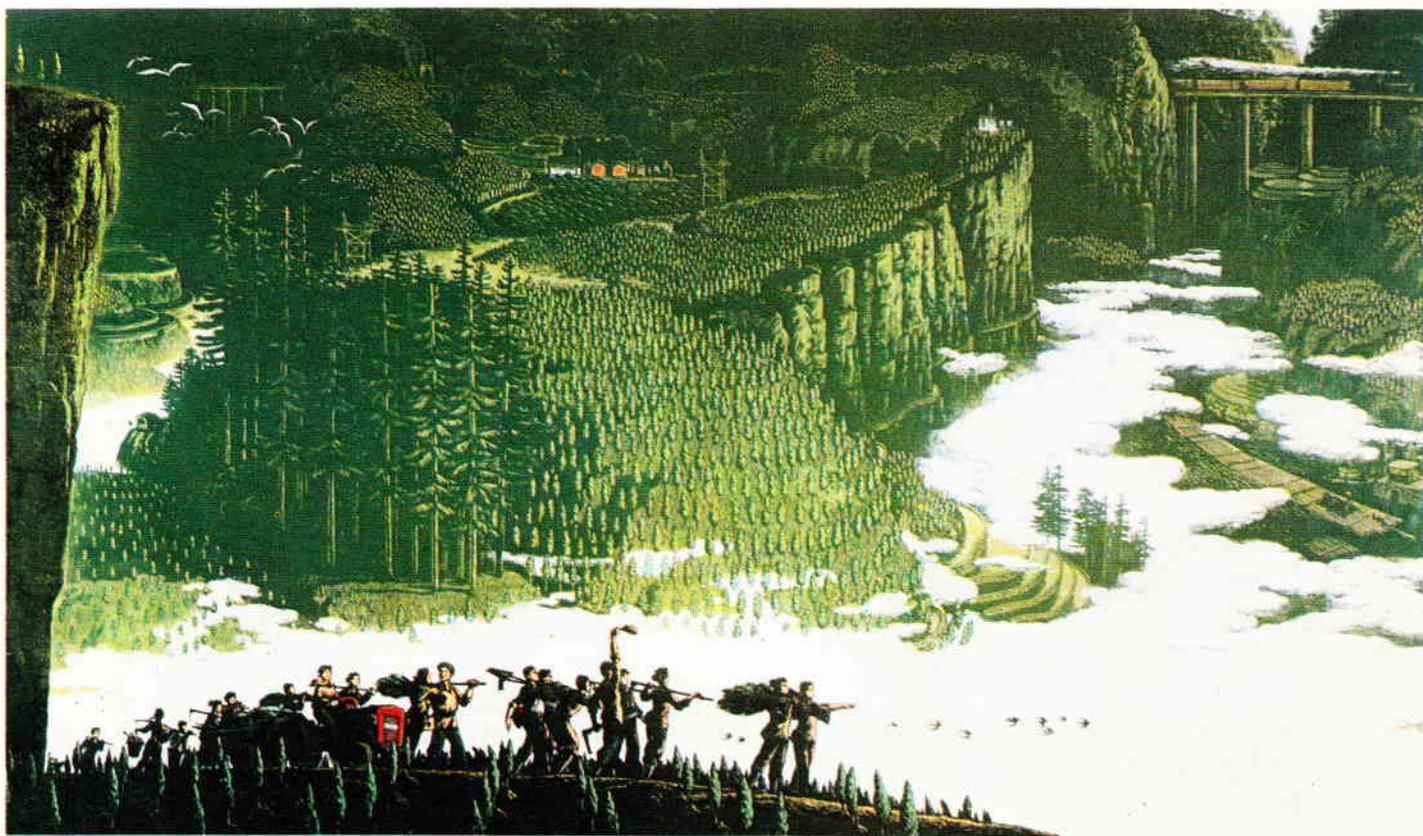


"With You in Charge, I'm at Ease" (oil painting) by Peng Pin and Qin Shang-yi



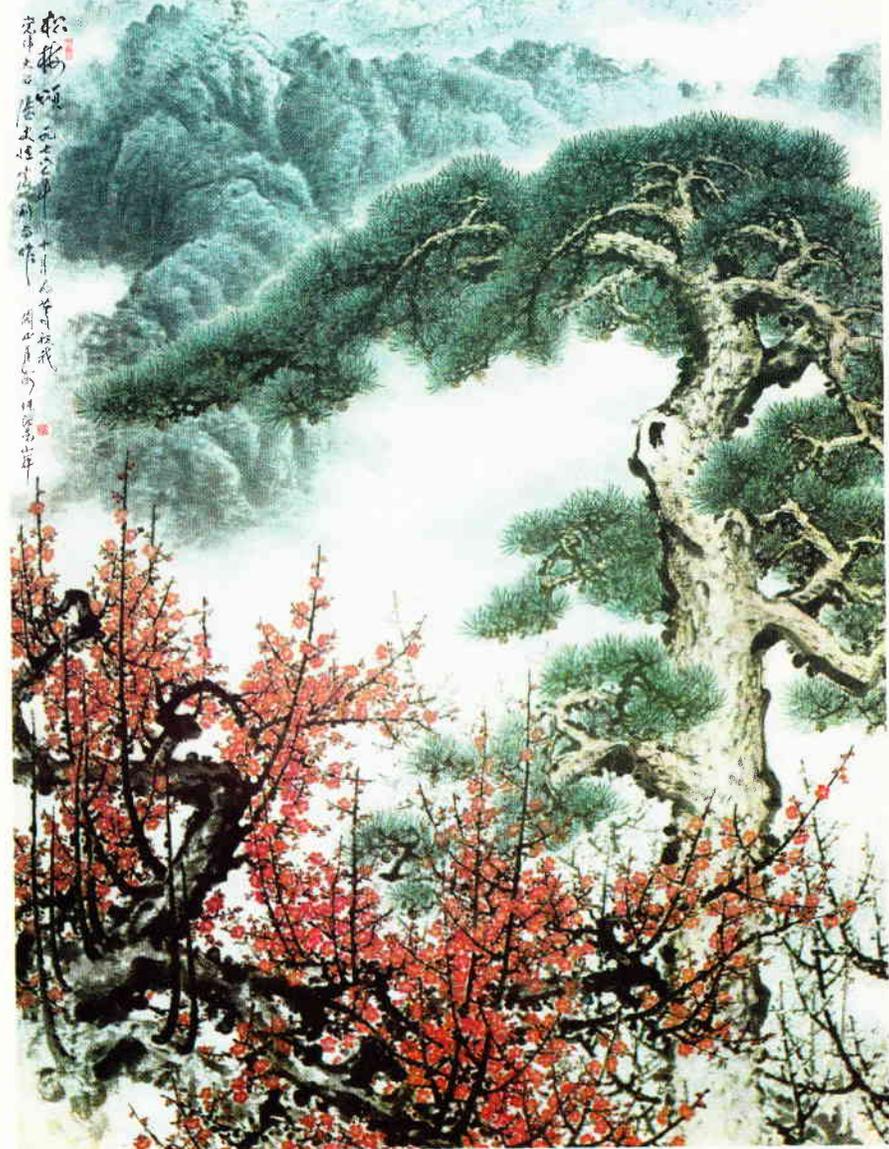
Jubilation in the Southern Borderland (oil painting)

by Liu Chu-teh



Afforestation (woodcut)

by Fang Shih-chung and others



Pine and Plum Blossom (traditional Chinese painting) by Kuan Shan-yueh

## National Art Exhibition

As fire-crackers celebrated the Spring Festival, the National Art Exhibition, first of its kind since the smashing of the "gang of four", was opened on February 18 in Peking. Like the flowers heralding spring it attracted huge audiences.

Pride of place was given in this exhibition to the splendid achievements of our great leader Chairman Mao, our esteemed and beloved Premier Chou and Comrade Chu Teh, Chairman of the N.P.C. Standing Committee as well as to Chairman Hua's revolutionary record. Many exhibits hailed the historic victory over the "gang of four" and expressed the determination of the people of all nationalities in China to rally closely round Chairman Hua, uphold the banner of Chairman Mao, and carry through to the end the proletarian revolutionary cause. Works like *Advancing Towards Victory*, an oil painting of Chairman Mao, Premier Chou and Commander-in-Chief Chu which had long been suppressed by the "gang of four", were warmly acclaimed by the audience. Other veteran proletarian revolutionaries such as Comrades Chen Yi and Ho Lung were also portrayed and works depicting the martyr Yang Kai-hui, close comrade-in-arms

and wife of Chairman Mao, were displayed for the first time in an art exhibition. All this showed that only after the "gang of four" were swept into the garbage heap of history could historical truth be restored.

Some of the most outstanding depictions of our revolutionary leaders were the oil painting "*With You in Charge, I'm at Ease*", the woodblock print *Chairman Mao Reascending Ching kangshan*,\* the sculpture *Our Great Leader and His Close Comrades-in-Arms*\*\* and the oil painting *Keep the Men's Welfare in Mind*.

"*With You in Charge, I'm at Ease*" records the historic occasion when Chairman Mao expressed his complete trust in Comrade Hua Kuo-feng. The artist shows Chairman Mao placing one hand on that of Hua Kuo-feng while in the other he holds a copy of the *Han Dynasty History*. This and his solemn, kindly expression recall to us how Chairman Mao by reminding Comrade Hua of how Liu Pang, first emperor of the Han Dynasty, saw through his wife Empress Lu's plot to seize power warned him to be on his guard against the "gang of four" who conspired to usurp Party and state power. Firmly holding the sheet of paper on which Chairman Mao wrote "**With you in charge, I'm at ease**", Comrade Hua Kuo-feng listens earnestly, obviously determined to live up to Chairman Mao's expectations.

*Our Great Leader and His Close Comrades-in-Arms* is a tribute to the militant friendship between Chairman Mao, Premier Chou and Comrade Chu Teh. This sculpture shows that after the victory of China's revolutionary war, our great leader and his comrades-in-arms, not pausing to rest, were looking ahead to New China's socialist revolution and construction.

*Keep the Men's Welfare in Mind* is a vivid depiction of Comrade Hua Kuo-feng's visit on behalf of the Party Central Committee to Haicheng in Liaoning Province after the earthquake there in 1975. With snow on his shoes he has entered an earthquake shelter to stoke the stove and chat with some PLA soldiers, conveying to them the concern of

\*See *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1977.

\*\*See *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1977.

Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee for the people in the stricken area. This is one of the best of many works in this exhibition reflecting the revolutionary activities of Chairman Hua.

The splendid news of Chairman Hua's appointment as head of our Party and state and of the overthrow of the "gang of four" spread across our motherland like a spring breeze. Cities and countryside, all the way from the capital to the border regions, were scenes of tremendous rejoicing. *Jubilation in the Southern Borderland* shows some of our national minority people celebrating the glad tidings. *The People's Victory* is a landscape with a striking composition showing the rejoicing in a mountain town overlooking a river. *Pine and Plum Blossom* by Kuan Shan-yueh, a veteran artist of the traditional school, symbolizes the victory of October 1976, the sturdy pine and effulgent plum blossom reflecting the spirit of our revolutionary people.

Many works were devoted to the important themes of learning from Taching in industry and learning from Tachai in agriculture. They gave heartfelt praise to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and new socialist phenomena and depicted our people's new outlook.

The exhibition showed that the broad masses of art workers have spared no pains to improve their technique in various art forms and make their presentation more effective — especially in the portrayal of our leaders and worker-peasant-soldier heroes. This was evident in the oil paintings, traditional Chinese paintings, woodcuts, sculptures and even paper-cuts on display. It is relatively difficult to depict characters in depth by woodblock printing. Yet *Chairman Mao Reascending Ching kangshan* successfully presents the lofty image of Chairman Mao returning to the old revolutionary base on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. Adopting certain techniques of traditional Chinese painting, it uses vivid colours to create effective background scenery for Chairman Mao's powerful figure. He stands in the middle looking ahead at Ching kangshan's rolling peaks and the sea of clouds, giving one the impression that he is on the summit of a mountain. Chairman Mao's dauntless spirit is conveyed by his steady tread, his broad shoulders inclining forward, his slightly raised head. His

broad vision is suggested by his brilliant, steadfast and penetrating eyes. The perilous peaks surrounding the magnificent Chingkangshan massif extend to the horizon and merge in a surging tide with the turbulent clouds. The flaming azaleas and sturdy young pines all around symbolize the revolutionary political significance of Chairman Mao's reascending Chingkangshan.

Professional and amateur artists of all ages, professions and nationalities took part in this exhibition. Spurred by their enthusiasm over the downfall of the "gang of four", they have created a large number of works in a comparatively short period. Quite a number of veteran artists whose work had been banned have taken up their brushes again.

Implementing Chairman Mao's policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom", the exhibits covered a wide range of subjects and styles. The 695 works on display, including traditional Chinese paintings, oil paintings, woodcuts, sculptures, cartoons, posters, New Year pictures, paper-cuts and serial pictures, filled nine exhibition halls. The hall devoted to cartoons exposing the "gang of four" attracted great interest. And the traditional landscapes and flower-and-bird paintings condemned by the "gang of four" made a come-back at this exhibition to acclaim our beautiful motherland and our vigorous socialist construction.

## ON THE CULTURAL FRONT

Chung Shu

### The "Wagon Opera Troupe"

— *Introducing a Honan opera troupe of Kuanghua County in Hupeh Province*

A common sight on the roads through the hilly countryside of Kuanghua County is a troop of vigorous youngsters pulling eight wagons loaded with luggage and stage properties. The fields on either side resound with their singing. They are members of a Honan opera troupe on their way to a village to perform for the poor and lower-middle peasants.

Under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art the opera troupes of many counties repudiated the revisionist line pushed by Liu Shao-chi which went counter to the orientation of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers. Keeping up the revolutionary tradition of war-time cultural work teams, they boldly left their small theatres in town to perform on the vaster stage of the countryside. As communications are poor, to get their backcloths, costumes and properties to the scattered villages they carry them on their own backs or slung from shoulder-poles, or pile them on wagons which they pull themselves, climbing mountains and ford-

ing streams to perform for the peasants and let revolutionary art occupy the rural cultural position.

This is the practice of the Honan Opera Troupe of Kuanghua County in Hupeh Province which the local peasants call our "Wagon Opera Troupe".

When the troupe first started touring the villages to put on operas, they left the rigging up of a stage to the local peasants. As putting it up and taking it down required about fifty man-days it was a burdensome task. People complained: "Watching operas is fine; rigging up a stage is hard." Once, the brigade they came to had no time to put up a stage so marked out a patch of ground for them instead. Actors and audience were so crowded together that it spoiled the performance — the villagers could not see it properly. The

On their way to perform



objections they raised helped the troupe to realize that their task was to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants, not to be served by them. They determined to change their style of work. On their own initiative they used eight drop-side wagons to make a portable stage 15 feet high, 22 feet long and 23 feet wide. These wagons served them as transport, also as beds, and it took only twenty minutes to rig them up into a stage. In this way they saved the peasants trouble and facilitated their performance too.

When next they went back to the above-mentioned brigade, many villagers recalling the last fiasco went without a meal to go and fix up a stage. When they came to the spot, however, they found a large stage already standing there. In high delight they applauded the troupe's consideration and fondly named it their "Wagon Opera Troupe", a name very soon adopted by the whole county.

Kuanghua County in northern Hupeh has over 300,000 inhabitants, most of whom live in the villages. To integrate themselves with the poor and lower-middle peasants and learn from them, the "Wagon Opera Troupe" declare, "We must keep the villages in mind and go to put on our performances there." To enable every peasant in the county to enjoy operas the troupe spends seven or eight months a year in the countryside, regardless of how hard conditions may be. Because they serve the peasants heart and soul, many stirring stories are current about "Wagon Opera Troupe".

One day having finished performing in one commune the troupe made ready to go on to another. The two highways between the communes both made big detours around a reservoir. Going by either of these roads they would not reach their destination till after dark. If they were to stage an opera the same evening, they would have to take a short cut along a narrow, steep track. To race against time they decided to do this, surmounting any difficulties on the way. They had hauled their wagons halfway up a slope when one of them bogged down in the mud. At once everyone put his shoulder to the wheel and extricated it. Pressing on, they reached their destination on time. When the peasants learned that the troupe had come by this track, they exclaimed, "Before seeing your good opera we've been moved by your troupe's fine spirit."

Every time they go to the countryside, top priority is given to hilly areas or out-of-the-way villages. They are unwilling to pass over even a little hamlet deep in the mountains. Once, in the mountains bordering another province, they heard that high up in the forest lived three families who very seldom came down to see operas. The place was ten miles away and it was a hard climb, yet the troupe sent a group of actors, carrying their costumes and properties on their backs, to perform specially for these three families. The peasants were deeply moved. "Before Liberation we were treated as beasts of burden and often robbed by bandits," they said. "Who ever showed concern for us? Now Chairman Mao not only lets us be masters of our country, but sends an opera troupe here to perform for us. We'll be thankful for his goodness from generation to generation."

Wherever they go, the actors show warm concern for the local army dependants, families of revolutionary martyrs, disabled soldiers and childless old people, and help them with their housework. When in one brigade they heard that a certain Granny Chang being over ninety seldom came out to see operas, they sent people to escort her over. But Granny Chang declined, not wanting to give them any trouble. The next day, to her surprise, some actors carrying musical instruments arrived at her house and performed for her. With tears in her eyes, she gripped their hands and said, "I've lived through three governments, but never dreamed that an opera would be put on just for me! I owe this happiness to Chairman Mao."

The actors persist in going to perform in the countryside not only to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants but to temper themselves and remould their world outlook there. They often invite advanced units or individuals to tell them their experience in learning from Tachai in agriculture, or ask old people to tell them about their bitter history. During their long stays in the countryside they have met many fine and selfless characters: an old poor peasant who did not go home for three years but remained at a water-conservancy construction site to help expedite the completion of the project; an old woman who volunteered to act as a midwife and deliver children in her own cottage. . . . All these socialist phenomena have made a



Giving a performance

strong impression on them and spurred their eagerness to serve the people. On the one hand they have composed items about the stirring incidents they have seen and staged these far and wide, on the other, they keep aiming higher than before. To give better performances in the countryside, they hold rehearsals there and train each actor to take different parts and play musical instruments too. They have also produced multipurpose and easily modified stage properties. Whereas four wagons were formerly required to carry the back-cloths for one opera, these now only take up half a wagon. Their ingenious improvements evidence their devotion to the countryside and their deep feeling for the poor and lower-middle peasants.

To enliven the cultural life in the countryside and make it serve the socialist revolution and construction better the "Wagon Opera Troupe" attaches importance to promoting the villagers' spare-time cultural activities. After performing for the peasants all these years

they know that the masses' literature and art must be developed to satisfy the socialist villages' growing demands. Wherever they go therefore, no matter how busy they are with performances or working together with the local peasants, some of them make time to teach the commune members how to sing arias of Honan or Peking operas, beat drums and gongs, and dance or put on variety shows, helping them to set up spare-time cultural propaganda teams. Sometimes the actors and members of a village's amateur opera troupe give joint performances. Sometimes the "Wagon Opera Troupe" sends an actor to stay in a brigade and coach its spare-time cultural workers. Their efforts in this respect have been well rewarded. Last year alone saw more than twenty literary and art propaganda teams set up in different communes and brigades and about two thousand amateur cultural workers coached. These amateur opera troupes are able to write and stage small plays or operas. Some can even put on a full-length opera. The poor and lower-middle peasants say appreciatively, "Although you professionals go away, you have left a spare-time opera troupe here for us."

These years under the guidance of Chairman Mao's brilliant *Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art*, the "Wagon Opera Troupe" have acted on his instruction, "**All our literature and art are for the masses of the people, and in the first place for the workers, peasants and soldiers; they are created for the workers, peasants and soldiers and are for their use.**" All their praiseworthy deeds — from going to the countryside to perform for the peasants to rigging up a stage themselves, putting on revolutionary operas and making multipurpose back-cloths and stage properties — reflect the tremendous change in our literary and art workers steeled in the Cultural Revolution and display their fresh spirit. They have virtually revolutionized their thinking. In their jubilation over the smashing of the anti-Party "gang of four", the literary and art workers of the "Wagon Opera Troupe" have vowed to stick to their "wagon" spirit and keep advancing along the broad road of our socialist countryside.

## MASS CRITICISM

Chung Ya-erh

### Chiang Ching's Treachery in the Criticism of "Water Margin"

In August 1975, on Chairman Mao's instructions, a nationwide mass movement was launched to discuss and criticize the classical novel *Water Margin*. In 1975 and 1976 we published four articles dealing with this novel as well as the significance of that movement. The "gang of four" brazenly twisted Chairman Mao's instructions and tried to lead the mass movement astray so as to create a climate of opinion favourable for their seizure of Party and state power. This article gives the historical background of Chairman Mao's instructions concerning *Water Margin*, and analyses Chiang Ching's fallacious glorification of the novel and its leading character Sung Chiang.

— The Editors

The later part of 1975 saw a nationwide discussion and criticism of *Water Margin* in line with Chairman Mao's directive. When Chiang Ching, once a trumpeter of Sung Chiang, saw the directive she suddenly changed her tune and masqueraded as an anti-Sung Chiang

heroine. She used the media controlled by the “gang of four” to distort Chairman Mao’s instructions and pin the label “capitulationist” on many leading cadres throughout the country in an attempt to pave the way to usurp Party and state power. However, the truth will out and no Rightist can act the role of a Leftist convincingly. By reviewing a talk made by Chiang Ching in 1973 and her despicable conduct during the criticism of *Water Margin*, we can easily see the treachery of the careerist Chiang Ching in attempting to seize power.

## 1

In February 1973, Chiang Ching posing as an “authority” delivered a talk on *Water Margin* in which she did her utmost to boost up Sung Chiang and his capitulationist line. She lauded him as “an outstanding historical character” who “should be fully approved”, alleging that he had “played an important role in leading the peasant insurgents in an unflinching struggle against the feudal ruling class.”

Is Sung Chiang really “an outstanding historical character” who “should be fully approved”? No! Chairman Mao has explicitly pointed out: **“Sung Chiang pushes capitulationism, practises revisionism, changes Chao’s Chu Yi Hall to Chung Yi Hall, and accepts the offer of amnesty and enlistment.”** Sung Chiang is a member of the landlord class who “has studied Confucian classics in his youth and become astute as a grown-up”, his aim in going to Liangshan is not to join the revolt but to carry out his capitulationist scheme. As soon as he usurps the leadership of the peasant insurgents and becomes the head of the mountain stronghold, he changes the name of the assembly hall from Chu Yi Hall (Assembly Hall of the Righteous) to Chung Yi Hall (Hall of the Loyal and Righteous). He opposes only corrupt officials, not the emperor, and urges his men to be loyal to the throne, substituting this capitulationist line for Chao Kai’s revolutionary one calling upon all just men to topple the emperor. He makes endless overtures to the court, eager to surrender in return for an amnesty and enlistment in the

government army. Far from being “an outstanding historical character”, Sung Chiang is a fawner upon the feudal ruling class.

Has Sung Chiang really “played an important role in leading the peasant insurgents in an unflinching struggle against the feudal ruling class”? Again no! Chairman Mao has sharply pointed out: **“Sung Chiang’s struggle against Kao Chiu is a struggle waged by one faction against another within the landlord class. As soon as he surrenders, Sung Chiang goes to fight Fang La.”** Sung Chiang is a low character who sneaks into the ranks of the peasant insurgents. To achieve his despicable scheme to secure imperial favour and a high official post, he does not scruple to sell out the peasant insurgent forces in the Liangshan marshes in return for an amnesty and the offer of an official position. In this way Sung Chiang not only cuts down the revolutionary banner and betrays the peasant insurgents, he even makes them prop up the ruling class by fighting other “brigands who do not ‘carry out the true way on behalf of heaven’”. Instead of being a “hero” who has been “leading the peasant insurgents in an unflinching struggle against the feudal ruling class”, Sung Chiang is an executioner whose hands are stained with the blood of the peasant rebels whom he betrays.

Actuated by her counter-revolutionary ambitions Chiang Ching distorted the facts and spared no efforts to justify Sung Chiang’s betrayal of the peasant revolt, arguing, “Sung Chiang’s acceptance of the amnesty and enlistment should be analysed according to the historical background of that time. Faced with the aggression of the Liao and Kin Tartars, the Sung Dynasty had to resist the intruders.” In Chiang Ching’s eyes this renegade who goes to fight Fang La’s rebel force after capitulating to the government has become a “national hero”. In other words, it is right to accept the amnesty and enlistment, it is justified to surrender to the emperor and meritorious to suppress a peasant uprising. This is sheer sophistry and capitulationist nonsense.

These falsifications of history by Chiang Ching are nothing new. Early in the ’20s, Hu Shih, a reactionary comprador scholar of the

landlord-bourgeois classes, peddled similar rubbish in his comments on *Water Margin*. To justify his own subservience to imperialism he made national contradictions negate class struggle. In the '30s the renegade, Trotskyite and political swindler Chen Po-ta acclaimed *Water Margin* as "a great national classic" and repeated the lie that Sung Chiang had accepted the emperor's amnesty for the sake of "resisting external enemies". His purpose was to enlist support for the Right capitulationist line of Wang Ming and Liu Shao-chi and persuade the Communist Party and its army to follow Sung Chiang's example of class capitulation and surrender to Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang Ching, who also helped publicize Wang Ming's Right capitulationist line in the '30s, acted in a so-called "fine film of national defence" and took part in the performance to celebrate Chiang Kai-shek's birthday and raise funds to buy a plane for that traitor to the people. Now, in the '70s, Chiang Ching trotted out her old tricks and started touting the mouldering wares of Hu Shih and Chen Po-ta so as to create a climate of opinion favourable to her revisionist line of capitulation.

It is not at all surprising that Chiang Ching should glorify Sung Chiang, a loyal lackey of the feudal dynasty who infiltrated the revolutionary camp in order to carry out his treacherous plot of capitulation. For Chiang Ching herself did the same. Though belonging to different historical periods, they are both representatives of the decadent exploiting class. The political ambition of both was to undermine the revolutionary camp from within and usurp its leadership by duplicity. In order to achieve this, Sung Chiang built up his own clique within the Liangshan camp and reversed Chao Kai's revolutionary line, thus destroying the powerful rebel army. In the same way, the bourgeois careerist Chiang Ching formed an anti-Party clique with Wang Hung-wen, Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan. Acting like tyrants they set themselves above even Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee, attempting to usurp the supreme power of the Party and state. Chiang Ching used to liken herself to the empresses Lu and Wu Tse-tien and took "great pride"

in doing so, making no attempt to conceal her counter-revolutionary ambitions.

## 2

Chairman Mao, aware of the plot of the "gang of four", in August 1975 issued important instructions concerning *Water Margin*, pointing out explicitly: **"The merit of the book *Water Margin* lies precisely in the portrayal of capitulation. It serves as teaching material by negative example to help all the people recognize capitulation."** This directive exposed the capitulationist essence of *Water Margin* and showed Sung Chiang up as a capitulationist and lackey of the feudal ruling class, thereby refuting Chiang Ching's specious praise of *Water Margin* and Sung Chiang. At the same time Chairman Mao urged us to draw lessons from this **"teaching material by negative example"**, be on our guard against schemers who posed as revolutionaries and be quick to detect capitulationists like Sung Chiang. This severe criticism of the "gang of four" had been preceded by Chairman Mao's rebuttal of their claim that empiricism was the main danger, and his reproach that they had violated the three basic principles: **"Practise Marxism, and not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and aboveboard, and don't intrigue and conspire."**

Chiang Ching's gang were thrown into a panic by Chairman Mao's instructions. They spared no pains to distort them and lead the mass movement astray.

Chiang Ching, an old hand at acting and playing tricks, got her hack writers to dish up articles distorting Chairman Mao's instructions, pinning the label "capitulationist" on all who stood in the gang's way or did not obey their orders and slandering leading cadres who adhered to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. At the same time she took the field herself, went around speechifying and played double-dealing tricks to twist the revolutionary spirit of Chairman Mao's instructions and to confuse people's minds. In September 1975 Chiang Ching rampaged to Tachai and gave its brigade members

a long harangue on the subject of *Water Margin*. It was she who had made Sung Chiang out a hero and gushed that *Water Margin* was "a fine novel", but now she whitewashed herself by making the slanderous charge, "A handful of scoundrels who have sneaked into our ranks praise this novel that glorifies a renegade." It was she who had ascribed Sung Chiang's acceptance of the amnesty and enlistment to the "limitations of the peasant mentality", but now she shifted the blame for this on to others. Chopping and changing like this, she put up a ludicrous and disgusting performance.

Not satisfied with this, Chiang Ching tampered even more blatantly with Chairman Mao's instructions. She said, "Let me tell you frankly: The crux of the book *Water Margin* is that they take real power away from Chao Kai." In this way she contradicted Chairman Mao's statement, "**The merit of the book *Water Margin* lies precisely in the portrayal of capitulation.**" Of course she had ulterior motives in stressing the fact that Sung Chiang had deprived Chao Kai of his authority. She kept reiterating, "We mustn't regard the discussion of *Water Margin* as just a literary matter, it has real topical significance." She went so far as to allege publicly, "There are people now in the Political Bureau who want to deprive Chairman Mao of his authority." What did she mean by that? It is quite clear. This was a dastardly attack on our beloved Premier Chou En-lai and other leading comrades in the Central Committee — despicable tactics to further a vicious scheme.

Engels once said that the vileness of the method employed just proves the vileness of the aim. Chiang Ching twisted Chairman Mao's instructions, attacked Premier Chou with base insinuations and led the discussion of *Water Margin* astray in her bid to seize power in the Party and the government. When Chairman Mao was seriously ill she and her confederates stepped up their preparations and could hardly wait to carry out their coup. Soon after Chairman Mao's death, Chiang Ching went to Tsinghua University and its branch school in the suburbs and ranted: "The chairman is dead, but I'm not shedding tears; I have to look after my health." "We must fight hard against them." Her plot was to overthrow the Party Central

Committee headed by Comrade Hua Kuo-feng and seize control of the Party and the government. So her gang's ostensible criticism of *Water Margin* was bogus; their real aim was to seize power.

But with a clap of spring thunder their dreams came to nothing. This careerist Chiang Ching, the hated bane of our country, in spite of all her skill in masquerading could not escape the just verdict of history. She has now come to a despicable end and her name will be anathema for all time.

## CHRONICLE

### Works Commemorating Chairman Mao and Premier Chou

Four works commemorating our great leader and teacher Chairman Mao and our esteemed and beloved Premier Chou have recently been published.

*We'll Always Remember You, Chairman Mao*, a selection of essays edited by the staff of the magazine *People's Literature*, has been published by the Tientsin People's Publishing House while an anthology of poems *Chairman Mao Will Always Live in Our Hearts* has been edited and published by the People's Literature Publishing House. These two selections include works about and by units in Shaoshan, the Chingkang Mountains, Tsunyi, Yen-an, Hsipaipo, Peking, Taching, Tachai and other places visited by Chairman Mao.

*In Memory of Our Esteemed and Beloved Premier Chou*, a selection of essays, has been published by the People's Literature Publishing House which edited it jointly with *People's Literature*. It consists of significant articles and reports from local newspapers and magazines published to commemorate the first anniversary of Premier Chou's death as well as articles not published before.

*Premier Chou Is Always with Us*, edited and published by the People's Literature Publishing House, is another anthology of poems written by workers, soldiers, peasants and revolutionary cadres to mourn for

Premier Chou, including some written at the time of his death in 1976 but suppressed by the "gang of four".

### "The White-Haired Girl" Restaged

During the Spring Festival the popular opera *The White-Haired Girl* which had long been suppressed by the "gang of four" was restaged.

This opera was produced after the publication of Chairman Mao's brilliant *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art* in 1942 and at a time when the movement for new *yangko* dances with contemporary themes was in full swing in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Regions. It exposes the landlords' cruel exploitation and oppression of the peasants and their struggle against the landlord class. When this opera appeared on the stage in Yen-an to celebrate the Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, it won the high approval of Chairman Mao, Comrades Chou En-lai and Chu Teh and other leading comrades. During the wars of resistance and liberation it was staged all over the liberated areas and played the militant role of revolutionary literature and art **"for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy"**. It was further revised before its recent performance.

### New Films

During the Spring Festival new feature films, documentaries, science and educational films were released in Peking and other cities in China. *The Bright Road* (the second part of a trilogy), *Unity Dam*, *The Main Lesson*, *Sands in the Waves* and *Two Blueprints* (a colour film based on a local opera) were warmly received.

*The Naval Battle of 1894* and *Chaoyang Gully* which were made before the Cultural Revolution were also well received.

### **“How the Foolish Old Man Removed the Mountains” Shown in Peking**

In February this year, the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries showed part of *How the Foolish Old Man Removed the Mountains*, a full-length colour documentary produced by the celebrated Dutch film director Joris Ivens and the French film worker Marceline Loridan. Writers, artists, film workers and representatives of the press in the capital watched the film. The shooting of this film started in the spring of 1972 and was finished four years later. The whole, made up of twelve separate films, depicts in detail and from various angles the achievements of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, showing how the Chinese people work, study, live and struggle and revealing their verve and vitality.

### **Canadian Brass Band Performs in China**

A Canadian brass band came to China to give performances in spring this year.



This brass band composed of five people often gives performances in Canadian villages and small towns which have no concert halls and receives a warm welcome there. It has also toured some European and American countries.

During this visit the Canadian musicians performed some western classical music as well as modern works by Canadian, European and American composers. They also played the Chinese songs *Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman*, *Song of Liberation* and *Song of the Guerrillas*, showing the friendship of the Canadian people for the Chinese people.

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A Splendid Catch (paper-cut)

by Yin Chia-tsai



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