



*Flying Eagle
Cliff*

FLYING EAGLE CLIFF

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS PEKING 1975

Adapted by Kwangtung People's Publishing House

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Printed in the People's Republic of China

The Story

Flying Eagle Cliff is the story of Azalea, daughter of a poor peasant of China's Yao nationality. Before liberation, she was left an orphan at 12, when her father died of poverty and illness and a despotic landlord hurled her mother down a cliff to her death. Set on revenge, Azalea fought the landlord, then went to live alone in the mountains. At the liberation of the Yao nationality area she was discovered by a People's Liberation Army company.

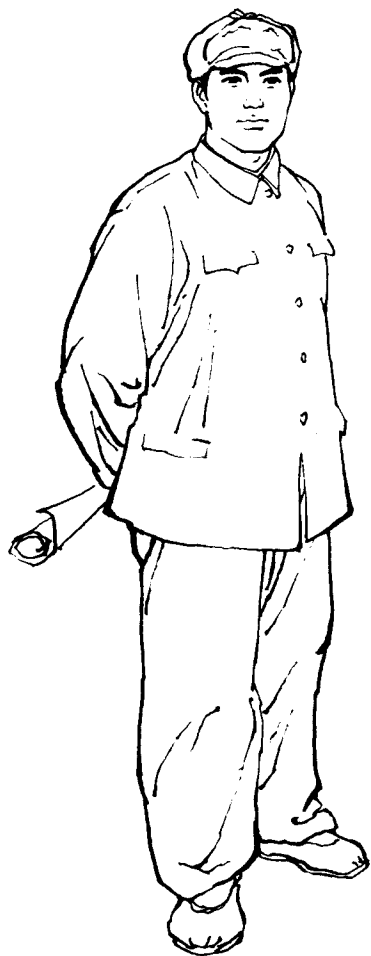
The Communist Party brought her up, raising her class consciousness and teaching her how to struggle. In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution she became the Party committee secretary of her commune, regarded by the local people as their leader and true friend.

In the mass movement to learn from Tachai in agriculture she relied on the masses, braved all dangers from nature and class enemies and, together with the people, found an underground source of abundant water beneath a mountain. It was she, too, who smashed the despotic landlord's plot to sabotage a water conservancy project they were undertaking.

Through Azalea's story the book vividly depicts the post-liberation changes in the Yao nationality area, pointing also to its bright future under Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.



Flying Eagle Cliff

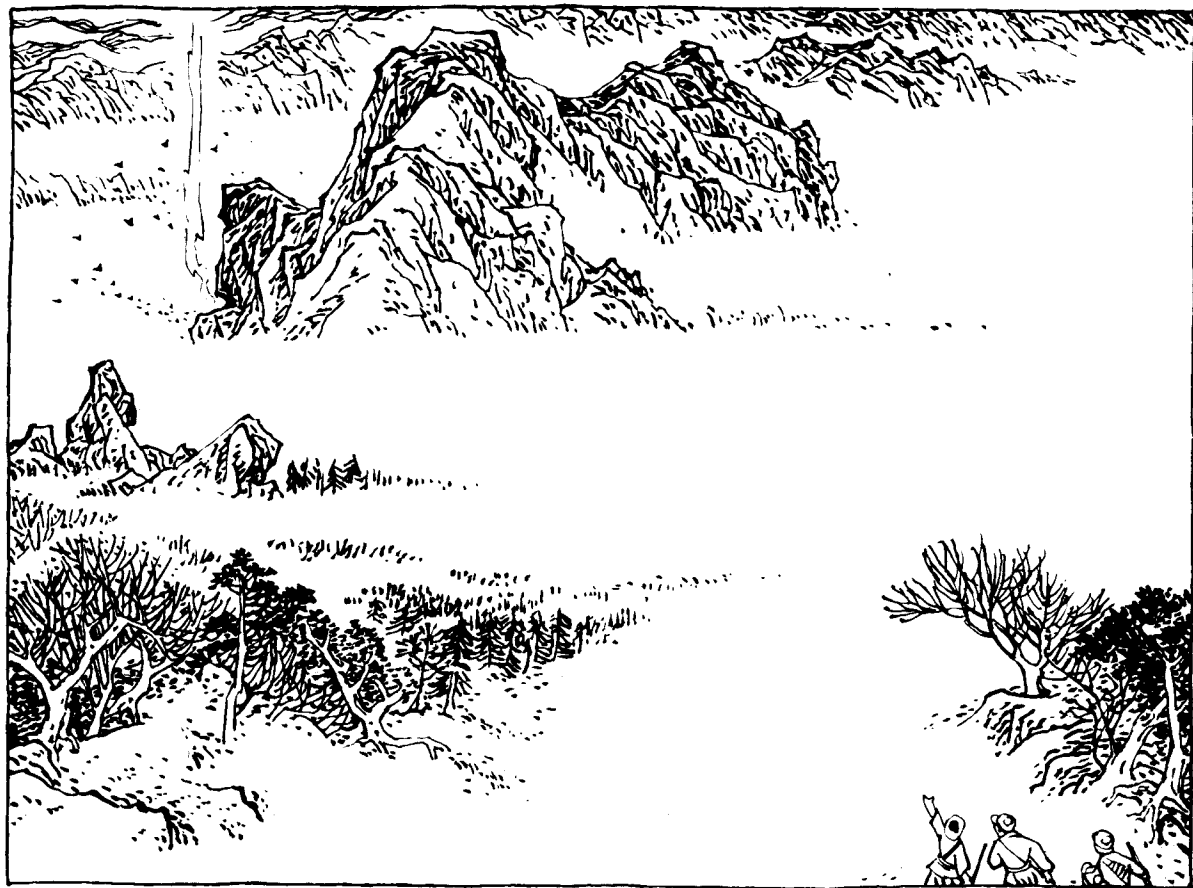




1. One night in the spring of 1950 a Chinese People's Liberation Army company was hotly pursuing bandit remnants in the Yaoshan Mountains in northern Kwangtung Province.



2. It was almost dawn but still they had found no clues. Then suddenly their Yao nationality guide called out: "Smoke! Look, there's smoke!"



3. The P.L.A. men looked and saw bluish smoke rising from among trees midway of a steep cliff.



4. The company political instructor, Kao, led the men at the double to the cliff to see where the smoke was coming from.



5. Reaching the spot, the guide cried out in surprise: "Azalea, you're still alive! . . ."



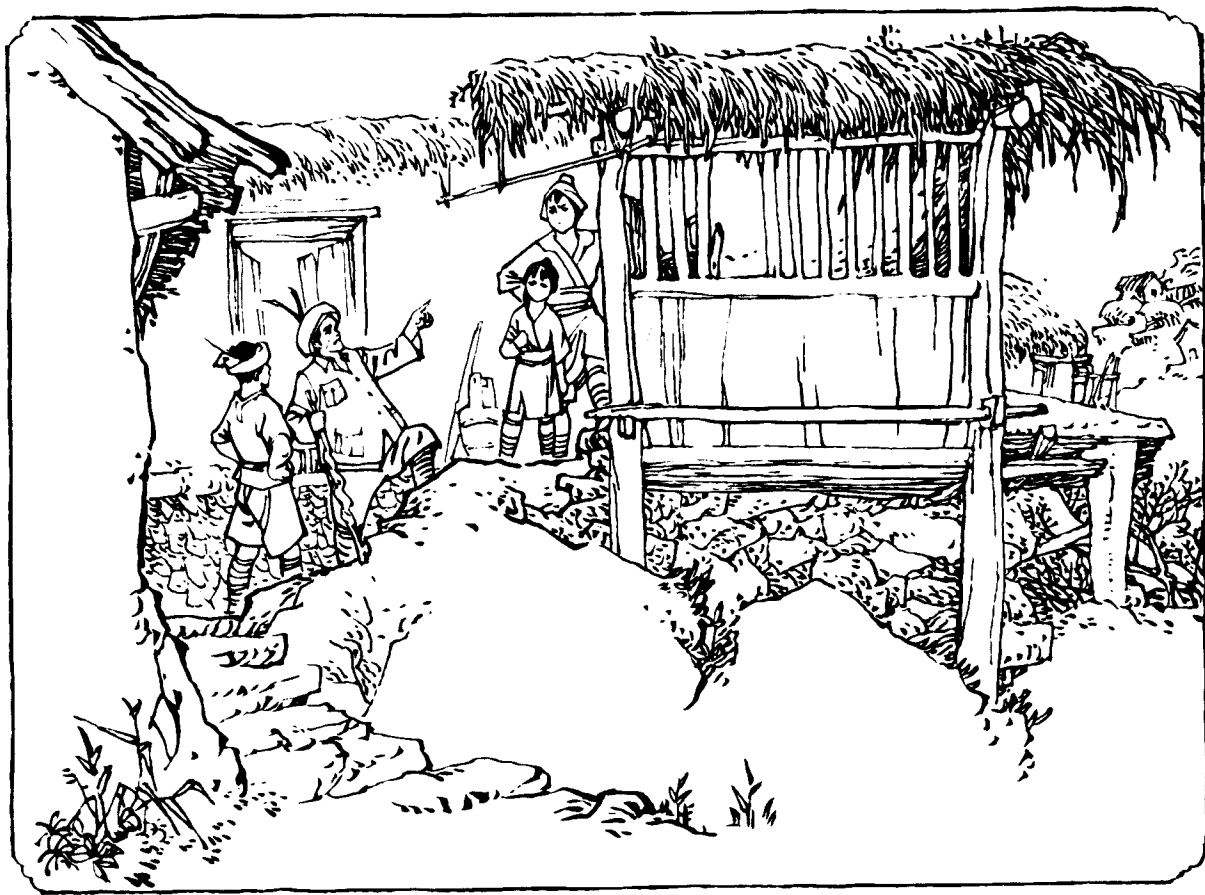
6. A young girl in rags stood beside a stack of firewood outside a cave. She eyed the soldiers icily.



7. The girl was an orphan of Tung Tree Village who had disappeared three years before without a trace.



8. She was 12 at the time. Her father had died of hunger and illness one night in a blizzard.



9. Claiming that the death of Azalea's father was due to demons, the despotic landlord, Centipede, ordered the widow to sell her daughter together with their household goods to get money to "exorcize the demons."



10. The mother was furious and threw a rock at the landlord.



11. The wounded Centipede blew his ox-horn and his henchmen rushed up, bound Azalea's mother and tossed her over the cliff into a deep cavern below.



12. Alone that night, Azalea groped her way to the edge of the cliff where she lay on a stone in the chill north wind and rain. "Ma, are you cold? Can you hear me, Ma?" she wailed bitterly.



13. But her mother did not answer, for she was dead. Only weird sounds echoed from the cavern below.



14. Azalea cried herself to sleep that night on the cliff, with wolves howling and owls hooting far away.



15. Next morning the weather was clear when the villagers passed by on their way to the fields and woke the girl.



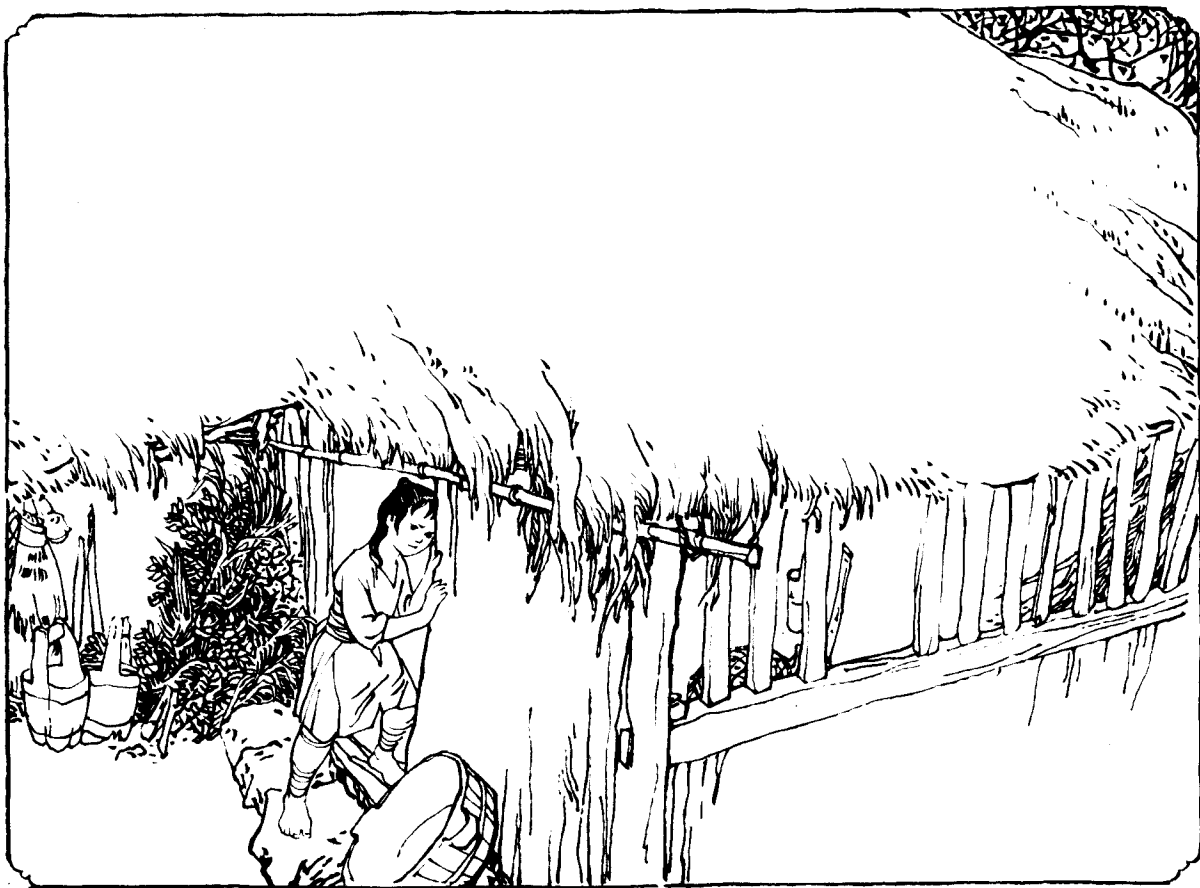
16. Tearfully, an old woman said: "Foolish girl! Can your mother come back to you when she's been murdered? Go quickly, or the wolf-hearted landlord will sell you. Once he's thrown someone over the cliff he won't stop till the whole family's wiped out."



17. Azalea had become another girl overnight. Hatred burned in her innocent, child eyes, but she only bit her lip and said nothing.



18. Finally, after staring vacantly for some time down at the dark cavern, she left the place, her feet as heavy as lead.



19. The girl stumbled through bushes and brambles back to the village and into her wooden hut.



20. Bringing an armload of faggots, she shoved them up into the loft.



21. Then, kneeling, she said as though to her parents: "I'm leaving here, Dad. And Ma, I'm coming after you. This is the end of us."



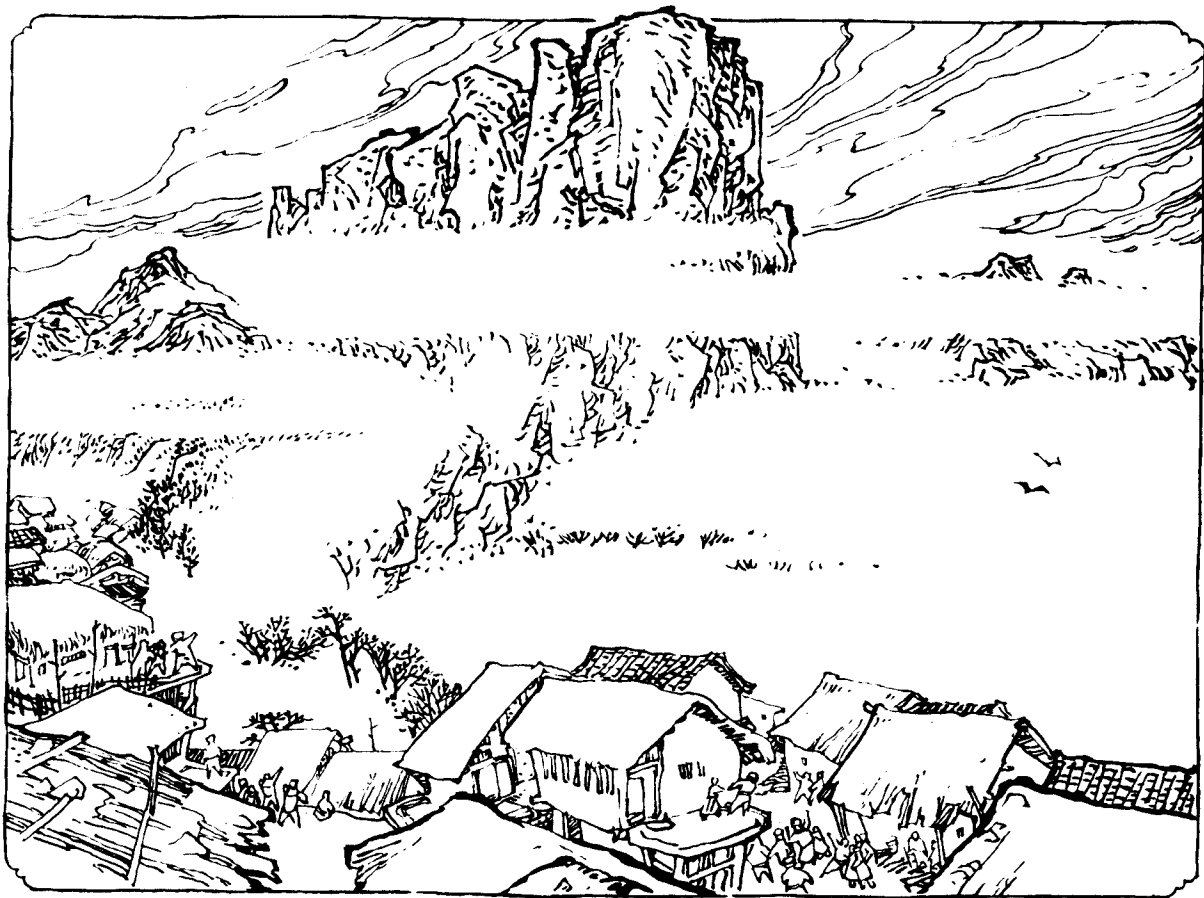
22. Azalea set fire to the faggots but didn't leave till she saw that the hut was in flames. Then she ran quickly out of the village.



23. Centipede's plot had failed. The house he was going to sell lay in ashes, and the girl had disappeared too. Enraged, he called his henchmen out to search for Azalea.



24. But she had taken neither the main road nor the path, bent on following her mother. Running to the top of Flying Eagle Cliff, she thought only of throwing herself into the cavern below.



25. In the man-eating old society Flying Eagle Cliff was known as the place where the unfortunate who could not go on living hurled themselves to their death.



26. The villagers saw the girl on the cliff top and shouted to her: "Azalea! Come down!" Some wiped away tears, others cursed the cruel landlord.



27. From the top of the cliff, overlooking craggy peaks and roaring streams, Azalea cried: "You mountains will see how I die! Please, streams, carry me to Ma!"



28. Azalea's cry startled some eagles perching on the cliff so that they flapped their wings and flew skyward, far into the horizon.



29. Azalea changed her mind. "The frightened eagles fly up. Why should I leap down? Shall I die for nothing, without paying the enemy back? No, I'll punish him first!"



30. Azalea suddenly turned back, her mouth set, eyes fierce and brows knit, after Centipede, who was out looking for her.



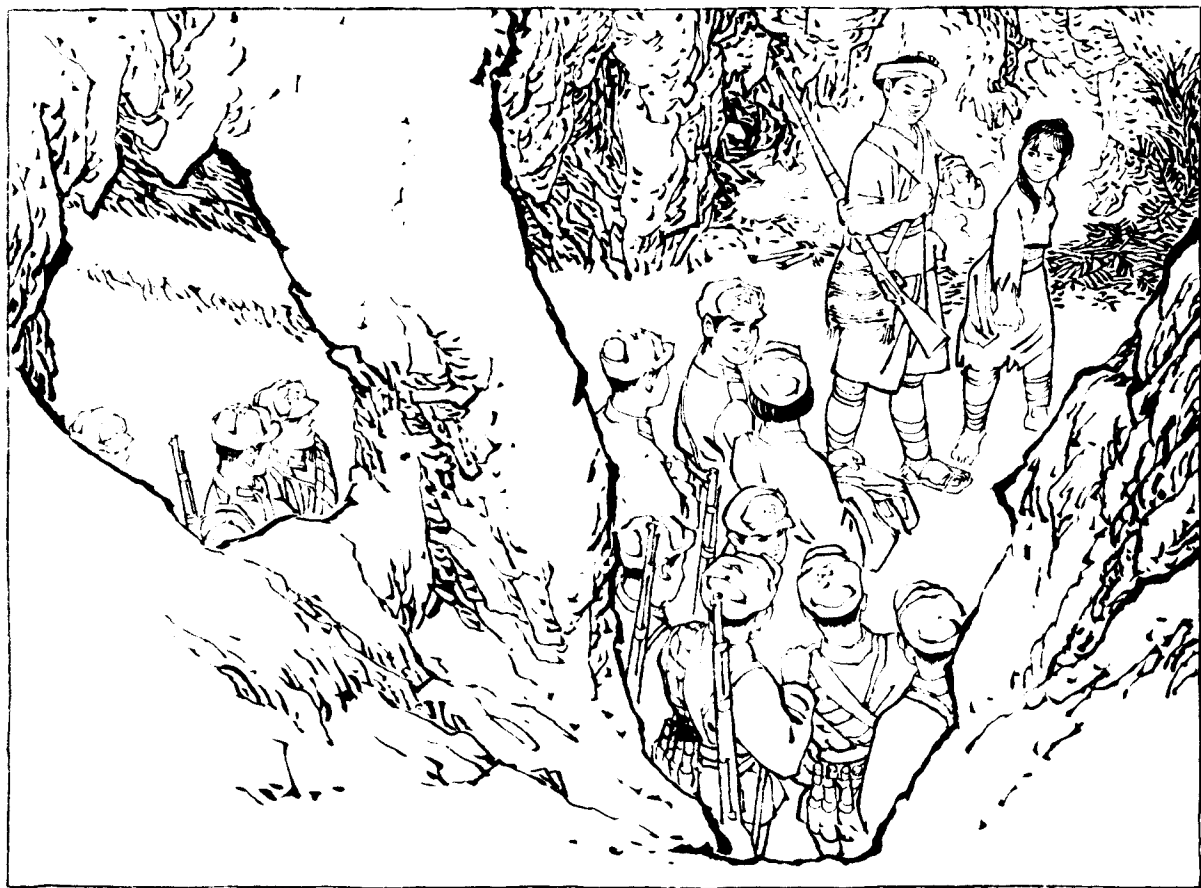
31. Azalea caught the scared landlord off balance and one butt with her head sent him sprawling down the hill. Then she ran quickly into the woods.



32. Centipede let out a groan and some of his henchmen rushed to his rescue, while others fired blindly into the woods. Azalea fled the village that day, and since then the villagers had never seen or heard anything of her.



33. Now, three years later, Azalea recognized the guide, Ah San Kuei. He was from her village and also of Yao nationality.



34. But she was suspicious of the soldiers standing around and involuntarily took a few steps back.



35. Ah San Kuei went up to her and said: "Don't be afraid, Azalea. They're soldiers of the People's Liberation Army, led by Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. They've come to wipe out the bandits and despots and avenge us poor folk!"



36. Company Political Instructor Kao said to her warmly: "We're the people's fighters. We support the millions of poor and oppressed like you. Come with us. Don't be afraid. Nobody will dare to harm you!"



37. Azalea's eyes lit up and tears came into them as she told the P.L.A. men of the many wrongs she had suffered



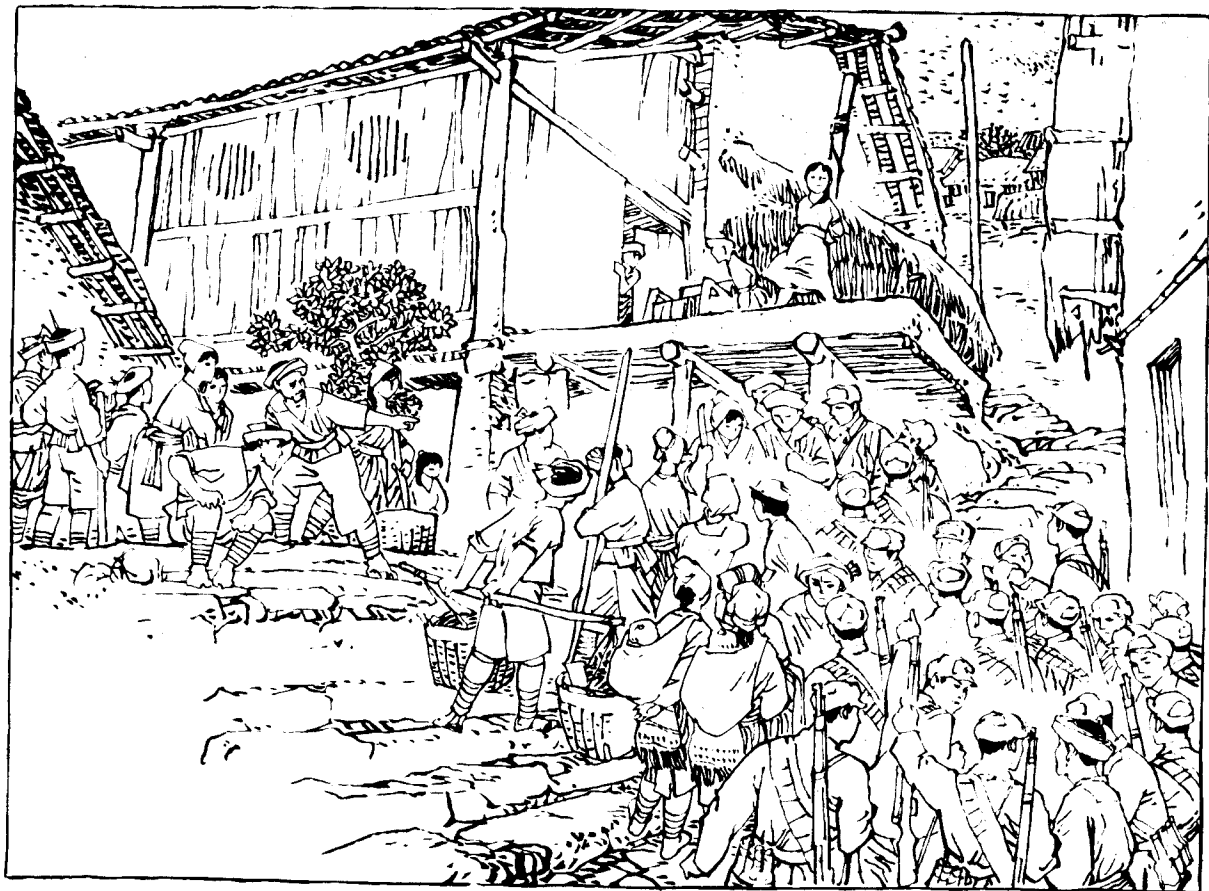
38. The soldiers escorted Azalea back to Tung Tree Village. But since the landlord forbade the villagers to take the P.L.A. men into their homes, they had to camp in the open. Azalea stayed with the woman medical orderly.



39. At daybreak the medical orderly found that Azalea had gone. The cook found his kitchen cleaver missing too. They reported this to the political instructor.



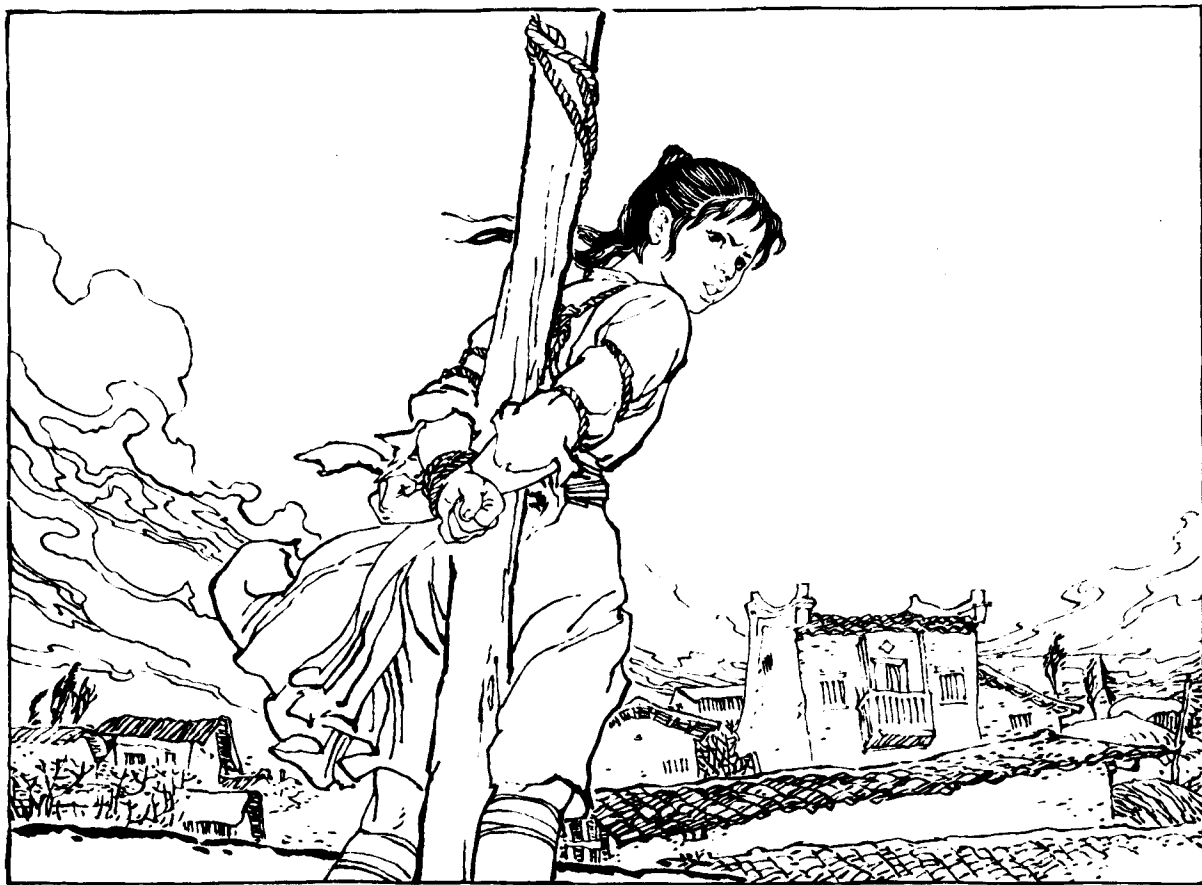
40. What had happened? They were organizing a search for Azalea when an ox-horn sounded in the village.



41. The soldiers went to the village and found Azalea tied to a pillar in the loft of a wooden house. A crowd was gathering round.



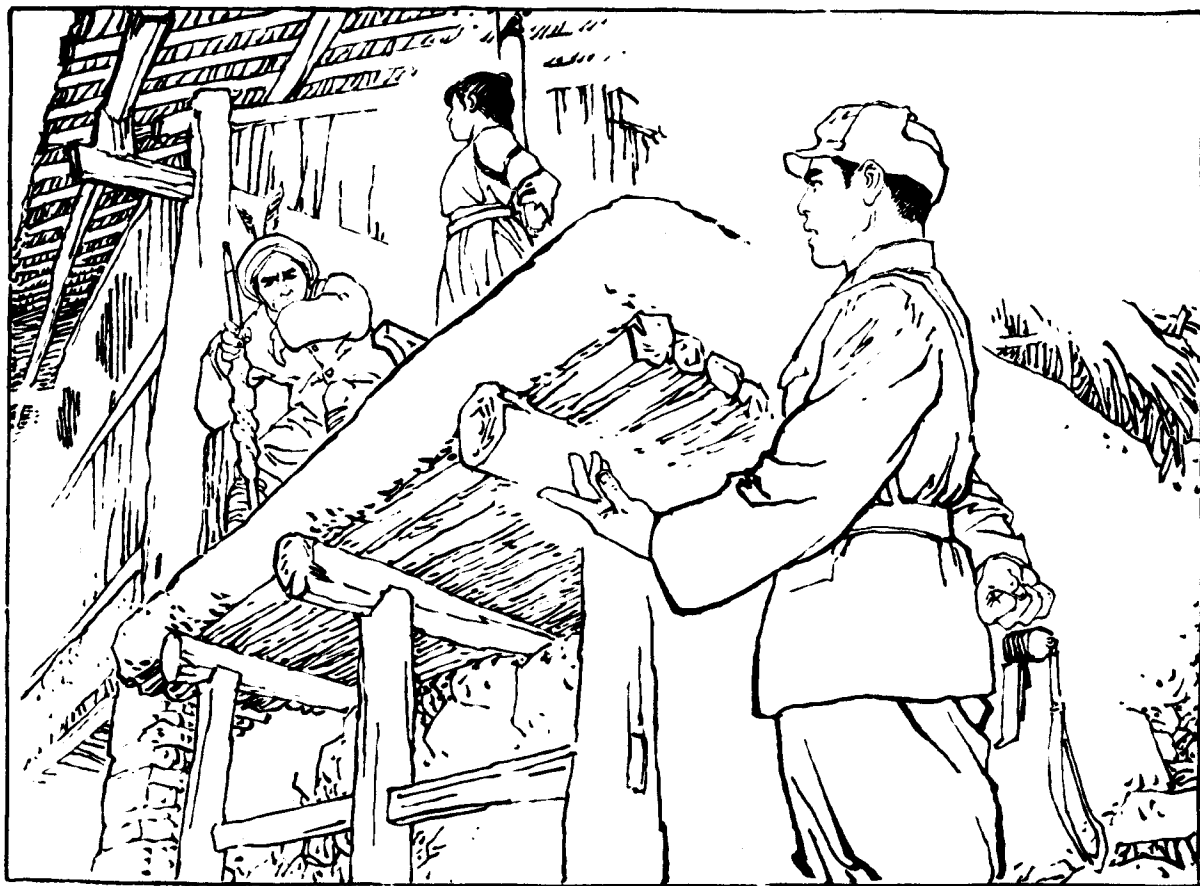
42. There was Centipede yelling for all to hear: "I let the Han army into the Yaoshan Mountains, and what did they do? They repaid my benevolence by sending this girl to kill me!"



43. Azalea was bursting with anger, hatred blazing in her eyes. She had said nothing until Centipede slandered the P.L.A., and then she exploded: "They never told me to kill anybody!"



44. The soldiers felt like giving the landlord a few deserved blows for his unjustified accusation, but the political instructor gave them a glance that told them to be patient. Then he strode towards the house.



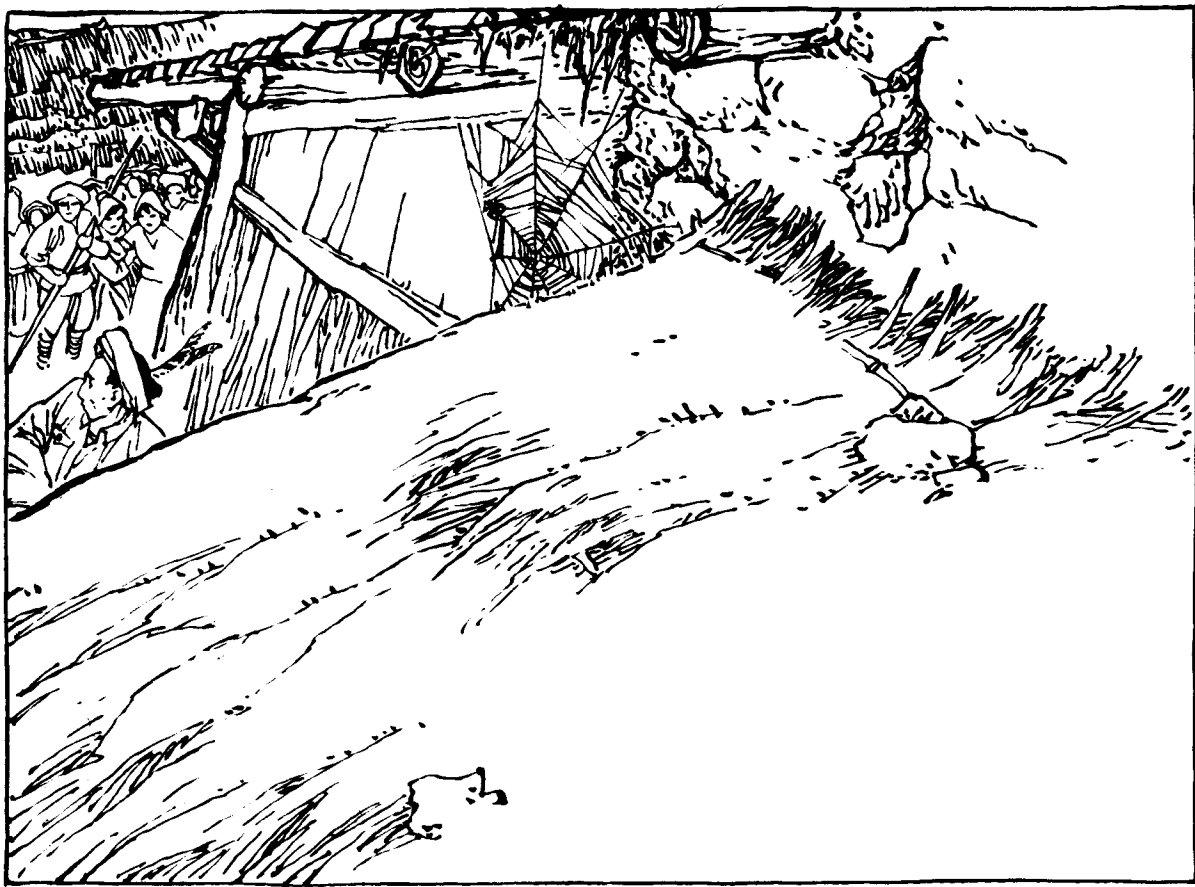
45. His clenched right fist trembling with indignation, Kao demanded sharply of the landlord: "Have you evidence that we sent her to kill you?"



46. Centipede displayed the cleaver. "Here's the evidence," he yelled. "The Yaos never use knives like this!"



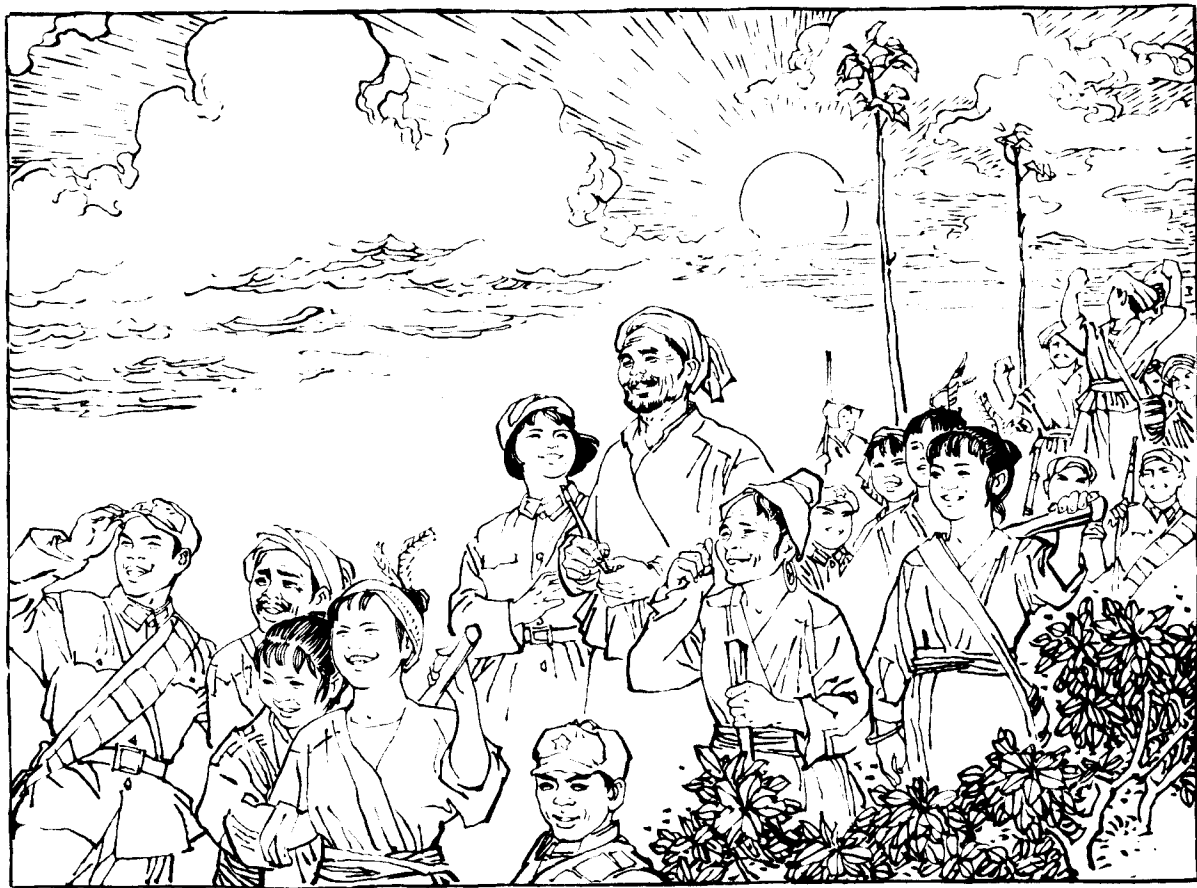
47. "And did the girl say we told her to kill you? Speak up!" pursued Kao.



48. The landlord was stumped and, blinking his eyes, stuttered out a counter-question: "Would she have dared to come here if you hadn't sent her?"



49. Kao then addressed the people: "Did you hear that? No one dared lift a finger against Centipede before, but the country is liberated now. Chairman Mao and the Communist Party support us. The labouring people can lift up their heads. The people have stood up!"



50. His words were like a spring breeze sweeping away the villagers' doubts. They began to stir, their faces lighting up with joy.



51. Kao continued: "We didn't tell Azalea to kill anyone. We Communists are straightforward and just. We're here to wipe out the bandits so that the people can have a good life. Rumours and slanders can do nothing!"



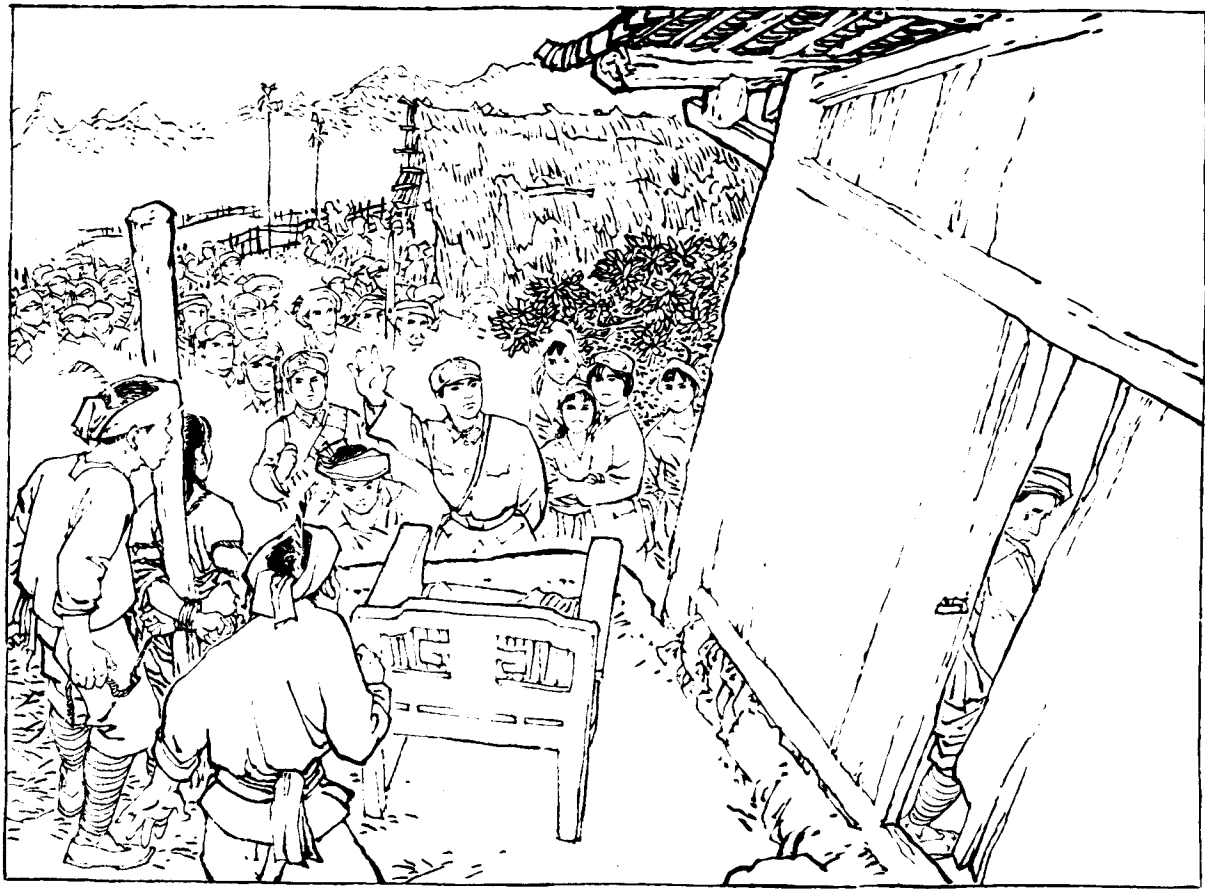
52. He turned to Centipede and said sternly: "The Yao people say that a tiger is hunted because it eats people. Why did Azalea try to kill you? You should know. How did her mother die? Why . . . ?"



53. The people were aroused and angry. Centipede was cornered and slunk into his room. "The people have the power now," said Kao, "and nobody can tie others up at will! Whoever tied that rope had better untie it!"



54. Centipede could do nothing but order the girl set free, at which two of his henchmen ran up to do his bidding.



55. But Kao stopped them, repeating that whoever bound her should free her himself.



56. Scared out of his wits, Centipede crept out of the room and untied the rope.



57. This was the first time the landlord's authority had been over-ruled, and the people were jubilant. Azalea jumped down from the loft and was caught by Kao.



58. A girl of iron will, Azalea had suffered untold misery without giving in. Comforted by the political instructor, she burst into tears.



59. There seemed to be no end to her weeping....



60. As the company had to move on, Kao intended to leave Azalea in the care of the county people's government. But she did not want to leave the army comrades.



61. Finally she was permitted to join the P.L.A. company where she assisted the woman medical orderly during the bandit suppression campaign.



62. After the bandits were rounded up, Kao was transferred to work in the county Party committee. Azalea was assigned to work in the same office.



领导我们事业的核心
力量是中国共产党。

指导我们思想的理论
基础是马克思列宁主义。

63. With the help of her comrades, Azalea did well in both her work and study. Through taking part in political movements she soon developed a high class consciousness.



64. In 1958 a democratic reform movement was started in the Yao nationality area. Kao led a work group from the county Party committee, and Azalea went with him.



65. White Wolf Valley, high in the Yaoshan Mountains, was a place where class enemies still ran wild. So it was the main focus for democratic reform.



66. After the work group arrived in White Wolf Valley, the class enemies became more arrogant than ever, ordering their henchmen to spread rumours and intimidate the people so that they would not trust the work group.



67. Kao and his group saw through the enemy's tricks. They intensified their work of arousing the masses to action.



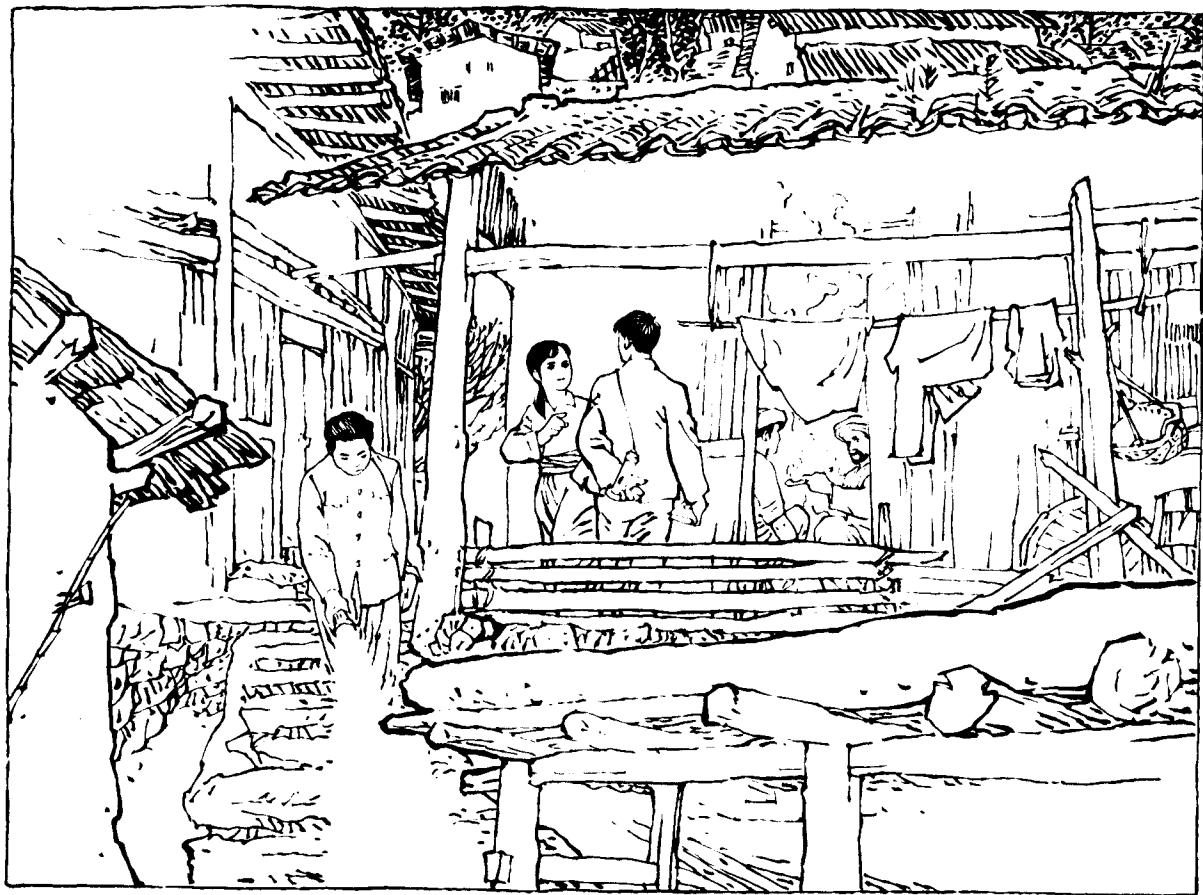
68. One new group member, Young Li, was impatient, thinking the movement went too slowly. He suggested arresting all enemy elements at one fell swoop.



69. But Kao explained: "Rashness won't get us anywhere but in a mess. The work group can't do what the masses must do themselves. To arrest the class enemies before the masses are aroused would be useless."



70. To prepare the way for success in the coming struggle, the comrades first contacted poor and lower-middle peasant families who had suffered the greatest exploitation and oppression.



71. One evening when Kao was at a meeting in another village, Azalea asked Young Li to continue talking with the local people while she and another group member conducted separate discussions.



72. Young Li asked the people to tell their bitterness in the old society so as to see for themselves the root of their past sufferings and so raise their class consciousness.



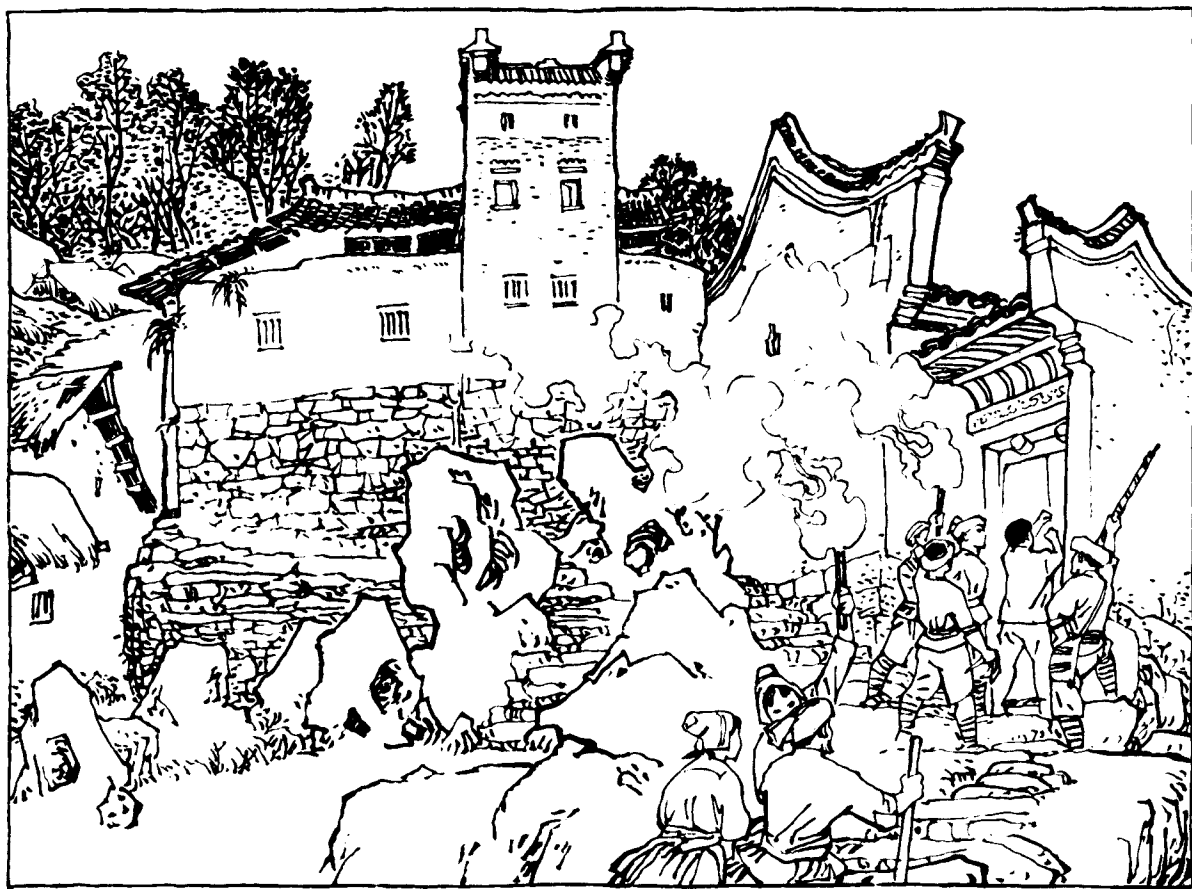
73. Young Li couldn't help recalling his own past bitter life. Suddenly inflamed, he pounded the table and demanded: "Do you dare to have it out with that blasted landlord right now?"



74. The villagers clenched their fists and declared that they did. "Good!" thundered Young Li. "Then get your weapons and we'll go after him!"



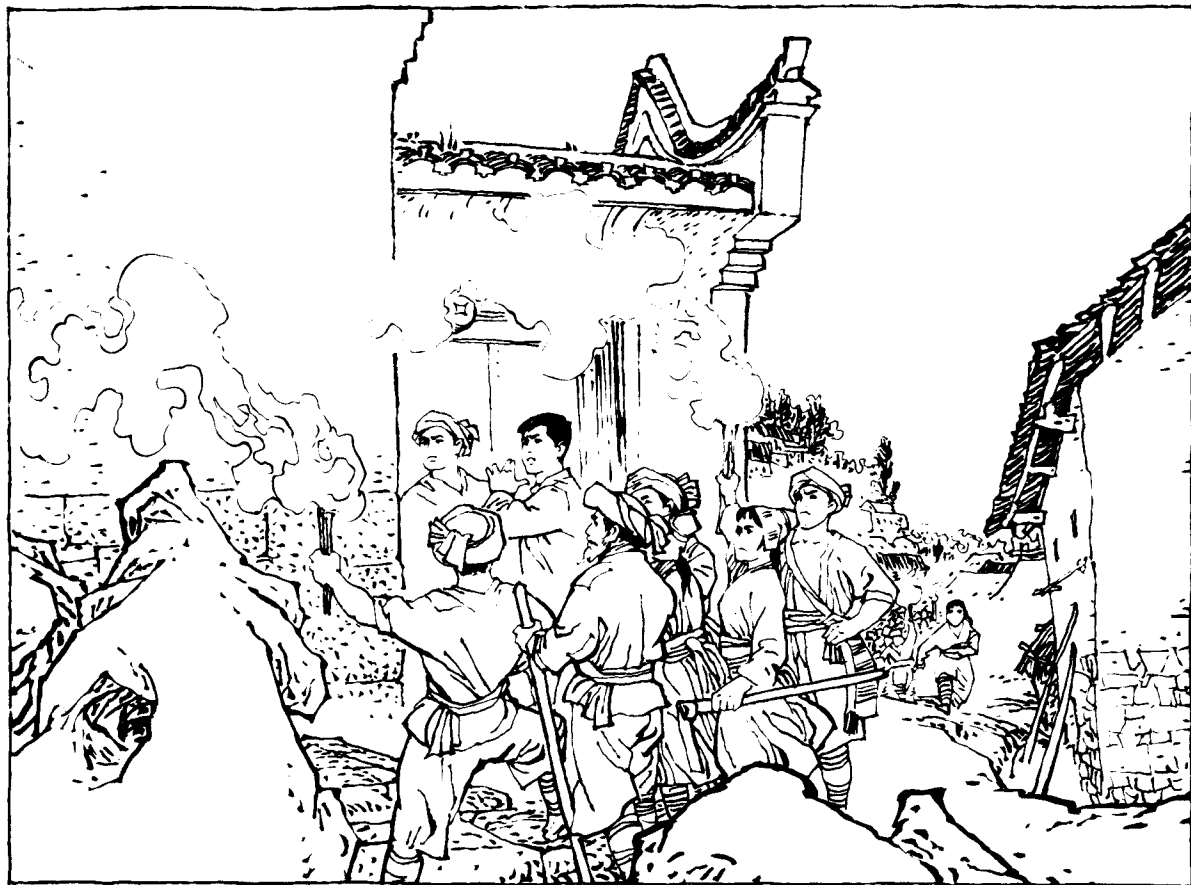
75. Some of the villagers gathered, but they didn't yet know how to struggle against a landlord.



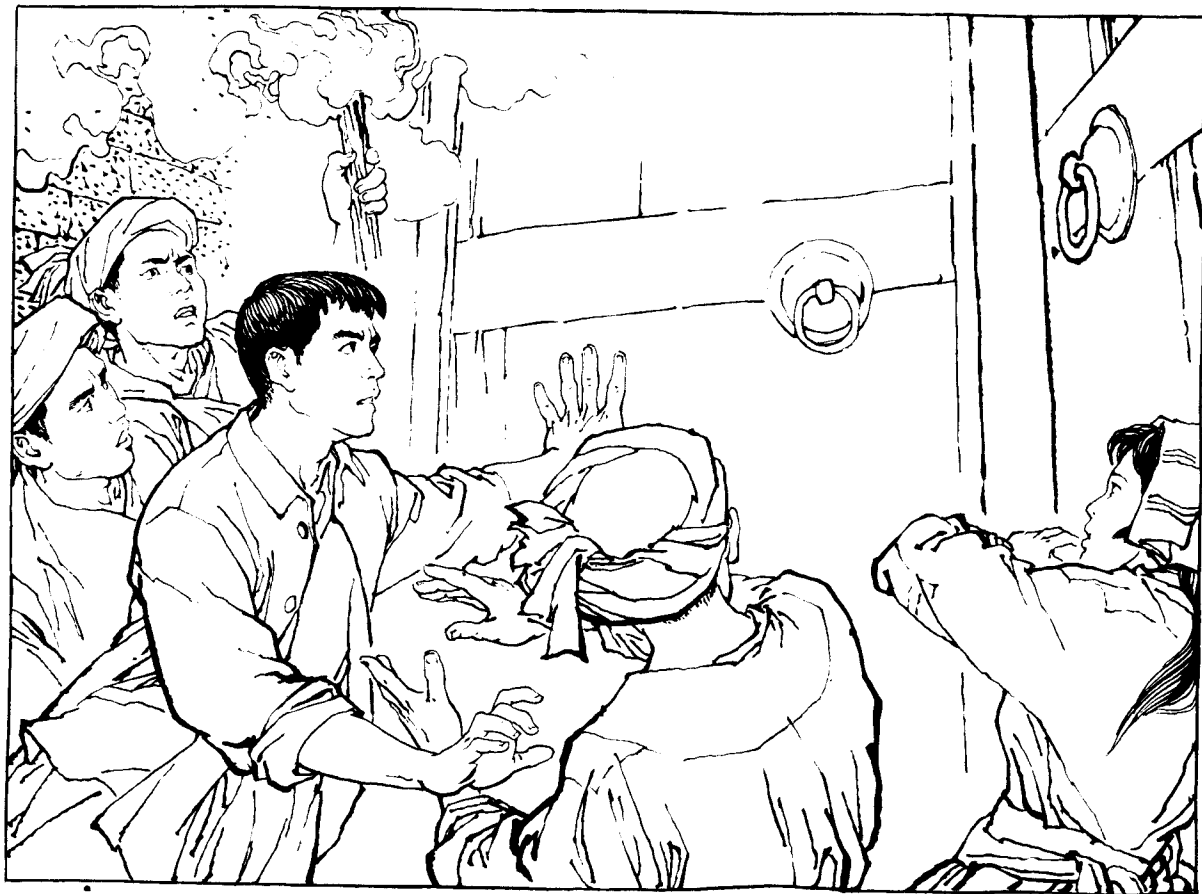
76. When they arrived at the landlord's house Young Li banged on the door.



77. But the wily landlord, up in his loft, had already spotted them. "What are you doing here at night? Shall I warm a pot of wine for you?" he asked coolly.



78. Young Li was furious and roared: "Open up at once! Stop your nonsense!"



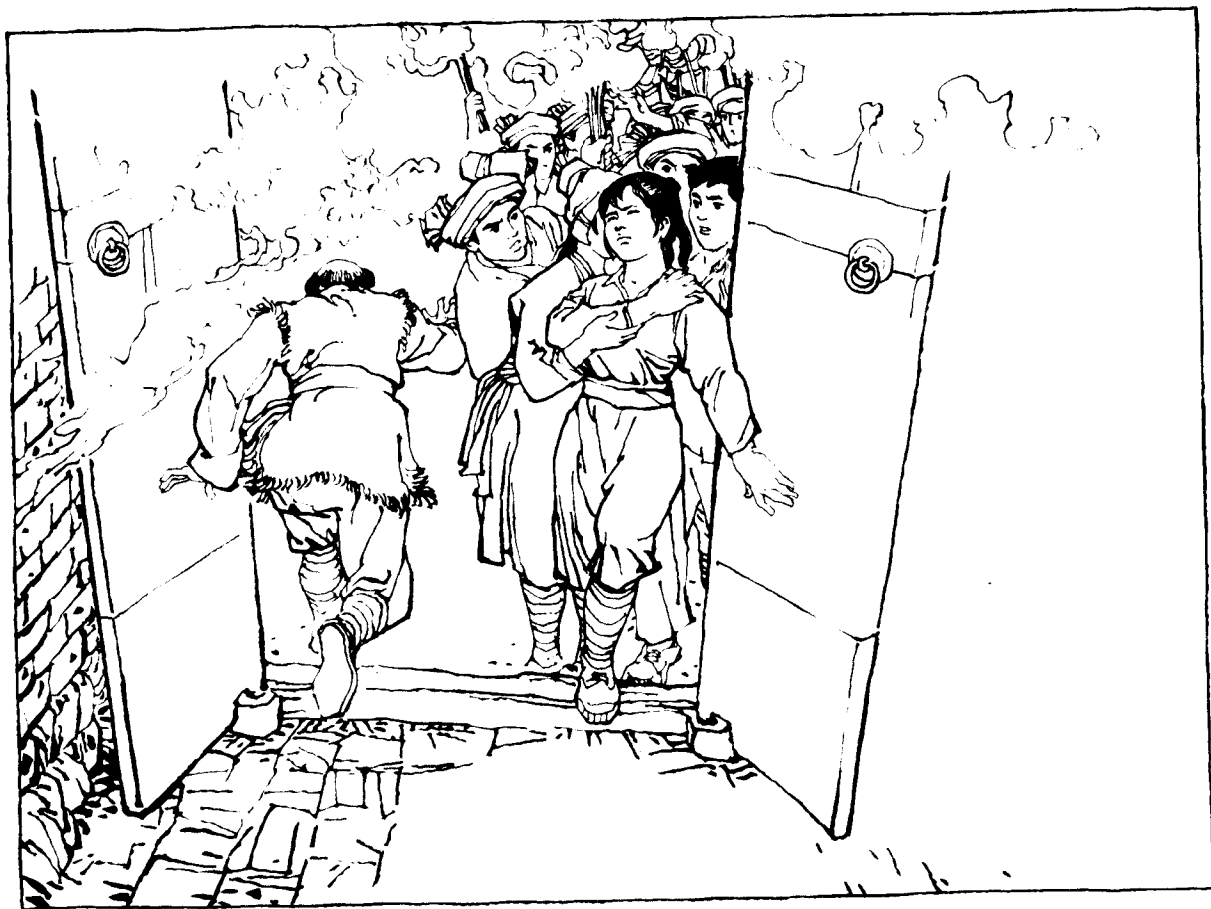
79. The door opened and out flew a dagger straight towards Young Li. It was a Yao hunting knife and a deadly weapon.



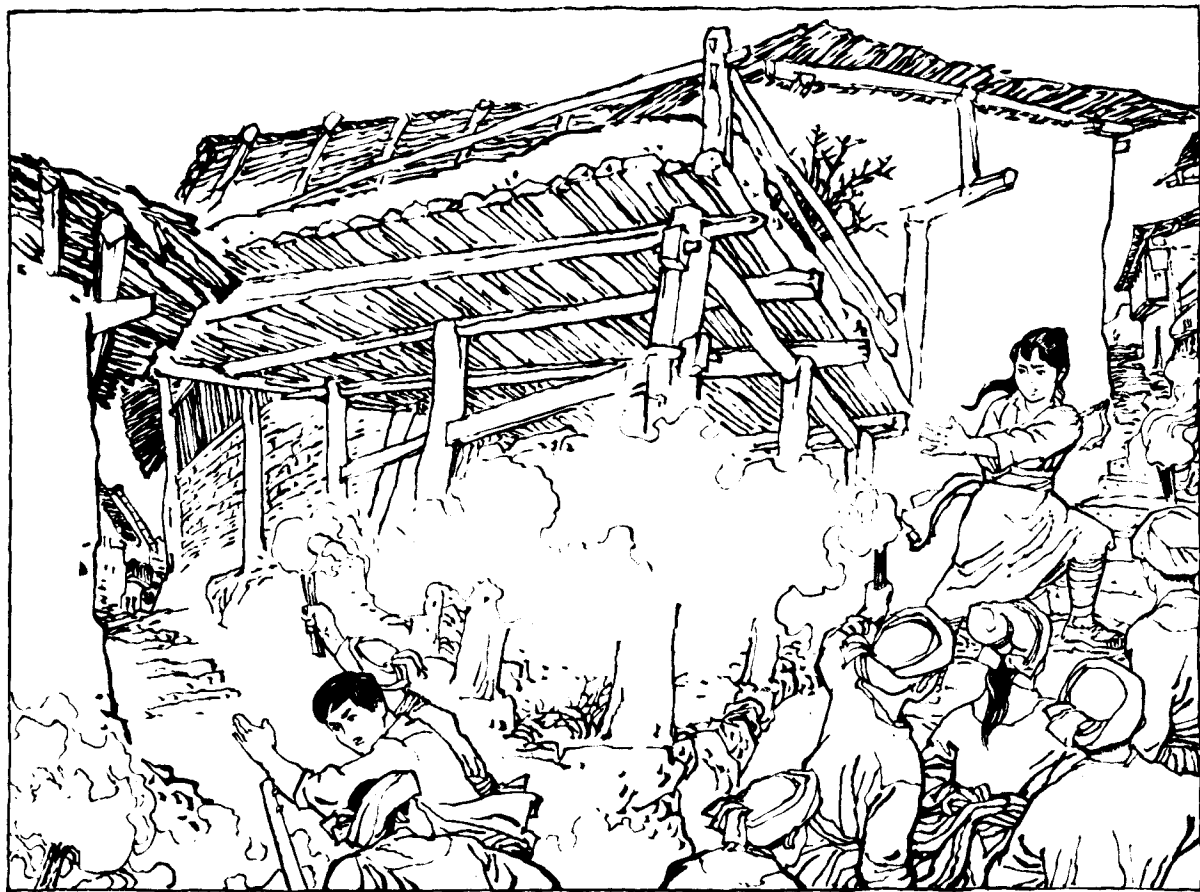
80. Just then a girl rushed up and pushed Young Li to safety.



81. The dagger, aimed at Li, went deep into the girl's shoulder. The girl was Azalea, who had rushed to the landlord's when she learned what had happened.



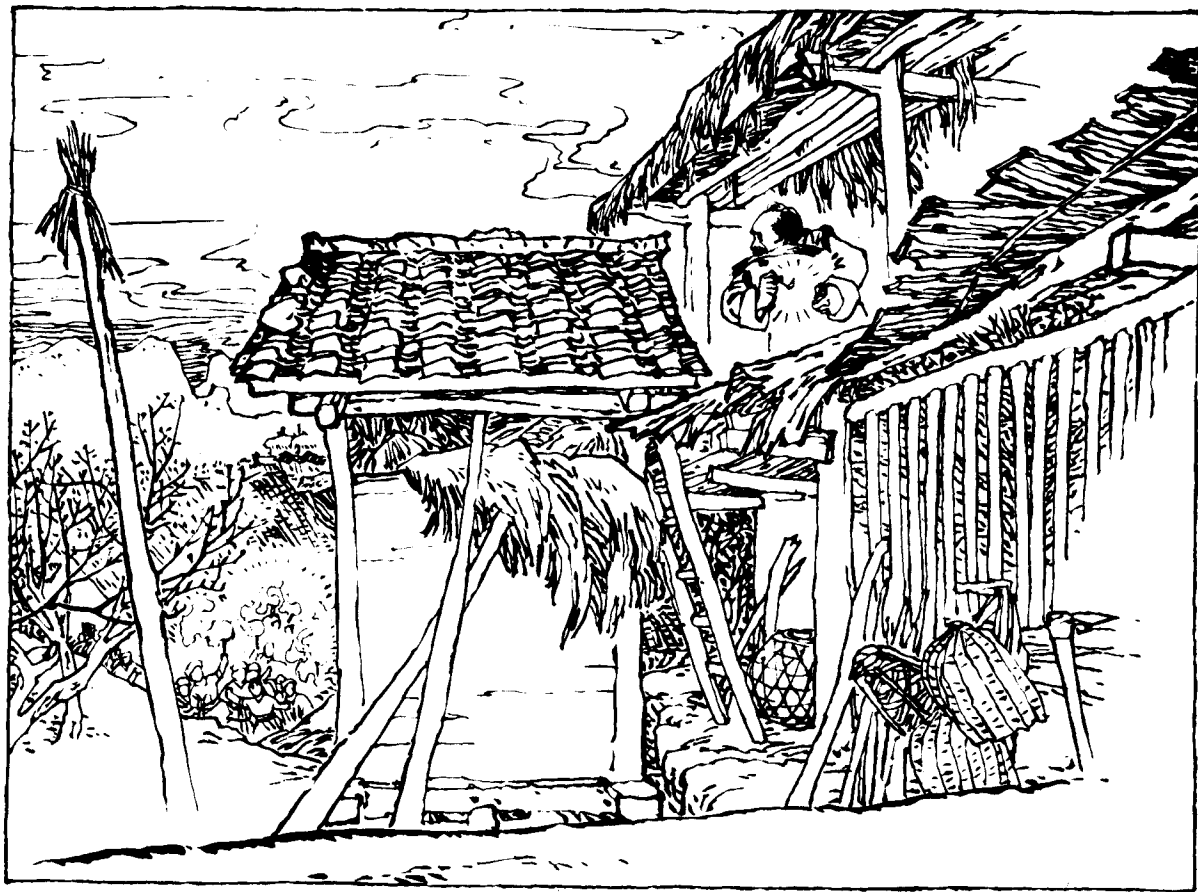
82. At sight of Azalea with people behind her, the landlord tried to get away in the confusion.



83. Azalea dashed out after him, her hand on the dagger in her shoulder.



84. The people seethed with anger at the landlord's treachery, inspired at the same time by the wounded Azalea's bravery in pursuing him. "Let's capture the landlord!" they shouted.



85. More people gathered, and when the landlord saw he couldn't get away, he climbed into another loft. Striking a match to set fire to the house, he planned to escape in the commotion that was bound to follow.



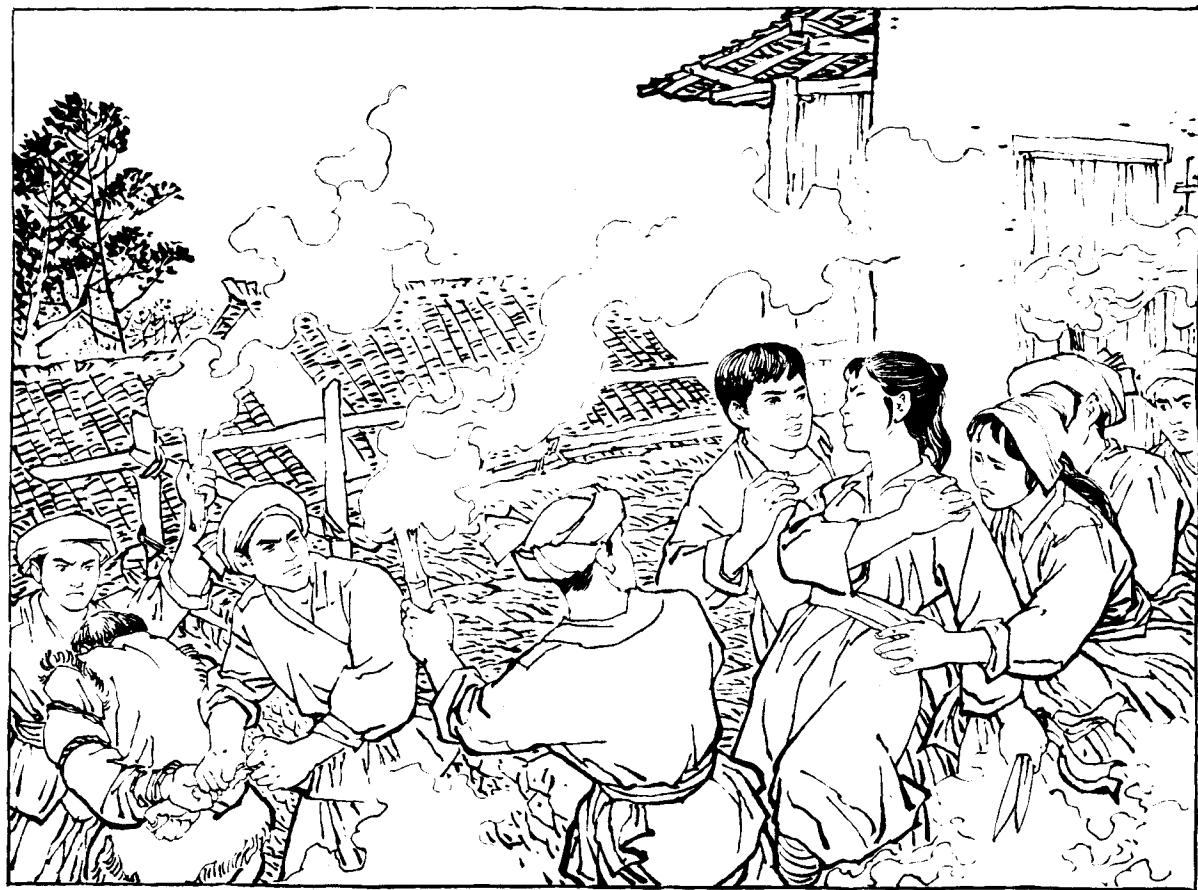
86. Azalea pulled the dagger from her shoulder and shouted: "If you won't come down, well, do you see that post beside you?"



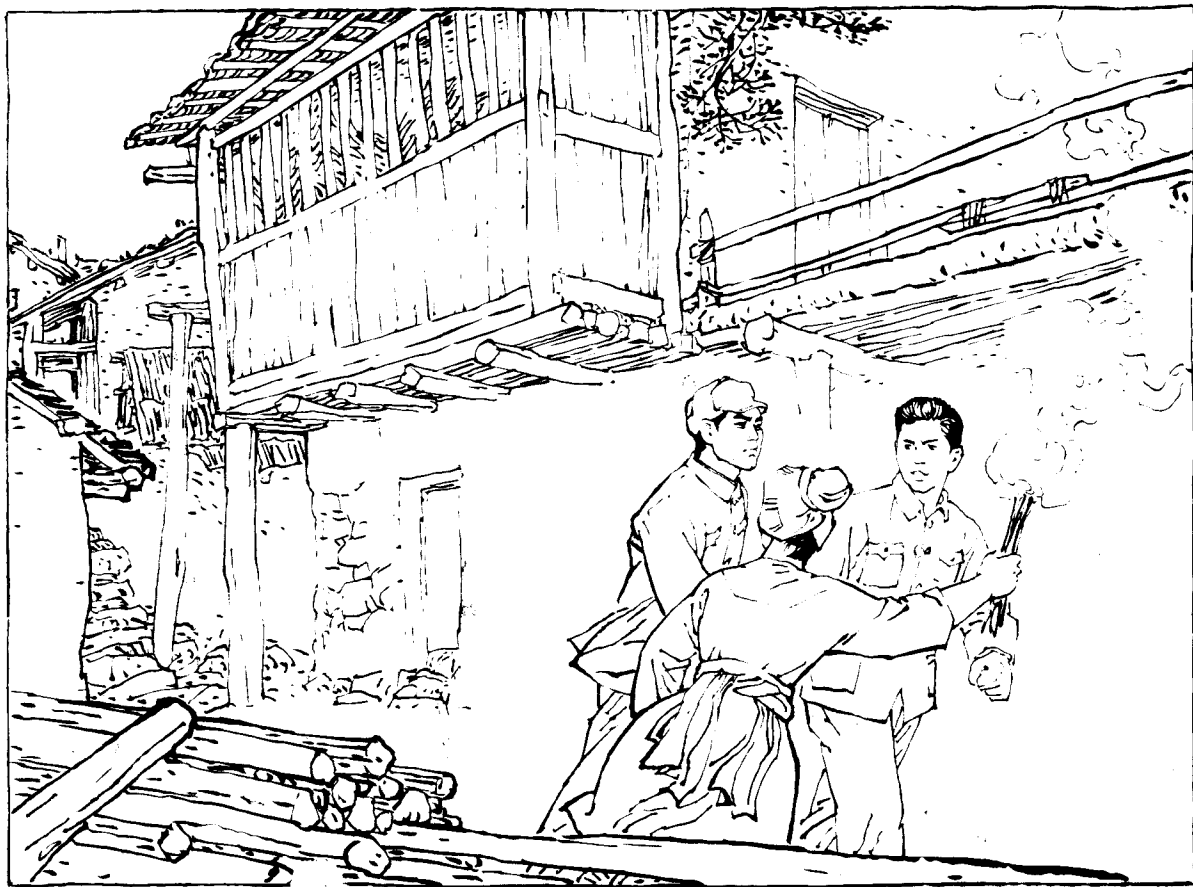
87. With that she let fly the dagger, right into the post, where it stuck fast, quivering.



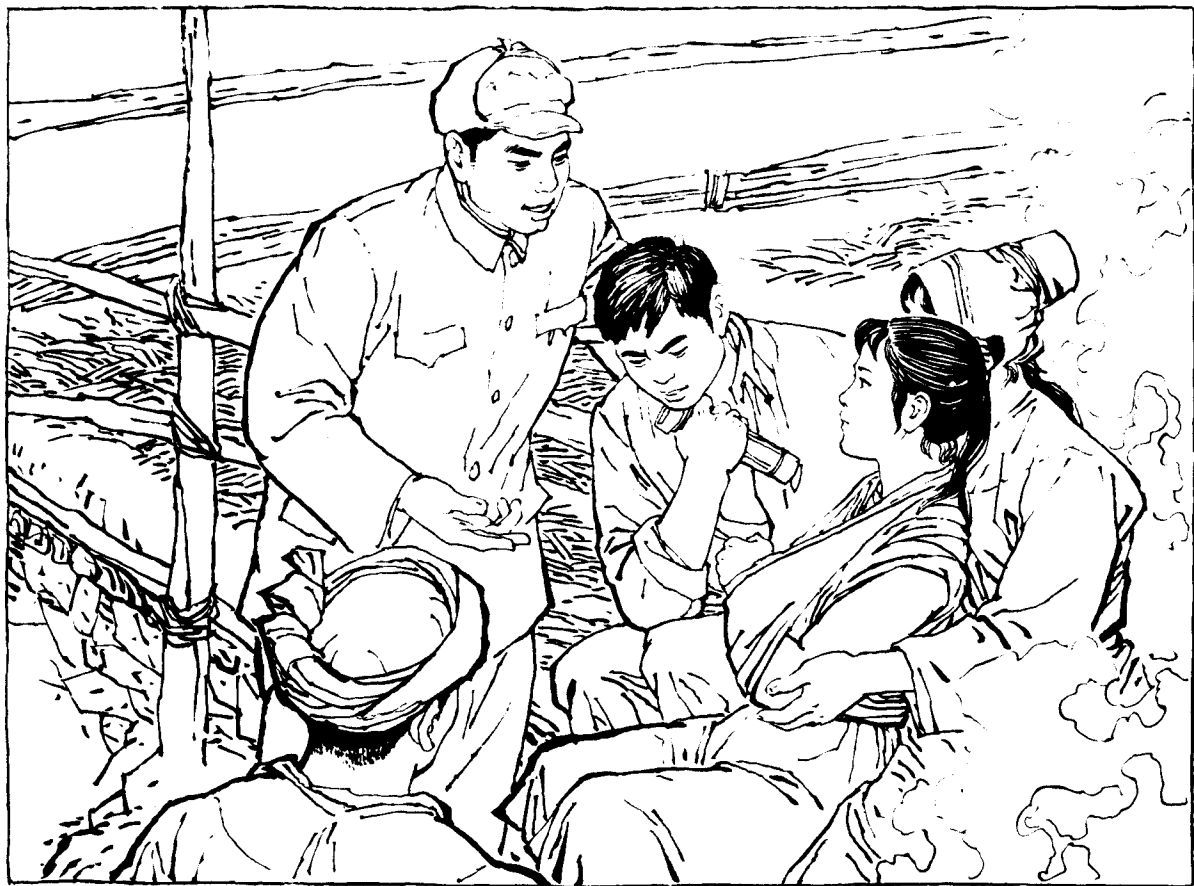
88. "Come down, I warn you," said Azalea, taking two more daggers from the hands of people nearby.



89. Only then did the landlord obey and was led away, his hands bound behind his back. Young Li, crying now, rushed to support Azalea who had fainted due to loss of blood from her wound.



90. Kao, back from a neighbouring village and finding Azalea wounded, rushed to apply a dressing and then phoned for a doctor at once.



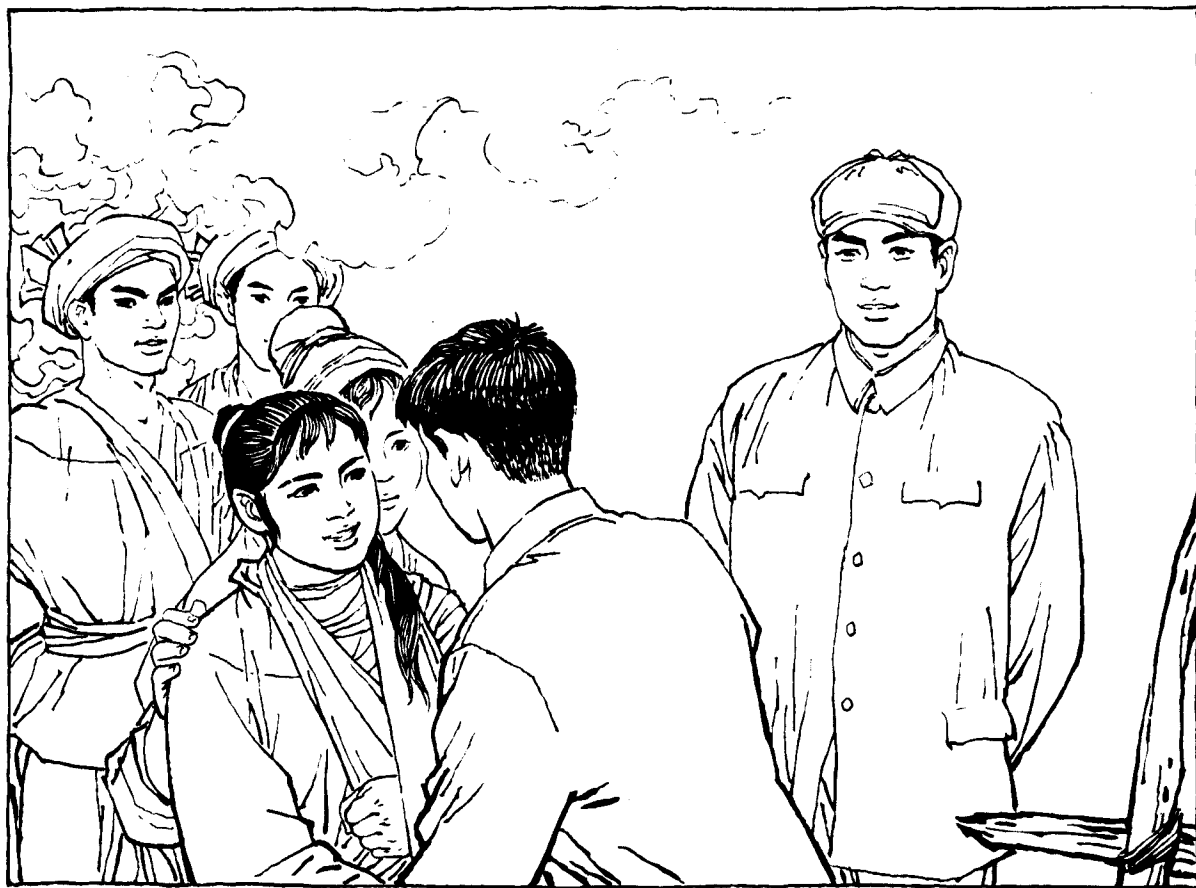
91. Azalea soon revived, but Young Li kept on sobbing. Kao said: "Don't cry. Shedding blood is unavoidable in making revolution, but tears won't help. We must remember Chairman Mao's teaching and learn to turn Party policy into mass action. Relying on only a few won't do."



92. Young Li promised to remember. Then he said: "The villagers' tragic stories reminded me of my father's death at the hands of a landlord. I felt I must catch this one to get even!"



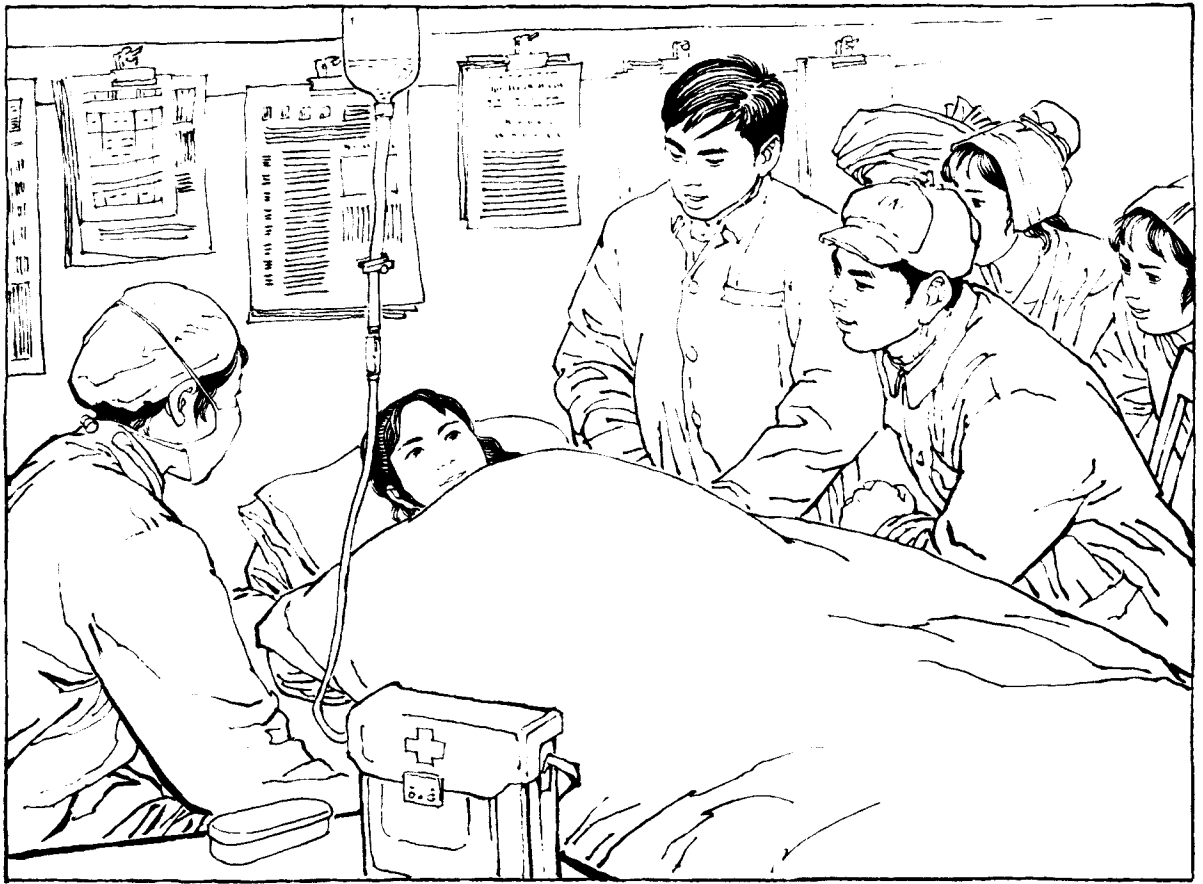
93. "Making revolution is not working off one's anger," put in Azalea. "If it were, I'd go back to Tung Tree Village after Centipede. He killed my mother, and he's still at large."



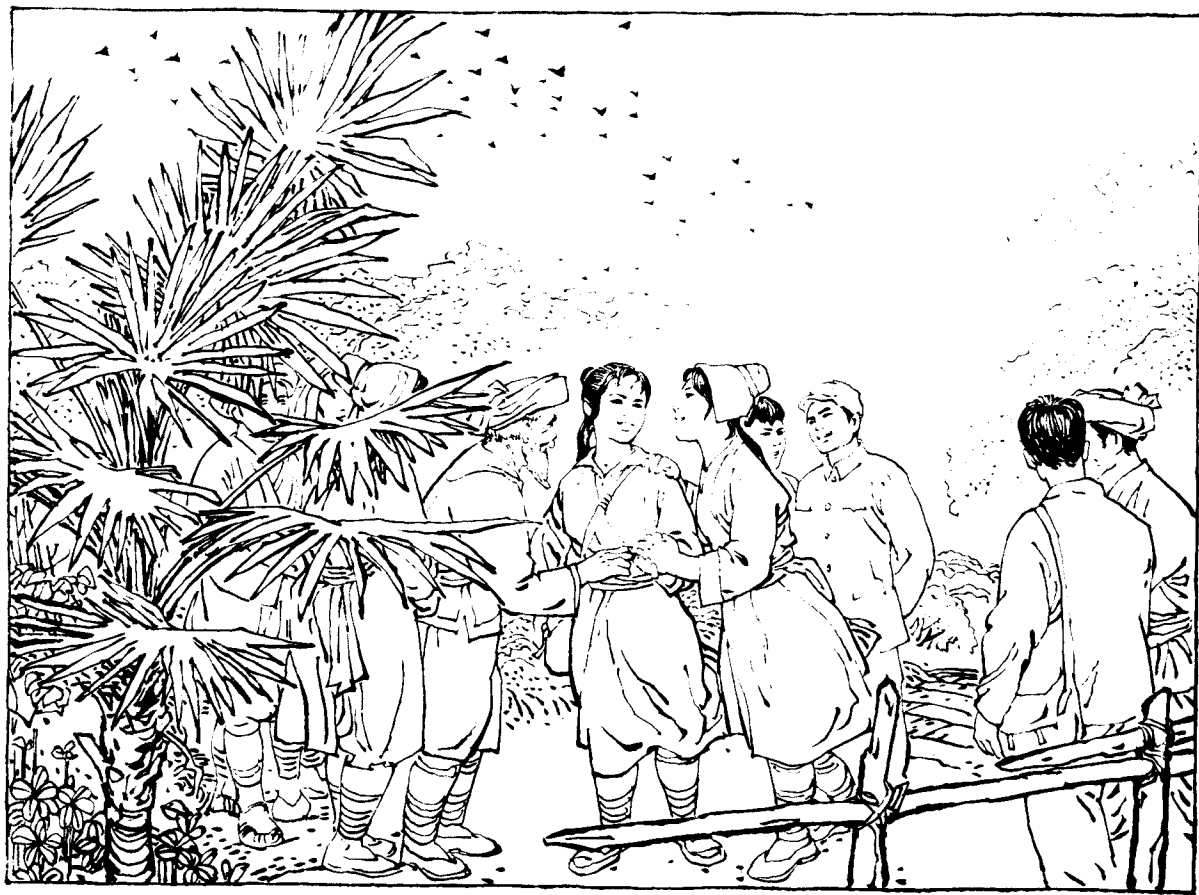
94. "I once did a stupid thing too. I went for revenge with a cleaver, playing into the hands of the enemy, who used my mistake to attack the P.L.A. I have always felt a twinge of regret whenever I recall that incident. We must always think first of the Party's interests."



95. Azalea fainted again and the comrades rushed her to the work group's office for emergency care.



96. That night the doctor from the county hospital came and treated Azalea so that she was out of danger.



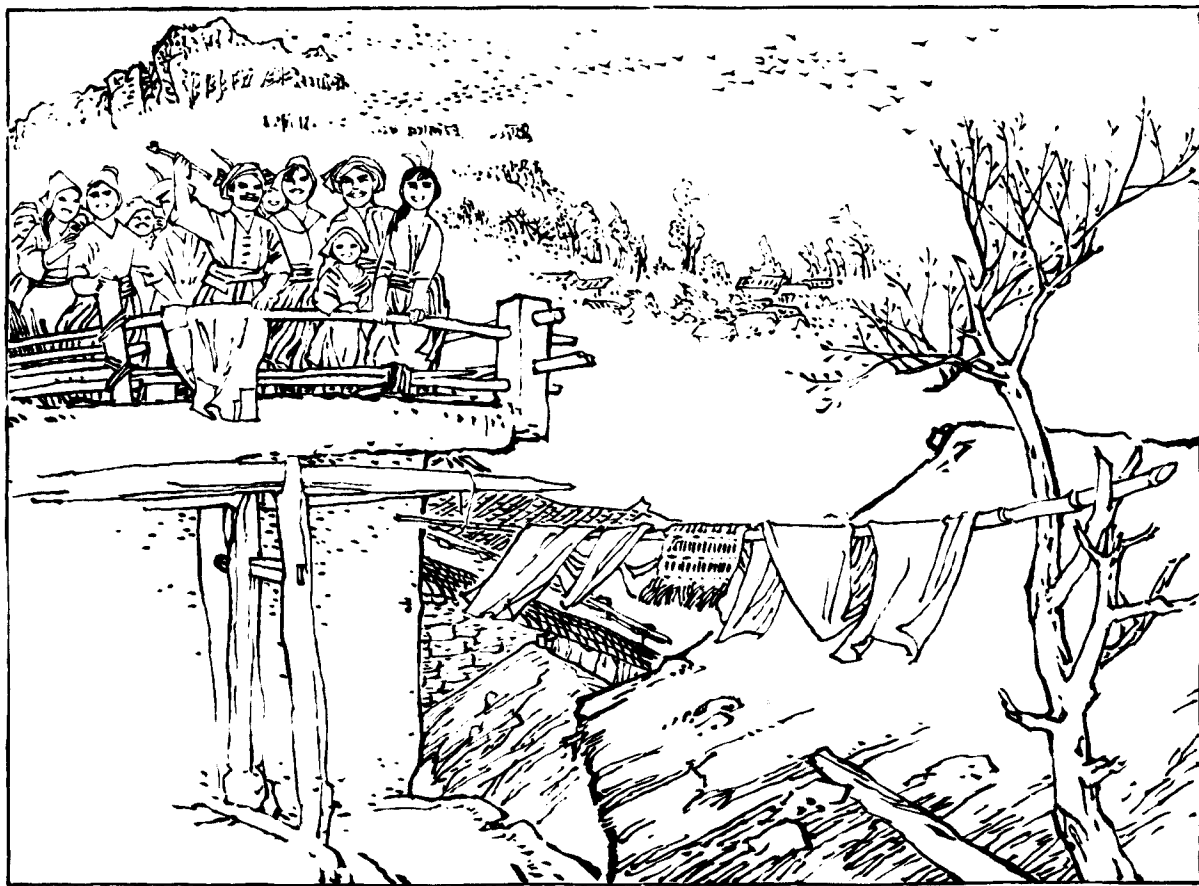
97. The girl's body proved as strong as her character. Her wound healed within a month. Kao, Azalea and the group used the time to sum up their experience and draw the appropriate lessons from it.



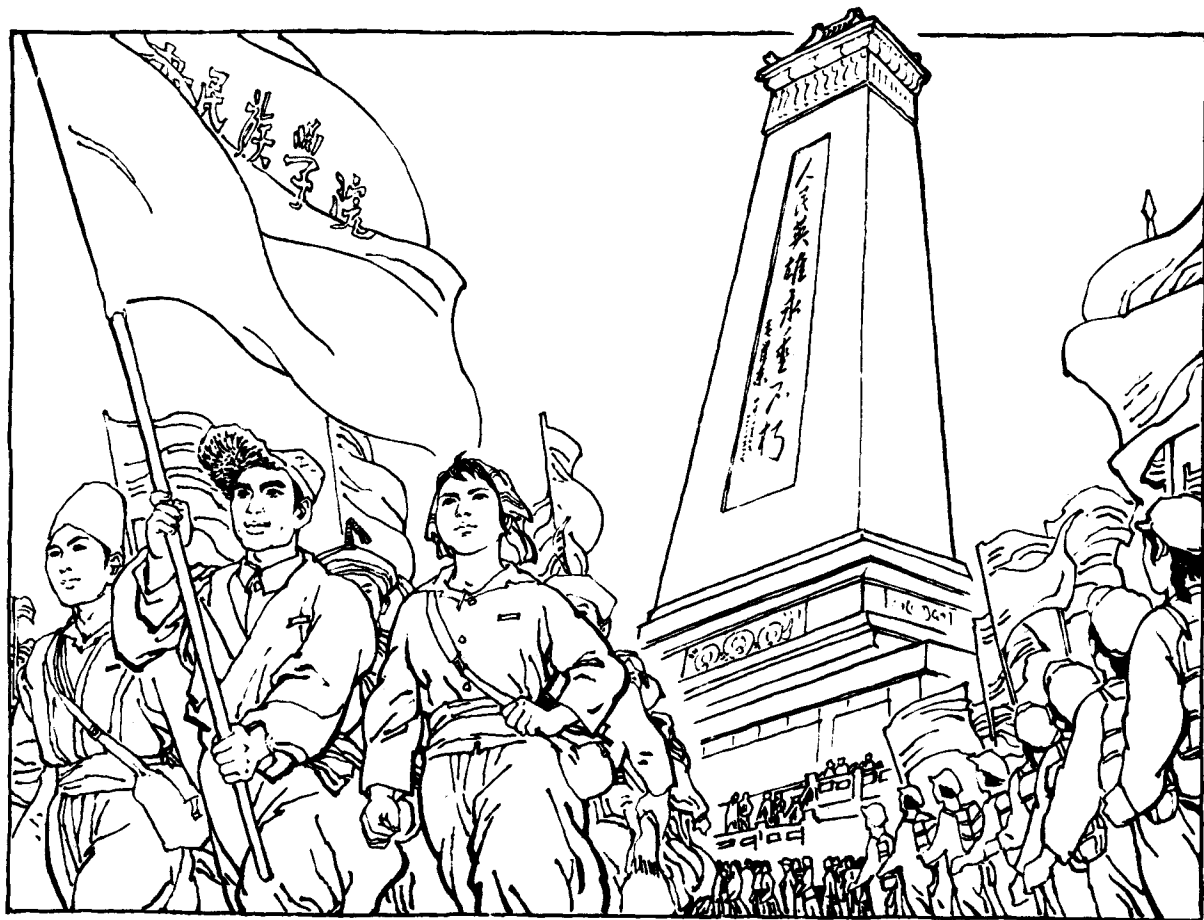
98. They proceeded to further arouse the masses of White Wolf Valley, launching the full force of the democratic reform movement.



99. The movement developed rapidly in Tung Tree Village as well. The despotic landlord Centipede was arrested and made to labour under the people's supervision.



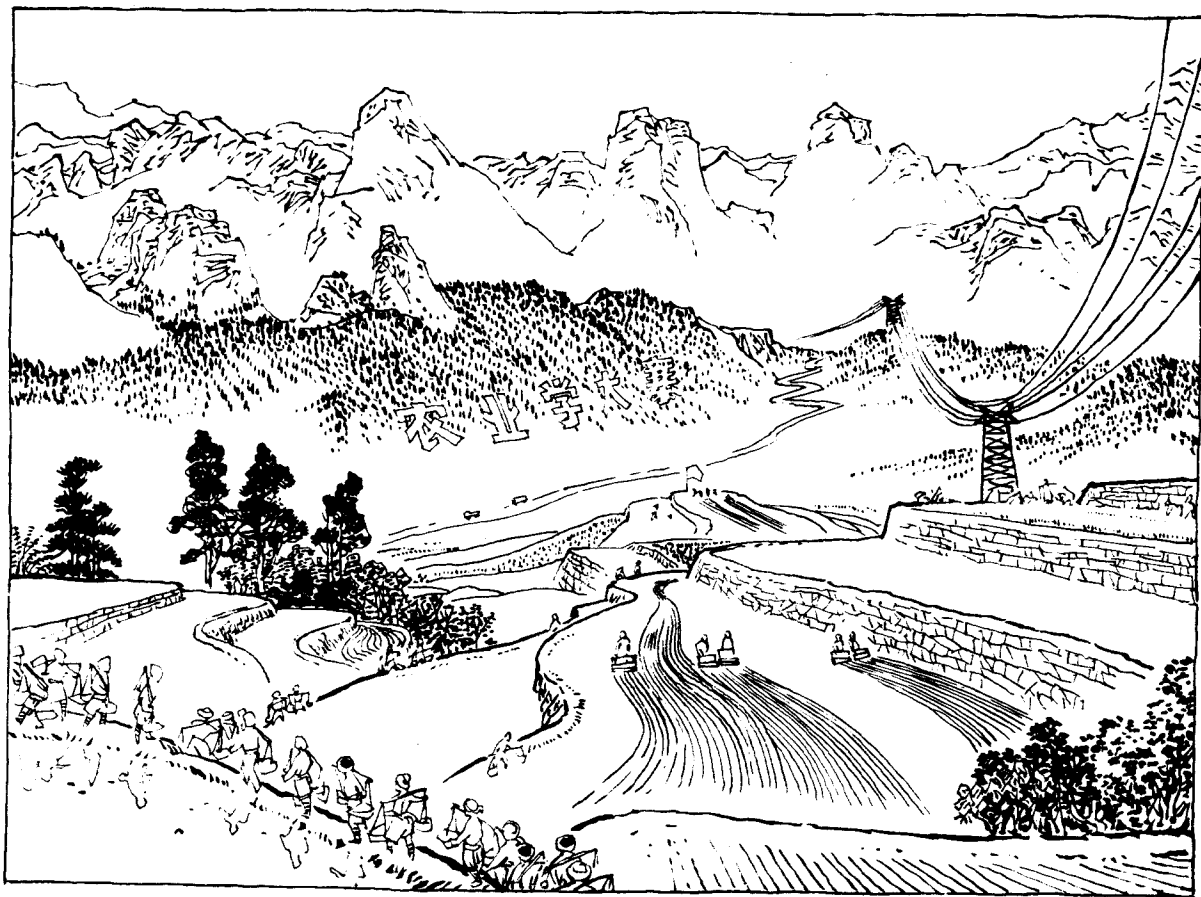
100. The Yao people were liberated and had their wrongs redressed. Every family was elated and all the people smiled.



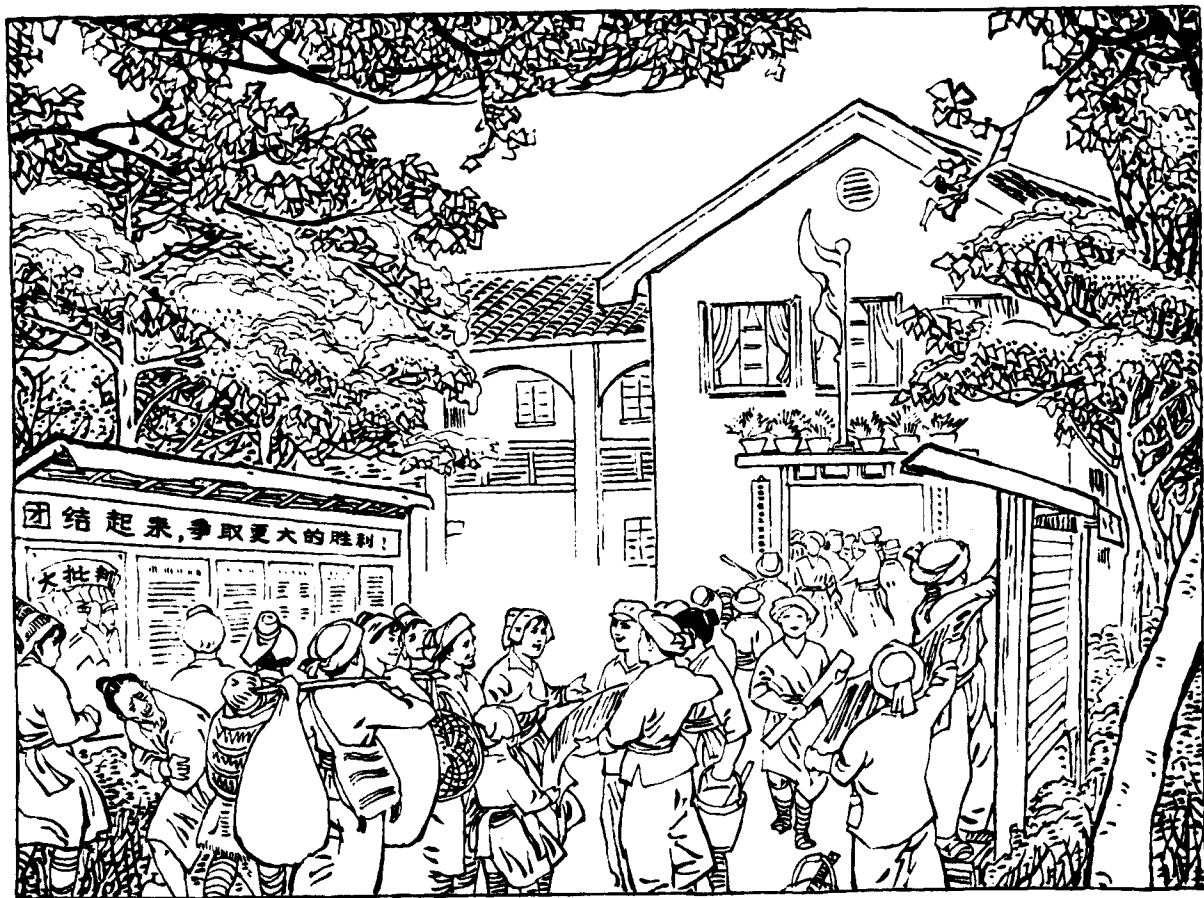
101. After the democratic reform, Azalea was admitted into the Chinese Communist Party. The Party sent her to study at the Central Institute for Nationalities in Peking.



102. After graduation Azalea returned to work in her native Tung Tree Village where she was loved by the people. Ten years passed after the democratic reform, and spring was radiant on Flying Eagle Cliff.



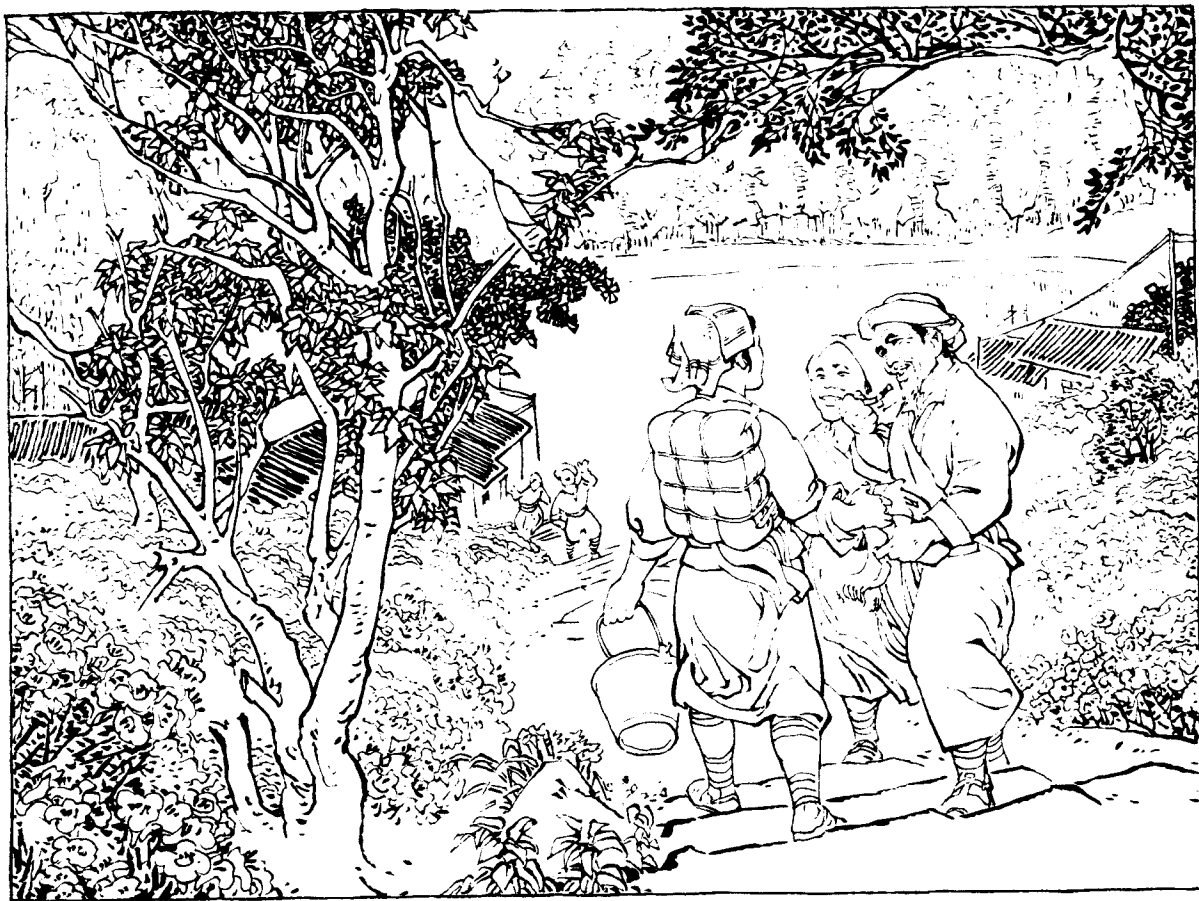
103. Encouraged by the calls to unite for still greater victories and to learn from Tachai in agriculture, this mountain region, like the rest of China, took on a new look.



104. Azalea was chosen as secretary and chairman respectively of the new Party committee and revolutionary committee of her people's commune.



105. How energetic she felt at seeing the changes in the mountain region when Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line was followed, and at thought of the hopes placed on her by the Party and the people!



106. Azalea brightened the people's hearts like the flowers on the hills. Though a commune leader now, she remained close to the masses, making her home wherever she was working among them.



107. Tea Tree Gully Village was so poor before liberation that no girl would go there to marry. After liberation, especially after the Cultural Revolution began, things were different, but the village still lagged behind in learning from Tachai.



108. On the third day after Azalea became the people's commune leader, she took her bedroll and set out for Tea Tree Gully.



109. On arrival she talked first with the production brigade cadres and then called a meeting of poor and lower-middle peasants. She explained to them Chairman Mao's brilliant instruction on learning from Tachai and discussed how to transform Tea Tree Gully.



110. The problem of water came up and some said they should dig a canal 25 kilometres long to lead in water from the Golden Water River. Others wanted to dig a storage pool far away in the mountains.



III. An old woman said: "Don't always be looking for far-off treasures so that you can't see those at your doorstep. There's water in the mountains right behind this village." This poor peasant woman's family had moved to Tea Tree Gully from the Chingmang Commune to work on a highway built during the Great Leap Forward in 1958.



112. Everybody laughed at the idea, and one young man said scornfully: "Aren't you day-dreaming, Granny? Where's there any water around here, with no creek or river in sight?"



113. "People say the mountain rock wall 'sweats' in dry weather and 'weeps' in wet," replied the old woman. "There must be an underground river in the mountains."



114. When there was more loud laughter, Azalea asked: "What are you laughing at? As the saying goes, 'Seeing is believing.' Let's go and see for ourselves."



115. In the mountains behind the village they listened carefully near the rock wall. Azalea was very happy to hear a gurgling sound and started at once into the nearest cave.



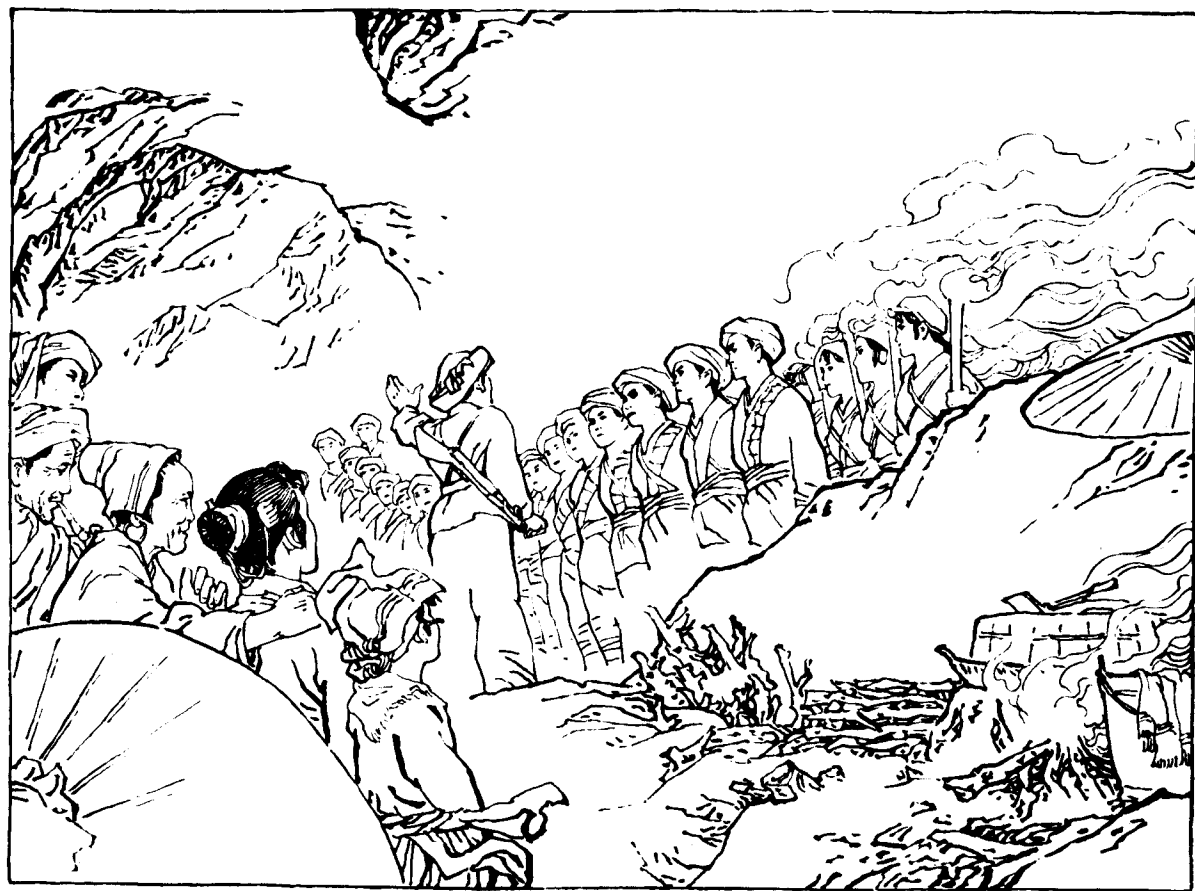
116. Someone stopped her, saying: "It's dark inside and no one has ever been in there." But Azalea insisted that someone had to take the first step; otherwise there could never be a way opened for the people.



117. Cadres and village youth volunteered to explore the cave with her. So, each taking some biscuits and a torch, they went in.



118. By dusk all had reported out of the cave except Azalea.



119. The others waited all night, very anxious. The brigade cadres sent people into the cave to look for her, at the same time reporting to the county Party committee.



120. Azalea had found a few caverns which she asked several others to investigate cautiously while she followed the gurgling sound, looking for the water source.



121. Groping her way along, she discovered the underground river. It flowed under Flying Eagle Cliff, where Azalea's mother had been killed by Centipede. Finally it joined the Golden Water River.



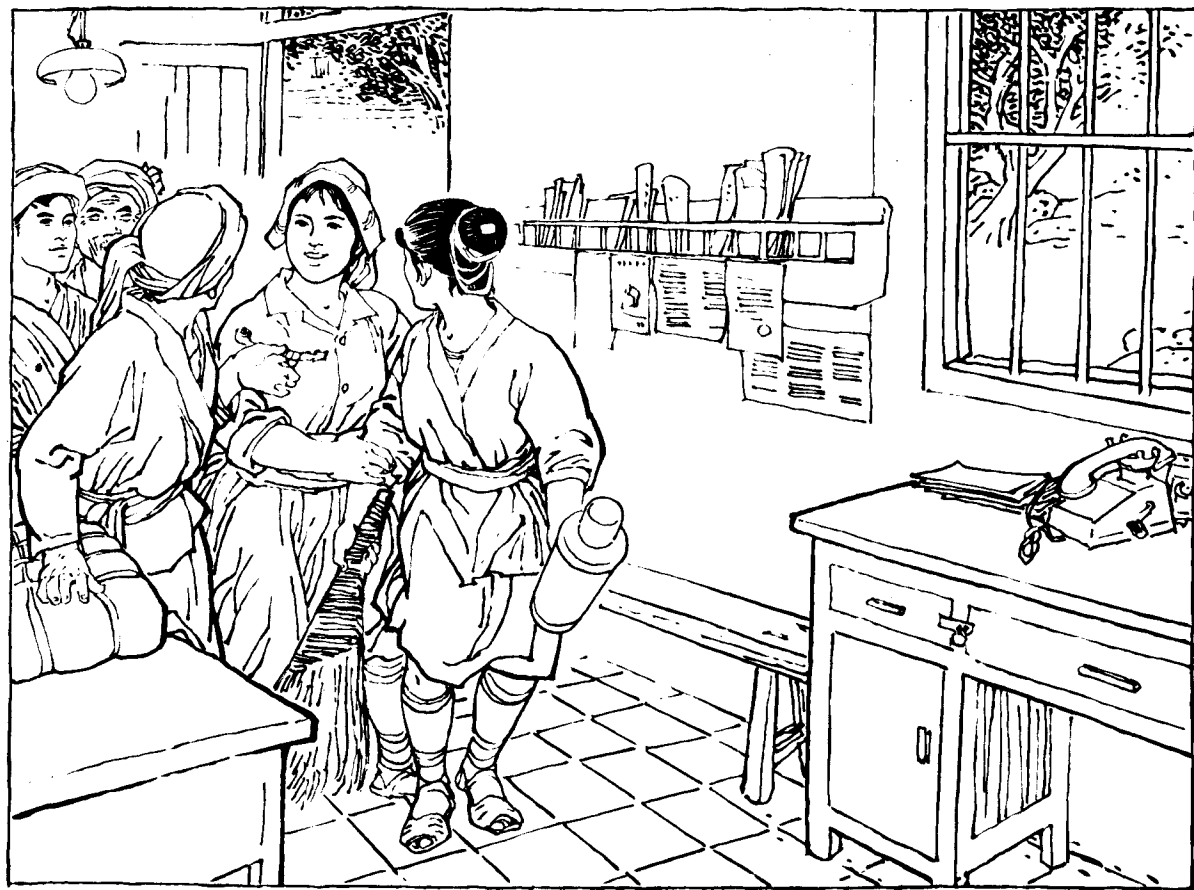
122. Azalea was excited at the thought of leading the water out to irrigate the fields and also to generate electricity for the commune. She came out of the cave only the next morning.



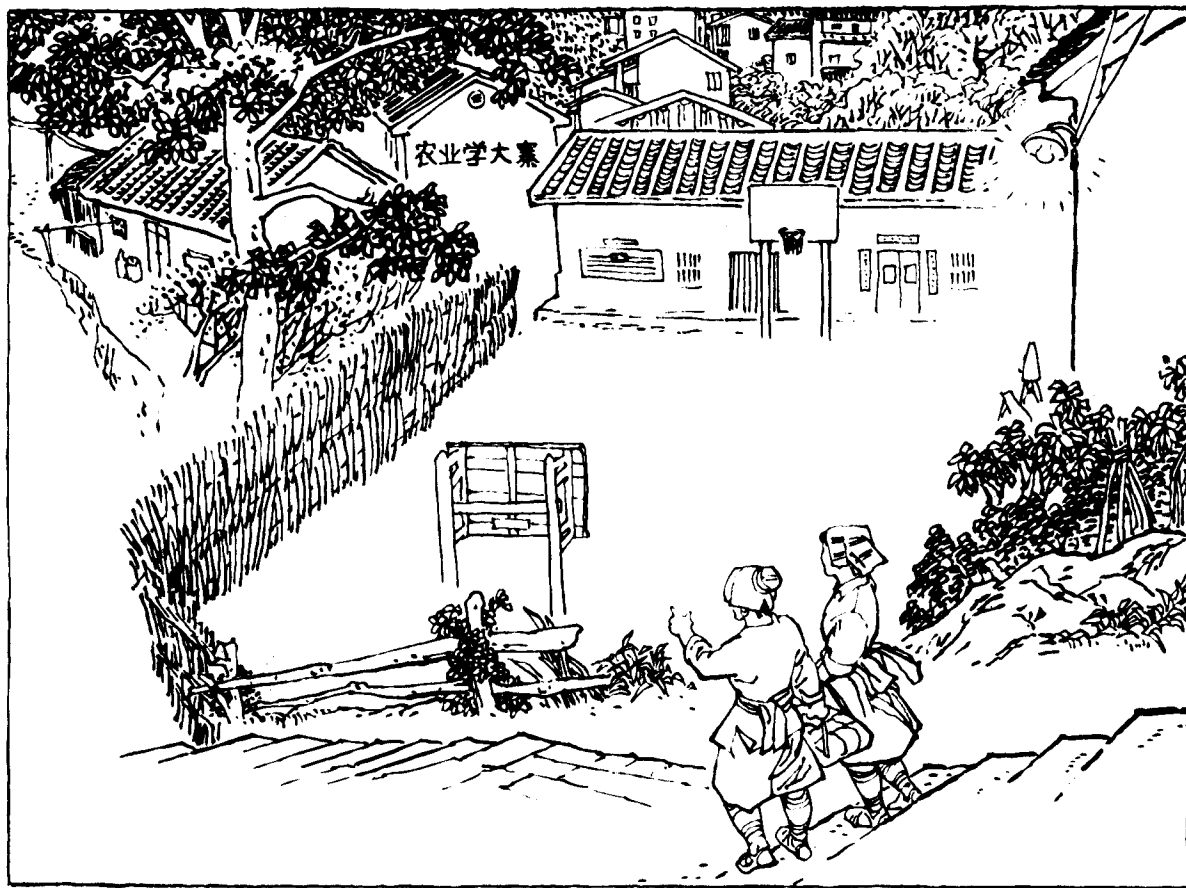
123. She appreciated the comrades' concern for her safety but said: "Man should tunnel through mountains, not be crushed by them. Water and electricity will transform our mountain region!"



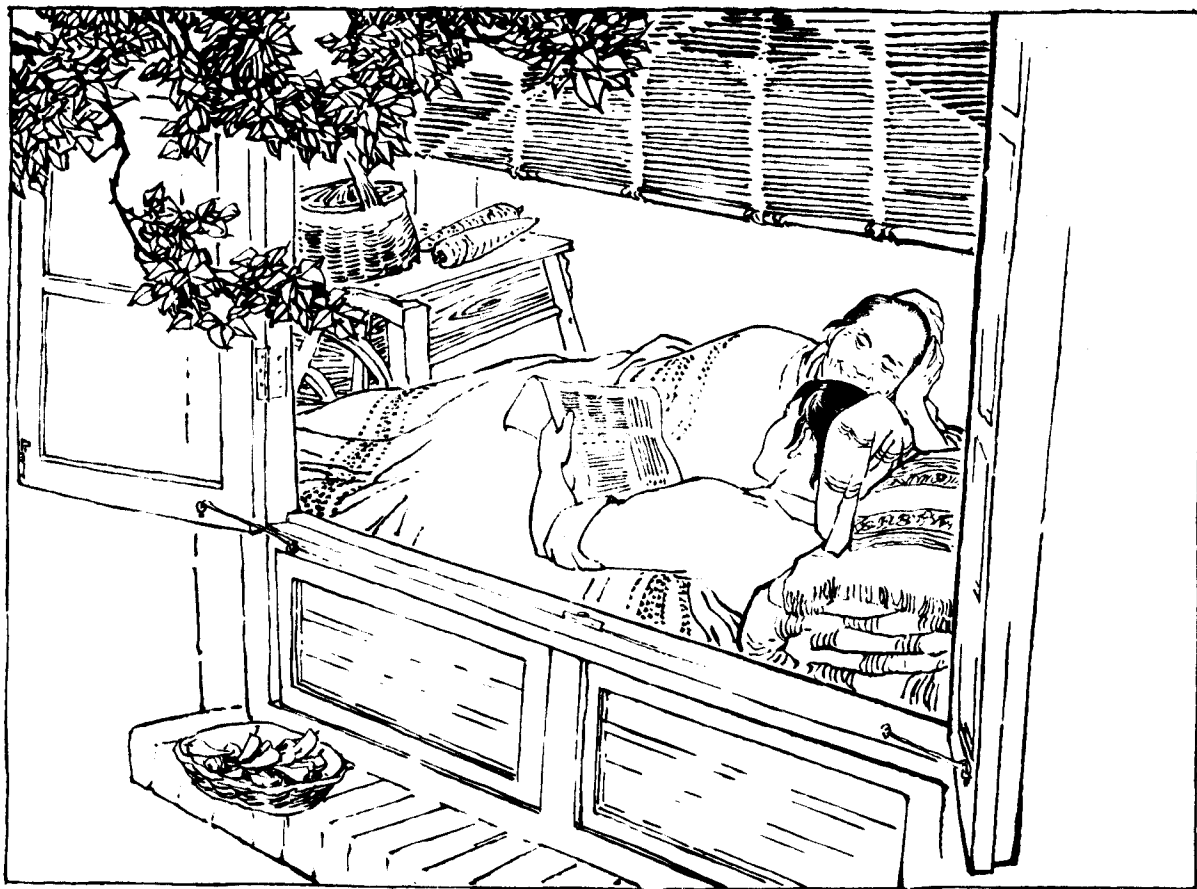
124. The people were very enthusiastic and decided to start surveying at once. They would dig the canal while hewing out the cave.



125. It was night, and while the local cadres had arranged lodging for Azalea in the brigade office, she said she would like to stay at the old woman's house instead.



126. So they pointed the house out to her: "The one with a tile roof, under the pear tree."



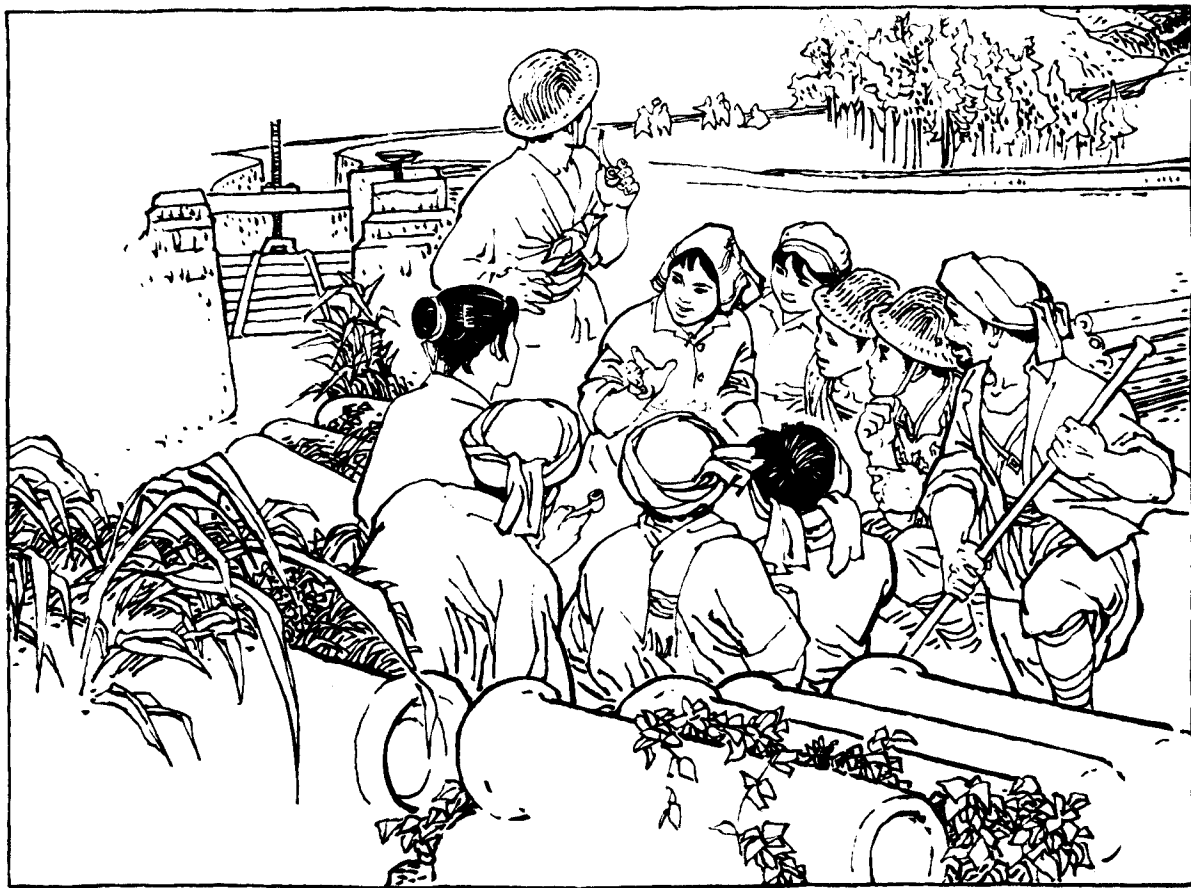
127. At the old woman's house, Azalea put her bedroll down and began talking with her, very much like a daughter.



128. The county Party committee supported their plan to build a hydro-power station near Flying Eagle Cliff and promised to send materials and technicians to help.



129. When Azalea returned half a month later she found work on the canal slowed down. There had been rumours of a "ghost" haunting the worksite because the people had "offended the mountain god" by cutting into the rock-face.



130. Azalea and the other cadres discussed the matter, then concluded it was deliberate sabotage by the class enemy. They strengthened the night patrol and explained to the people how ghosts could not exist, saying that the cause of the trouble should be sought elsewhere.



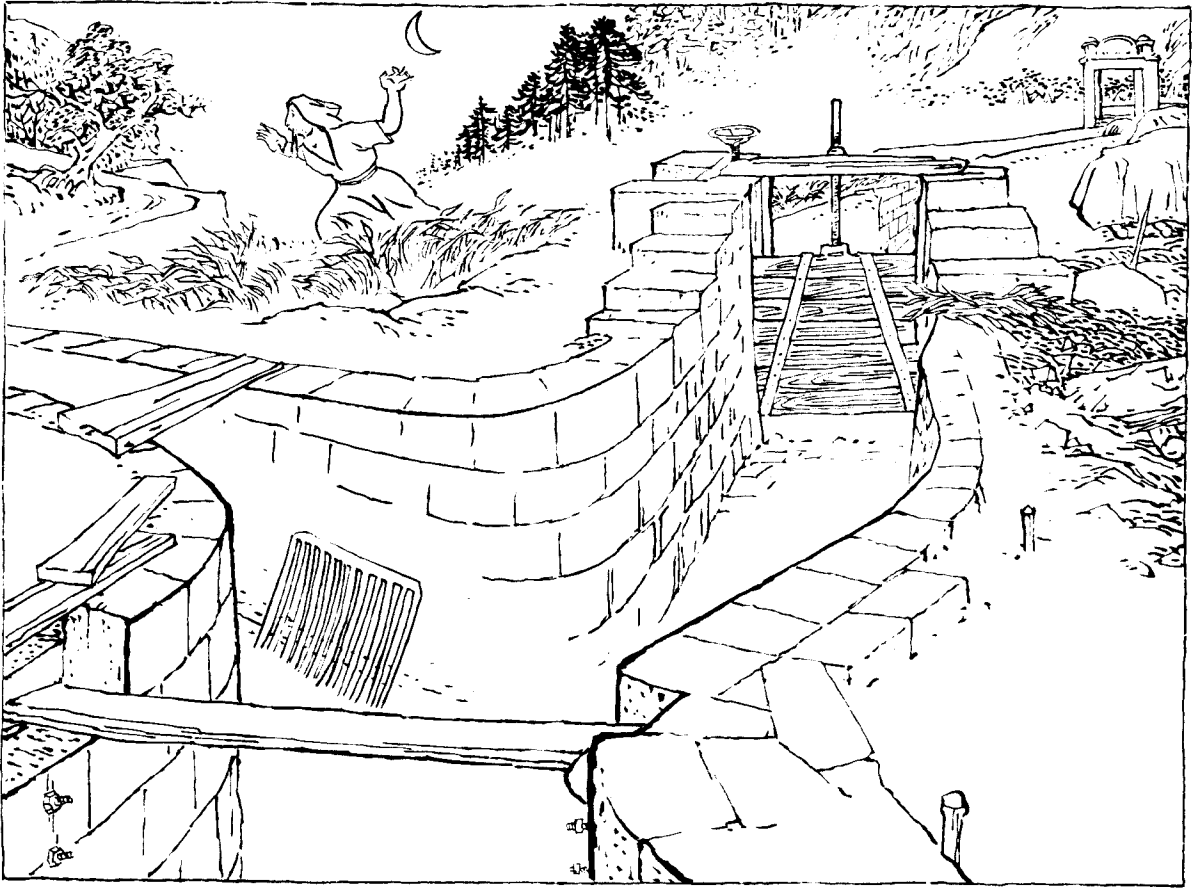
131. The people understood and provided many clues. Militiamen were posted at night to keep a look-out for the "ghost" and catch it.



132. Sure enough, that night the militiamen on patrol spotted the “ghost” at the worksite. After watching it for some time they reported back to Azalea.



133. Next evening Azalea made a plan together with some tiger hunters among the militiamen. Then she went out to capture the "ghost," saying she had gone to the commune office on an errand.



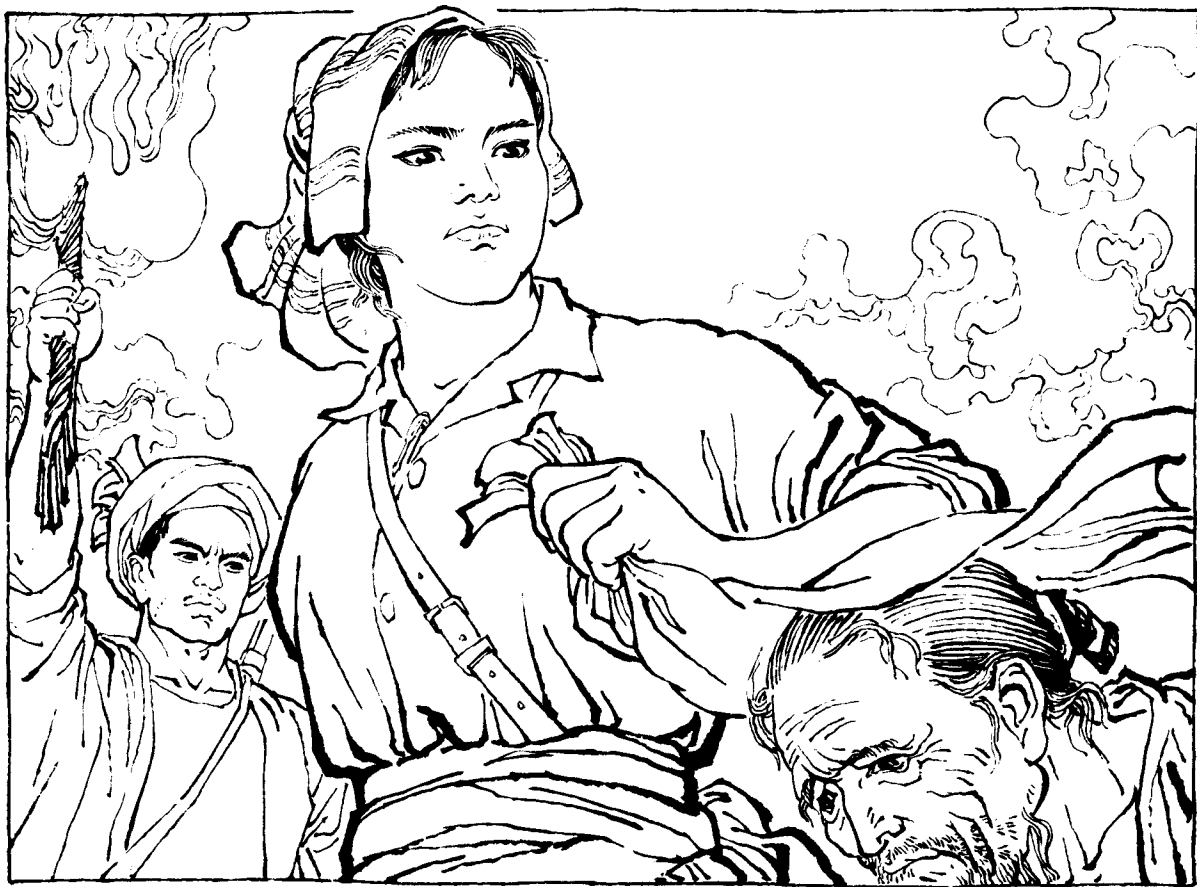
134. Concealed that night, Azalea saw a shadowy figure swaying back and forth, howling and screeching on the moonlit mountain slope.



135. The howling and screeching suddenly changed into a cry for help.
The "ghost," clad in white, was caught in a tiger trap.



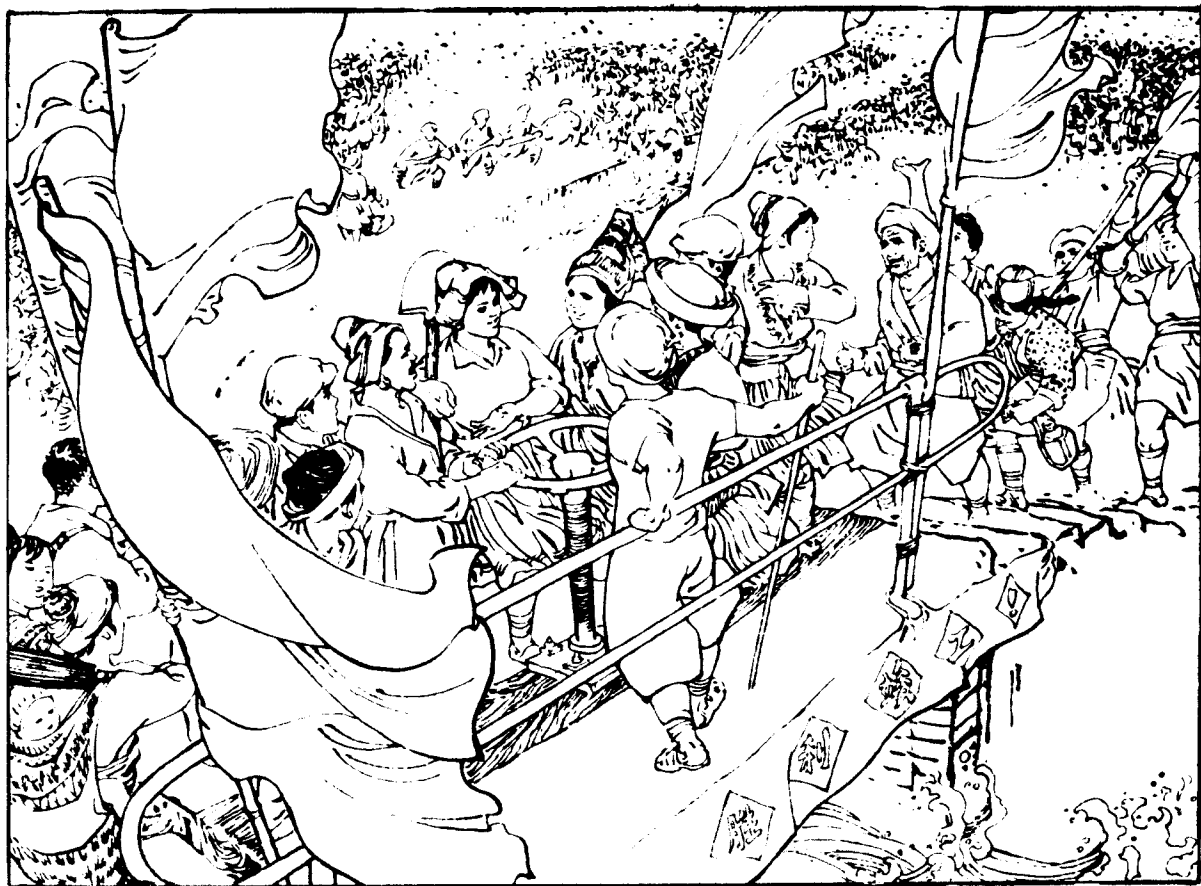
136. Dragged up out of the trap, the “ghost” turned out to be none other than Centipede. Back from his term of forced labour, he was resorting now to this form of sabotage.



137. Azalea's piercing gaze, like daggers, sent chills down Centipede's spine. Cringing with fear, he lowered his gaze to the ground.



138. "Fellow villagers," said Azalea, "here is the 'ghost'! Never dream that our construction work can go on smoothly so long as class enemies are still around. Never forget class struggle!"



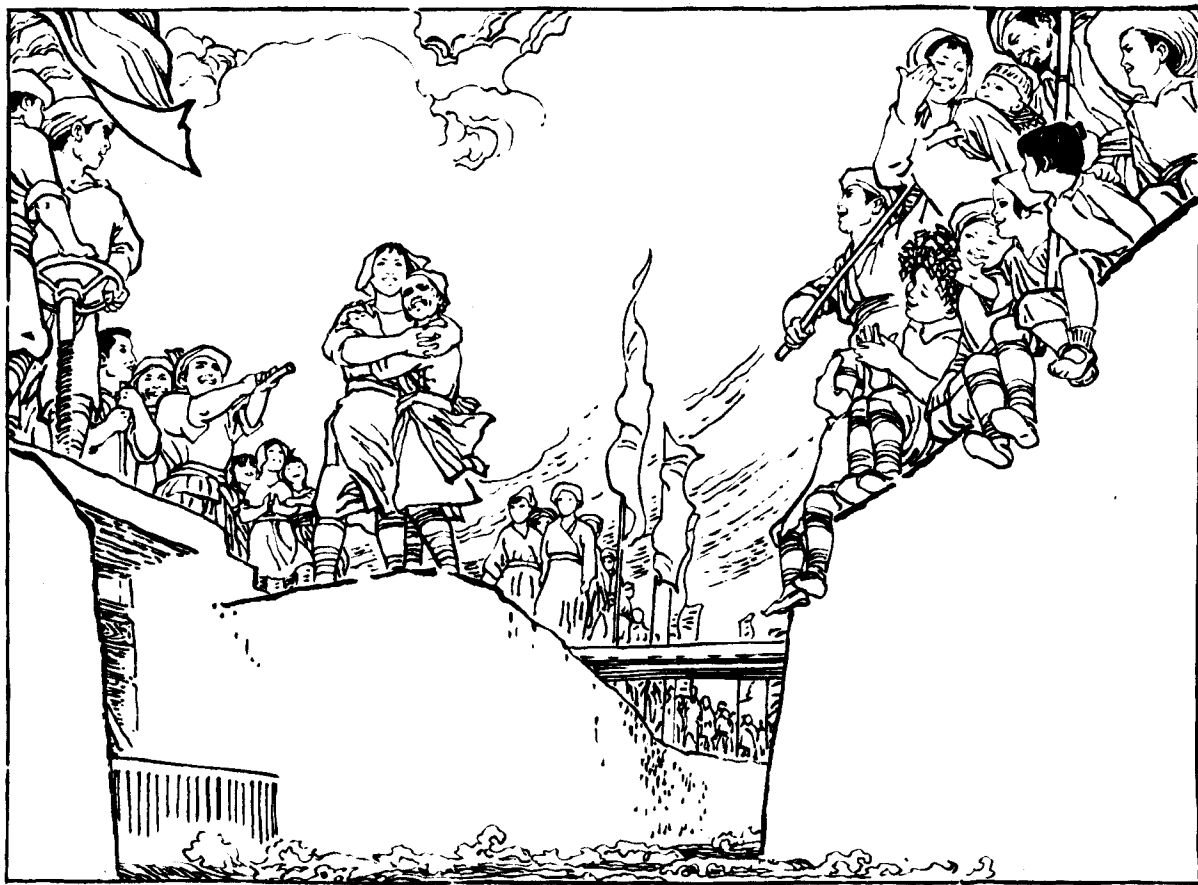
139. After the class enemy was dealt with by law, the canal was soon completed. Its opening was more than festive, with people from other villages coming to take part and learning the whole story of struggle.



140. The old woman was happy and looked upon Azalea as her own. "I had a daughter very much like you," she said. "But. . ."



141. Granny's daughter was another of the landlord's victims, and the old woman was very sad and lonely. "Let me be your daughter!" cried Azalea.



142. The old woman was moved to tears. "My child! Then you must make your home with me!"



143. Azalea had never mentioned her marriage, nor had this personal matter ever interfered with her work. "But Granny," she replied, "I'm also the daughter of all the commune's poor and lower-middle peasants."



144. When the old woman insisted, Azalea said: "Granny, I've won my liberation and must keep more than one family and one village in mind."



145. "I'll go to the commune Party committee tomorrow morning and ask their permission for you. I'm sure they'll agree," persisted the old woman.



146. At the committee office next morning Granny was told that the secretary was out, so she said she would wait till he came back.



147. Just then Azalea returned. She had been asked by Kao to attend a meeting with the county Party committee. "This granny wants to see you, Azalea," said a comrade in the office.



148. Granny gazed at Azalea for a long time before realizing she was the secretary. Then she said: "I've got nothing to ask. But, Comrade Secretary, why didn't you tell me you're the commune leader?"



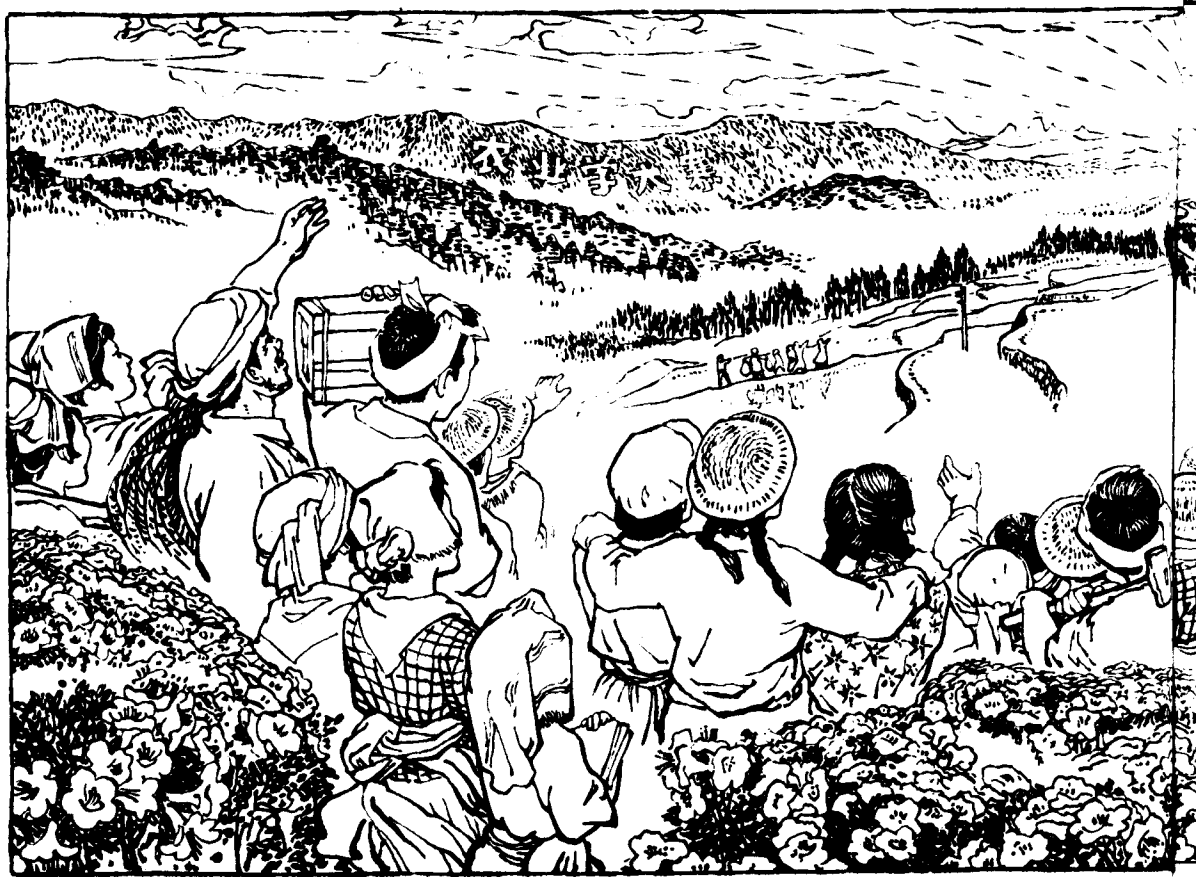
149. Azalea said with a smile: "Chairman Mao teaches us to stay close to the masses of workers and peasants. I've done far too little. I can't stay with you for I've been assigned work in another place."



150. Granny brightened up. "You're Party secretary but you act like an ordinary person. That's why you're so wise. You do a lot of work for the commune and it doesn't matter if you can't live with me. Just so you keep us always in mind."



151. After handing her work over to the comrades, Azalea strapped her bedroll on her back, said goodbye to the old woman and the comrades, and boarded the bus to her new work place.





152. The bus rounded Flying Eagle Cliff, heading east. Flowering azaleas covered the ridges and villages on the sunny mountain slopes in red.

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外文出版社出版（北京）

1975年（24开）第一版

编号：（英）8050—1490

00120

88—E—127P



