

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Sketches

Li Hua-lan

THE SECOND ESSAY

Tomorrow, students of Junior Class One were to write an essay, their first one in middle school. We teachers had taken pains that afternoon to solicit each others' opinions and finally decided on a suitable subject. It was to be *A Letter to My Primary School Teacher*.

School had been dismissed before our discussion was over. As I walked back to the Junior One classroom just to check whether all the windows were fastened and so on, a boy named Lin Hsiao-tsui ran up to me.

"Teacher Wu, are we going to write an essay tomorrow?" he asked.

"Well yes. But how did you find out?"

"I guessed. After all those years in primary school sometimes I can guess right. Besides, we have two periods for our language lesson tomorrow. So it's as clear as broad daylight that there'll be time to write an essay." He grinned quite sure of himself, two deep dimples giving him an impish look.

"We've decided on the subject and the title," I confided to him. "It should be interesting."

"Really? What is it, teacher?" He was obviously excited about it so I told him what it was.

All his interest faded immediately. He pouted, looking as though he felt cheated.

"What a title!" he exclaimed. "What's so interesting about it?"

His reaction surprised me. "What's wrong with it?" I queried. "In such an essay you should have plenty to tell your primary school teacher about your life in middle school and your plans for the future."

"Write to him?" he challenged. "No. Not to him. He was unfair and incorrect in his criticism of me. He said I didn't have any aim in studying. He even came to our house to tell my mother on me." Lin spoke indignantly, as if he had been badly wronged.

It had never occurred to me that Lin, who had impressed me and his new class-mates as a lively and somewhat mischievous boy, should have such a grievance. So I sat down and asked him to tell me his story in greater detail.

The incident had occurred three months previously during a mathematics lesson. All the pupils were listening attentively. Sitting in his seat by the window, Lin heard some army songs being sung somewhere in the distance. He turned his eyes from the blackboard to look outside. From between the leaves and branches of the plane-trees he caught glimpses of a detachment of PLA soldiers passing along the street beyond the school's playground. How smart they looked with their rifles and knapsacks on their backs. Ever since he was quite young he had wanted to be a PLA soldier when he grew up and defend the motherland. He was always thrilled when he watched the PLA soldiers drilling. Sometimes, with a stick for a rifle, he would try to imitate them. This particular morning in class he could hardly take his eyes off the marching men.

Teacher Wang was writing an equation on the blackboard. When he turned around he noticed that Lin was absorbed in watching something outside the window.

"What are you looking at, Lin Hsiao-tsui?" he inquired.

Embarrassed, Lin turned his head.

Teacher Wang had caught Lin looking out of the window more than once. This time, he was determined to find out what the attraction was. He walked over to Lin's desk and looked out of the window. As bad luck would have it, just at that moment all he could see was two sparrows having a fight.

"Why don't you concentrate on your lesson, Lin, instead of watching sparrows fight?"



Lin raised his head and looked at his teacher. "You're the one who is interested in watching sparrows fight," he retorted cheekily.

"Besides window-gazing in class quite often you also do your homework very carelessly," his teacher said severely. "Your mind seems more on other things like mountain climbing and going on long marches. And now, you're inattentive in class again. . . . You don't seem to have any clear idea of why you should study."

Lin, hurt by this accusation, answered back rudely, "You're pinning labels on me before making a proper investigation. You don't know what you're talking about."

After telling me this story and looking very self-righteous, Lin paused. Obviously, he considered himself the victor in this exchange with his former teacher.

"And?" My interest was roused.

"When Teacher Wang found out the next day from my classmates that I had not been watching sparrows but the PLA soldiers, he admitted in class that he had criticized me too hastily and wrongly. But still he blamed me in a round-about way for not having a better idea of the need to study. Then he went to my home and complained about me to my mother."

"What exactly did he tell your mother?" I asked him.

"I don't really know. But why else did he go to see her? He must have said that I didn't understand the need to study."

I felt that the boy had tried to tell me the main points as objectively as he could though his story was full of his own personal feelings. Apparently, his former teacher had not handled the boy correctly. But his criticism of Lin, though not well expressed, was nevertheless correct in my opinion.

These days many students, filled with revolutionary zeal, want to become workers, peasants or soldiers when they grow up, but lack a correct attitude to their present school work because they fail to link it with their ideal in life. So I said to Lin, "Teacher Wang's criticism needs some thinking over, doesn't it? Why don't you write a letter and tell him your attitude to study now?"

"Please let me write an essay on some other subject, Teacher Wu," he pleaded. "I'll write it very carefully."

Gazing at his boyish face, I told myself: Patience is needed in ideological work. I must help him in such a way that he will recognize his own shortcomings.

"All right," I said. "You may choose a different subject, since you are so strongly opposed to writing this letter."

He laughed happily.

"What shall I write about then?" he asked eagerly.

"Listen. Some students in our school want to be peasants when they grow up. Do you consider that's a good idea?"

"Of course. They'll learn how to farm scientifically for the revolution."

"Well," I continued, "d'you think it correct for these students to neglect their lessons and fail to learn all they can in school because they think peasants don't need to know much?"

"No, certainly not," he answered firmly.

"Well, write your essay in the form of a letter to them," I told him. "Help them to see why their attitude is wrong. Use good reasoning to show them that to realize their correct aim they must change their attitude to study."

"All right, teacher."

"So, you'll write this letter as your essay tomorrow."

"Yes. See you then, Teacher Wu." He ran off confidently, his satchel swinging behind him.

The following day began with two periods for the language lesson. When I entered the classroom, Lin, his face flushed, pretended not to see me but continued writing conscientiously on a piece of paper. When I passed his desk he smiled at me in a rather embarrassed way, then resumed his writing. I looked at his manuscript. The sheet was already nearly covered with neat, closely written characters.

After some of the students had handed in their essays, I leafed through their neat exercise books, a feeling of mingled satisfaction and happiness swept over me. Unnoticed, Lin walked up to me and said confidentially, "Teacher Wu, did you include me among those students you mentioned yesterday?" Before I could answer, he continued, "If you did, you were quite correct, Teacher Wu. But why didn't you criticize me outright? Last night at home I compared



my ideas with the teachings of Chairman Mao and I realized that my primary school teacher's criticism was correct. Then I felt sure that you had me in mind when you told me about those other students. But why didn't you tell me so yesterday? Did you think I wouldn't be able to accept it and see how wrong my own attitude to study has been?"

"But you've realized that you were wrong now anyway, haven't you?" We smiled with mutual understanding.

"Have you finished your essay?" I asked.

"Yes, but... Teacher Wu, I've a suggestion."

"What is it?"

Seriously, he said, "I believe this essay I've written should be used on the wall newspaper. Now I want to write another one *A Letter to My Primary School Teacher*. I'll write it tonight and hand in my exercise book tomorrow morning."

"That will be too late."

"But this is a special case." He sounded self-righteous again. Well, perhaps he was right. He had almost refused to write to his former teacher. Now, after thinking over Chairman Mao's teaching he was volunteering to write the letter as a second essay, which was good.

"All right," I agreed briskly. "But don't ask for special consideration again."

"I won't." He returned to his seat satisfied.

The next morning was bright with only a few wisps of cloud floating across the sky. The sunflowers in the school-yard were growing tall and turning their golden faces towards the sun.

As soon as I started walking across the school-yard Lin Hsiao-tsui ran over to me with his exercise book in his hands. "Here is my letter to my primary school teacher," he said. "I wrote it after supper last night. My mother gave me a real talking to. She said Teacher Wang had not criticized me when he visited her that time, but blamed himself for not being careful enough in his work. I felt awful, I... Here, read it yourself please." He thrust the exercise book into my hands and ran away.

I opened the book. Inside was a letter addressed to Teacher Wang and signed by Lin Hsiao-tsui.

When I finished reading and walked towards the classroom, I felt very stirred. This second essay of Lin's seemed to me most vivid material for teaching my pupils to understand the need to study. Looking up, I saw Lin smiling at me through the classroom window. His young face too, I thought, was like a flower turning towards the sun.

Illustrated by Weng Ju-lan



THE BRIDGE

It was evening, but the wind which had raged all day showed no sign of abating. In the straits between Main Island and Outpost Island the rolling billows of the angry sea threatened to swallow up the frontier post.

After supper I received orders from Headquarters to proceed immediately to Outpost Island where I was to help the reconnaissance squad carry out new combat preparations. I assembled my kit at once and went to the harbour.

The fishing-boats moored by the wharf were tossing up and down on the stormy waves. There was no horizon in sight: sky and water had merged into one as the howling wind whipped up hissing welters of spray.

All at once a familiar voice hailed me: "Instructor!"

"Uncle Lu!" I called back, and made as fast as I could for his fishing-boat.

Old Lu, although in his sixties, was a vigorous fisherman with muscles of iron who battled the whole year round with the wind and

waves. I saw him now standing at the stern of his boat, sturdy as a gnarled hoary pine. At his side stood his thirteen-year-old granddaughter Sea Swallow, a conch which served as a bugle in her hand.

"Do you still do guard duty at your age, uncle?" I asked, leaping aboard.

"Why not? Think I'm too old for this job? I'm still listed on the militia company's roll."

Indeed, the iron grip of Lu's powerful hand gave ample proof of his strength. He offered to ferry me to Outpost Island and with a strong pull on the oars put out to sea.

The wind rose higher and higher and waves each larger than the last tossed our cockle-shell of a fishing-boat up and down. One instant we were high on the crest of a wave, the next we were deep in the trough. Yet the old man and his grand-daughter rowed steadily on straight into the teeth of the wind, as if neither of them knew the meaning of fear.

"With you at the helm, uncle," I commented, "no boat could capsize however fierce the storm."

"You're wrong there." He shot me a quizzical glance. "I capsized a boat here once."

"I can hardly believe it."

"More than twenty years ago it was." Under his grizzled moustache Lu's firm lips curved in a reminiscent smile. "It was a dark stormy evening just like this. Some puppet troops stationed on Main Island heard that the Eighth Route Army was on its way here. That put the wind up them. They grabbed me and ordered me to ferry them across the straits. Well, they got what was coming to them. When we neared Wolf-fang Reef... there it is, just ahead..." I strained my eyes through the gathering gloom at some rocks jutting ominously above the waves on either side before us.

"... The puppet troops were scared stiff," continued the old man. "They stuffed some silver dollars in my pocket and promised me, 'There's plenty more of the same for you if you get us safely across.' But they didn't have it all their own way, the swine! As soon as they took their eyes off me I dived into the sea. I butted the keel with my head and shoved the boat hard so that it shot towards the reef..."

By now we were close to Wolf-fang Reef ourselves. Lu broke off to warn me and the girl to hold tight. Then pulling hard on his oars he steered the little craft straight towards the reef!

Lu knew each reef and current in those straits as well as he did the palm of his own hand. He stood like a rock at the stern, handling his oars with a cool expertise. Like a swallow the boat skimmed past the dangerous currents and hidden rocks, until soon the perilous reef was left behind. The sea breaking over the prow inundated the deck and threw up misty spray.

Once past Wolf-fang Reef, Sea Swallow urged: "Go on, grandad. What happened to the puppet troops?"

In my eagerness to hear the end of the story, I stepped closer to the old man too. For a moment Lu raised one hand from the oar to twirl



his moustache and told us complacently that not one of the puppet troops had escaped — every single one had found a watery grave. As for himself, he had clung to a plank from the wreckage and swum till dawn, when finally he reached land. Soon after that, Chairman Mao's troops had come and freed the fishermen from their bitter oppression. Since then he had kept busy catching fish or ferrying PLA men across the straits. For twenty years and more, through the heat of summer and the snow of winter, braving wind and waves he had helped our men guard the coast.

I was deeply moved by his tale. This small fishing-boat had forged such a close link between our army and people. When the enemy boarded it they could not escape, but met their death in the sea, while when our people's own troops used this boat they fared safely through the fiercest storm. By putting his boat at my service Lu had shown that the army and people are close as fish and water. His little craft served as a bridge linking our hearts.

As we neared our destination, Outpost Island, the old fisherman told me: "Get ready to jump ashore." But every time the boat approached the shore, the tide sucked it back again. I rolled up my trousers ready to wade to the beach, but Lu called: "Wait!" With a final vigorous stroke he made the stern swivel round. Then he told his grand-daughter, "Hold the stern there with your pole. Don't let it crash on to the rocks!" With that he plunged into the sea and rammed his shoulder against the prow. The joint efforts of the old man and the girl held the boat in place long enough for me to leap ashore. When I looked back, Lu had clambered aboard again and was putting back to sea.

"Why not stay the night, uncle?" I yelled. "You can go back tomorrow."

"No. I'm on patrol duty tonight."

"Look us up when you come again!" called the girl.

The light faded fast as I climbed the winding path to the sentry post at the summit of the hill. Gazing into the distance I could see flickering red lights out at sea which reminded me of those lines Chairman Mao wrote at Wuhan in June 1956:

A bridge will fly to span the north and south,

A deep chasm become a thoroughfare

Yes, where the fishing-boat passed I seemed to see a bridge spanning the sea, closely linking the hearts of hundreds of millions of people.

Illustrated by Kao Chuan

The People Love Our Armymen (oil-painting)
by Tung Fu-chang ▶



MOTHER

Sun Ching-ji



Not until I had found myself a seat in the front saloon, put away my luggage and settled down did I notice an old woman sitting opposite me. She must have been well over fifty, for her hair was silvery and her face lined. She looked at me in a friendly way.

“Aunty, where are you going?” I ventured to ask.

“To Chenpo Islet,” she answered with a smile.

“Are you going home?” I inquired, noticing that she spoke with the accent of the Tungting Lake region where the ship was going.

“Yes,” she said. “I missed my boy so I went to Changsha to see him. He’s not been home for two full years. I stayed with him for about a fortnight. It’s a joy to see him growing so strong and sturdy.” After a pause she continued, “I’m on my way home now. As I have attacks of colic now and then, he was afraid I might fall ill on the way. He asked for leave to take me home...”

Just then a young PLA man came up to her with a cup of hot water. “Here, have a drink,” he urged fondly.

That must be her son, I thought.

Taking the cup, she pointed to the seat next to her and replied in the same affectionate way, “Do sit down for a while.”

The young soldier did so, but soon got up again. He seemed to have something on his mind.

"The ship'll soon be under way," he told her. "I'll see if I can get you an empty berth."

Before the old woman could protest he disappeared down the corridor.

"Poor boy, he's already tried hard but there's just no stopping him," she remarked, gazing after him as he walked off. "It's only an overnight journey, I can manage without a berth." She paused and then went on: "In the old days to travel at all was difficult, not to mention getting a berth. Once I had my ticket all right, but there were so many passengers it was a real struggle to board the ship and I was nearly pushed into the river. D'you know what happened then? The ship started, leaving a whole lot of people behind! But, now..."

Abruptly, the siren wailed. I looked at my watch, it was just midnight.

As it was May, the breeze coming in was warm and soothing. The wide Hsiangkiang River, in full spate, rushed towards the north. Since the saloon was somewhat crowded that night, it took some time for everyone to settle down.

Later the young soldier returned to press a package of biscuits into the old woman's hands.

"You shouldn't spend your money on me," she complained.

"Our political instructor has stomach-aches too. His experience is that when an attack starts it helps to eat something," he explained and then added regretfully, "Sorry, all the berths are booked..."

"Never mind. Just a moment ago I was telling this comrade," she cut in, nodding at me, "that it's thanks to the good leadership of Chairman Mao that we working people can travel on such fine steamships at all. How times have changed!"

"At your age, and especially now that you're unwell, you should have a more comfortable place than this," said the young soldier, picking up his satchel. "Look, take my seat too, so that you can stretch out and lie down."

"How about you then?" questioned the old woman.

"I'll manage," he answered and went off again.

During the night the monotonous chugging of the engine lulled some people to sleep. I leaned back on my seat and felt very drowsy. Through half-closed eyelids I saw the old woman lying curled up on two places and I presumed that the young soldier must have found a seat somewhere else. But then I raised my eyes and saw him leaning against the panelling under a lamp, poring over a book.

The sight moved me so much that I no longer felt sleepy.

Presently the old woman tried to turn over. I heard a low groan which she was unable to suppress and noticed that her forehead was bathed in perspiration.

"Quick! Aunty is ill," I called out to the young soldier.

He bounded over, then took out his handkerchief and gently wiped the old woman's face, asking quietly, "Another attack? Is it very painful?"

The old woman writhed in pain, one hand tightly clasped to her stomach. Not knowing what else to do the young man groped around for the package of biscuits. By the time he found it, he saw that the biscuits had been crushed into crumbs.

The attendant on duty nearby quickly came over. The woman's condition appeared serious. He went immediately to summon a doctor. Soon from the loud-speaker a quiet voice called out: "Passengers, comrades! Is there a doctor on board? An old woman in the front saloon needs attention."

In a far corner of the saloon a young woman with plaits in a PLA uniform answered the call. She jumped up from her seat, looked around and hurried over to us. After examining the old woman and watching her spasms for a moment, she took a small box out of her pocket, chose a needle from it and began to give the patient acupuncture treatment. She worked nimbly and confidently until the attack subsided. The old woman's clenched hands loosened, she ceased to groan and her whole body relaxed.

The girl straightened up, cleaned her needle and put it back in the case. Only then did the saloon attendant return to ask whether a doctor had answered the call.



The young soldier replied with relief, "Oh yes, she's here."

"I'm not a doctor, only a nurse," the girl told them.

"Whether doctor or nurse doesn't matter. The important thing is to give first aid," said the attendant.

"She's done that and the patient is much better now," the young soldier assured him.

The attendant looked at the old woman again and asked, "Did you give her needle treatment? There's nothing like acupuncture." Then he turned to the passengers who had gathered round. "Thank you for your concern but please go back to your seats now."

The passengers dispersed. The nurse remained and softly asked the young soldier to go and get some water while she sat down and propped the patient up. When he returned with the water she pointed to her satchel on the corner seat, indicating that she wanted it. When he brought it, she poured some sugar from a plastic bag into the water and helped the woman to drink.

"Here comrade, let me do that while you go and sleep," the soldier suggested.

"No. Leave everything to me," the nurse insisted. "You'd better take my seat and have some rest."

Seeing that she was determined and there really was nothing for him to do, the young soldier reluctantly headed for the seat the nurse had vacated.

Now that she felt better, the old woman sat up and turned to the nurse with a look of gratitude. The girl fumbled in her satchel for a comb. Smiling, she said, "Aunty, your hair is rather untidy. Let me comb it for you so you'll feel more comfortable." Without waiting for a reply, she began smoothing the tousled silvery hair.

As the first light of dawn appeared through the portholes the old woman's escort, the young PLA man, came over quietly to collect her belongings.

"After landing, how far does she still have to travel?" queried the nurse.

"About six or seven miles I believe," he answered.

Carefully then she took out a few pills from a bottle in her satchel, wrapped them in paper and handed them to the soldier, prescribing two pills in case of another attack.

"Thanks. Let me take them," the old woman said as the soldier reached out for the pills.

He said nothing but turned to collect his kit.

"Aren't you going to Thatch Point further down the river?" asked the old woman in surprise. "Why are you getting your things together now?"

"I think I'd better get off at Chenpo Islet and take you all the way home," explained the soldier, continuing to pick up his kit. "I've just inquired. The attendant says my ticket will still be valid if I break my journey for a good reason. I'll take the next boat home."

"I can't have that, child! I want you to go straight home. You soldiers don't usually take home leave unless for some special occasion. Don't let me spoil your plans," exclaimed the old woman, taking the soldier's hand in hers.

"I can't let you walk home all alone," the young man insisted.

"No, you mustn't do this. I won't hear of it!" she protested.

This argument surprised both the nurse and me. As I was trying to straighten it out in my mind, the old woman turned to me for support. "Comrade, say a word for me," she pleaded.

"Then he isn't your son?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, no. I only met him yesterday when we boarded the ship," she admitted smiling at the young soldier. "My own boy is a bridge-builder, working right now on the Hsiangkiang Bridge project. He had permission to see me home, but just before leaving yesterday afternoon he heard that there might be a flood and their work had to be speeded up. So I made him cancel his leave and let me go home by myself. We met this comrade on the wharf and, when my son told him about me, he offered to look after me..."

"Our worker-comrade left his mother in my care because his job's important for our socialist construction," put in the soldier. "How can I desert her halfway?"

"My son only meant you to keep an eye on me as far as Chenpo Islet," argued the old woman.

"But now you're not feeling so well.... So I've changed my plans."

Right at this moment another slightly older PLA man, who had been standing near by, said to the young soldier, "Leave this to me, comrade. I'll take aunty home. I'm on home leave from my artillery unit. I'm getting off at Chenpo Islet too. I'll see her home first. Don't you worry." Without even waiting for the young soldier to agree, he turned to ask the old woman the name of her village.

"White Reed Ridge," she said.

"I'm going to Yellow Reed Ridge, less than a mile away. So we go the same way," said the older soldier, beaming. "We've reached the wharf now. Let's get off."

The loud-speaker announced: "Passengers, we are now at Chenpo Islet."

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Tsao Cheng-lu

The New Company Commander

All the men had been talking about the new company commander who was to arrive soon. At roll-call in the evening, the political instructor brought in a new comrade and introduced him to us as our company commander. He was a man of medium height with a dark, lean face.

"My name's Chou, as the instructor has just told you," said the company commander, addressing us. "From now on we shall be together, getting tempered in the same furnace." His voice was deep and resonant and as he spoke he swung his arms for emphasis. "I'm afraid I'm something of a martinet. But, if you feel at any time I'm unreasonable, I shall welcome your criticism. This evening at our first meeting I must point out a few things I've noticed already that are not so good. For instance, I've just been around to each squad. I found some of our equipment is not maintained properly. We're the people's army; we must be prepared for instant battle. Before taps, each squad is to check its equipment. Oh, yes, will first squad leader please come in to company headquarters after this. That's all."

"Good! That was short and snappy." The men started discussing their first impressions as soon as we were dismissed. On my way to headquarters, I heard the high-pitched voice of the new soldier Tseng Chien. "Ha, he's like cucumber and paprika salad, crisp and peppery," the boy said.

The company commander shook hands as soon as I entered his room. "I'm told your squad's been well trained for war preparedness. Is that right?" He offered me a seat. Perhaps I felt ill at ease because he was new, anyway, I didn't quite know what reply I should make.

"I suppose you don't know me well enough yet, eh?" he said with a wave of his hand. "Acting on instructions from above, the Party branch has decided that I am to start a training course with your squad as a pilot team. We'll be able to learn from each other. Well, tell me what you think about that?"

"That's just fine," I exclaimed, getting to my feet and feeling very elated. Then I remembered my own clumsiness and the various problems bound to come up in connection with the training and quickly added, "I'm afraid though..."

"That you lack experience, is that it?" He made me sit down again as he went on, "What's there to be afraid of? Be prepared to sweat it out, that's all. Nobody's born with experience. Everybody has to learn through practice. As long as we put politics in command, are strict in our demands and rigorous in training, we're sure to succeed. The point is whether we have the courage to try. Go back and prepare your men first."

"Very well, commander."

"Oh, another thing. We're giving your squad a new man. Tseng Chien... D'you know him?"

"Tseng Chien?" I exclaimed. He was a new recruit who'd just come from a big city. Though he was not in our platoon, I knew something about him. He was not undersized but had a poor physique. He appeared rather delicate and on the soft side. Now, the men in our squad were quite different. Every one of them could shoulder a full load and still go at a trot. Tseng Chien, I'd noticed, could hardly stagger along even with a light load.



“Company commander,” I cut in at this point, “since we’re to do plenty of sweating, you’d better give us comrades who are fairly tough. Tseng...”

He eyed me with a frown. “There’s something wrong with your thinking, first squad leader. For instance if you want boiling water, extra heat is needed under the kettle in which the water is slow coming to the boil. The same goes in training men.” Seeing I was still reluctant to admit this his tone softened. “Tseng Chien’s not bad, you know. I hear he’s an eager student and really wants to make all-round progress. Of course he has his weak points, but it’ll all depend on how you guide him.”

We quickly discovered certain traits in our new company commander. For one thing, he rarely allowed the word “good” to pass his lips. At best, he gave a grunt to show his satisfaction. But if anyone made a mistake, he’d let him have it straight from the shoulder and with that loud voice of his too. Of course he relaxed at times.

Sometimes he joined the men when they went to practise shooting on the basketball court; occasionally he hummed tunes from model operas.

Our first lesson under him was “laying and rewinding five hundred metres of line over moderately uneven ground.” When I took my men up the slope he was there already. After I’d lined up the squad, I asked him to give his instructions.

“I’ve no ‘instructions’ to give,” he said. “Better send two comrades out first for a trial, then we’ll know where we stand.” He brought out his stop-watch.

I turned to the men. “Chang Ta-hsiang, you try. The other one...” Before I could decide, Tseng Chien’s high-pitched voice rang out: “Let me go.”

I was still hesitating when the company commander said, “Tseng Chien will do.”

The two went off with their lines. They were very fast going out, but on the return trip Tseng stumbled along. The results: Chang, six minutes forty seconds; Tseng, seven minutes and forty seconds.

Seven forty was not too bad for a new recruit. I went over to where Tseng sat, still breathing hard. “Not bad, not bad at all,” I told him. “When I was a new soldier I couldn’t do it in eight.”

“I... er... lack strength,” he gasped.

The company commander looked over Chang’s coil of line first. “Hmm, tolerable.” He then examined Tseng’s. “You lack strength, eh? You lack technique too.” Turning round, he addressed the men, “Tell me, how have you been taught to wind a reel?”

“Straight, even and tight pressed. No tangles,” the men answered.

The company commander picked up Tseng’s coil. “The way you’ve wound your line is not up to standard. We have to do a good job when we retrieve our line so that we won’t be handicapped in battle if and when we need it again. Tell me, in an emergency would you be able to lay your line well with a coil like this?”

Inwardly, I began to worry. Isn't he being too hard on a new fighter? Would Tseng be able to take it?

As I expected, Tseng said hardly a word in the practice that followed but kept his mouth clamped tight. The company commander, however, continued to trail behind him. Whenever the boy tried to rest his tired arm by placing the reel of line against his leg, the company commander snapped, "No, no. You've got to stick it out. Don't rest until we've finished... that's right, your arm must press hard... stick it out." Hearing these words, we all made a bigger effort.

When we stopped for a rest, Tseng plonked himself down with a long sigh. He seemed exhausted. The company commander sat among us. "Don't think it's just routine because we repeat the same motions over and over again. Whether you're really skilled or not makes a tremendous difference. For instance, if we were laying the line through an enemy firing zone right now we'd have to go through other motions, suddenly lying flat and then jumping up to attack, that's flopping down and springing up again. Now, I know everybody can do that, but.... Come, Tseng Chien, let's try it together. First squad leader, you time us."

They went off a little way then came back, laying their lines. When I waved an arm and shouted "Down!" the company commander slipped the coil under one armpit and flopped down, naturally and fast. Tseng on the other hand first put his coil down and then bending over with both hands on the ground, eased himself down till he was lying flat. When I said "Attack!" the company commander sprang to his feet and was several paces away before Tseng had managed to stand up. There was a difference of six seconds between them. They tried again with the same result.

"I never imagined there was so much to learn about such simple movements," said Tseng flipping the dust off his trousers.

"They're simple and yet not so simple. The key to rapid movement doesn't lie inside somebody's head. It's the result of past experience."

On our way back I was just hoping for a chance to say a few words of encouragement to Tseng when the company commander appeared

at my side to whisper, "Well, what do you think of your new soldier?"

"Not bad really for a new comrade."

"Umm."

"Did you notice his tunic is sopping wet?"

"It's good for him to sweat."

After our evening meal I walked around looking for Tseng. When I reached the club, the company commander's loud voice caught my attention, "See, that's the banner our company won in a battle. Your squad connected a five-mile line in only an hour. They had arrived after a march of thirty-five miles and yet were able to lay the lines in such a short time. That was the result of strict training under very difficult conditions..."

We had heard that story countless times, but who was the company commander talking to now? I took a peek. It was Tseng. "Tell me," the company commander continued. "Why was it possible for those veterans of ours to defeat an enemy armed to the teeth?" I had one foot inside the door but quickly withdrew it in order not to disturb them. But I heard Tseng's reply.

"Because they had the revolutionary spirit of fearing neither hardship nor death."

"Umm. Right. What else?"

"Well, intelligence."

"Umm. I think it's because they also had the calibre of real fighting men. It would have been impossible otherwise."

"Yes."

"Tseng Chien, I hope you'll make strict demands on yourself. You must train yourself to be as good as those veterans."

"I pledge I'll do that, company commander."

After several days of training on how to "locate headquarters", we decided it was time for us to start night practice. A wind beginning at noon continued unabated all day. The night was pitch black, completely obliterating the wooded slopes of the mountain. This was a case of the new barber being confronted with a thick bearded customer. Weather like this was tough on new soldiers.

According to custom, veterans were to go out singly, new comrades in pairs. Altogether we had five new comrades. I decided that Tseng should pair off with Chang.

I had just finished reading the list of pairs when Tseng's high-pitched voice sounded: "Report. I ask to go on my own. This will be good training for me." Before I could say anything, the commander cut in, "I think that'll be all right."

"Well . . . so be it. Get started." I turned to look at the commander. To tell the truth, I wasn't at all easy about Tseng going on his own. Since he had been given permission, what could I do?

The distance was about six miles and there were four points to locate. In less than two hours the men began to return. Tseng did not show up until long after midnight, nearer one o'clock in fact. I asked no questions but ordered him to turn in at once.

The next morning seeing that he had a feverish cold I told him to stay in bed. He seized my hand when I took breakfast in to him and explained, "You see, squad leader, I lost my way last night. It was already quite late when I reached point two. When I began locating point three I was very flustered. In hurrying, my foot caught in a loose plank on the bridge while I was crossing and I landed in the river. Fortunately, the company commander was there to pull me out..."

"The company commander? He followed you?" I suddenly recalled that last night when I went to company headquarters to report about Tseng not being back, the instructor told me quite calmly not to worry.

"Yes, he followed me all the way but I only discovered it when I fell in the river..."

I found Tseng's words disturbing.

He told me that he had tried a short cut in the beginning and that was how he lost his way. Everyone who has been through this kind of training knows that one mistake at the start means more difficulties later. Ordinarily, if a company commander was following a new man, he would call him back from a side track. But our commander didn't. He just tailed the boy quietly to see that he came

to no harm. It was not until he fell in the river that the commander threw off his coat and jumped in to rescue him...

Tseng was of course very moved to find he had a silent protector. He asked the commander to return right away but Chou would not budge. Since the commander was also wet and muddy Tseng suggested, "Then let's go back together, it's already very late."

"That won't do. You haven't located all your points yet. How can you return?"

"Please give me a hint. Then I'll be able to finish quicker."

"I can't do that either." As Tseng still stood there wavering, the commander continued, "Tseng Chien, you did the right thing when you asked to go on your own this evening. To be out alone at night is good training not only technically but also for your thinking. This is how a soldier gains in calibre. This is the basic training needed by our linesmen. We need it both in connecting lines and in maintenance work. What did you men say when you were expressing your determination? 'We'll train ourselves for whatever is needed by the revolution.' But there's no short cut or easy way out in training. With every drop of sweat you shed you learn something. As a revolutionary soldier, you must conquer all hardships as they come up. Now you must consider yourself all alone here, for in a real battle nobody's going to follow you around." The commander was removing his own dry jacket, meaning to exchange it with Tseng, but the boy turned and ran off.

"I'll keep on training, squad leader," Tseng assured me. "I know there's no short cut."

I was feeling quite upset and rather tongue-tied when I entered company headquarters. Finally, I blurted out, "I'm such an unobservant fool. Yesterday, Tseng..."

"Tseng Chien?" The commander began to laugh. "He went off on a side track to begin with but he persisted in covering nearly sixteen miles and finally located all four points. What kind of spirit do you call that, comrade? I say he's making progress. Of course, it also shows he's still badly in need of training."

"He feels that way too."

"That's just it. Chairman Mao teaches us to be both red and expert. We should bring up our men to be both sound in their ideology and technically skilled. I wonder if you understand that correctly."

"I thought since Tseng wasn't very strong and hadn't had much tempering, I shouldn't be too exacting with him. It seems I've been too lax."

"When he was a greenhorn, you didn't want him in your squad. Now that he's made progress, you don't follow up. In neither instance did you make strict enough demands on him. Think carefully, why do we have to be so strict about training? Because we're a combat force. We'll be going to the battlefield to face the enemy at bayonet point. We need proletarian politics and the best fighting calibre in order to win. These qualities are not inborn. They come from political education, strict demands and rigid training."

That night I lay awake a long time thinking over what Chou had said. I realized there was something lacking in my concern for and understanding of Tseng Chien.

Suddenly an urgent staccato bugle call startled me out of a light sleep. It was a practice emergency call. There was the sound of bustling all over the barracks. When I led my squad out, the company commander said, "Tell Tseng not to come, he still isn't feeling well...." His sentence was cut short by a high-pitched voice behind me, "Tseng Chien reporting." With a quick glance at me, the company commander waved his arm, "Fall in."

We went towards Tayen Mount. Half way there, the heavy clouds let loose their rain and it poured down on us. Wind and rain both beat wildly in our faces.

The company commander turned to say, "Pass the message down the line: Fasten up your raincoats and follow at a good pace."

When we reached the foothills, he didn't give us time for a breather before announcing our assignment. "Our command post is set up in a bamboo grove down in the valley behind the mountain. The lines must be connected within two hours. First squad is to accomplish the task; the rest wait here for further orders. Ready now, first squad. Dismiss."

Tayen Mount, some six hundred metres high, rose steeply before us. The climb in itself was exhausting and our line-laying task was preceded by a forced march in the rain. However, the time was too short to think over our instructions. Quickly I divided the work among our squad members. Since Tseng had not quite recovered, I assigned him to stay behind as maintenance man but he insisted on going on, saying, "I'm all right now. This is combat, we should work according to our battle assignments." He seemed so sure of himself, I agreed. The company commander came over, said something to Tseng and the boy nodded. He also tied up Tseng's trouser legs for him with an extra pair of shoe-laces.

I was a veteran mountain climber, but for a few men in our squad it wasn't so easy. Tseng Chien found it particularly difficult. I noticed that he needed the help of his



hands at practically every step. As he carried an extra reel of line in one hand besides the one on his back, I went up to relieve him of this added burden. Only then did I discover he'd lost his right shoe. "Where's your shoe?" I asked, alarmed.

"It was sucked into the mud when we were crossing that swampy ground just now. It doesn't matter."

But it did matter. He was a greenhorn who'd never climbed mountains and he could hardly keep to the trail which was covered with loose stones, brambles and sharp tree stumps. How could a soft city-boy like him climb it without a shoe? I was going to tell him to go back when the company commander overtook us, stretched out his hand with a shoe in it and said, "Here, I saw it and brought it along for you." How remarkable! I snatched the reel from Tseng's hand and went ahead, turning to call back, "Put on your shoe and follow me."

When we were close to the top, we all felt relieved. Tseng was laying his last reel of line and going at a smart pace. Suddenly I heard a sharp cry of pain. He had fallen flat on his face, the reel still tightly clamped under his right arm. I quickly ran down to help him up. His foot had caught on a large bamboo stump, and because he was concentrating on his line he had cut one knee badly on a rock. I felt it and found it was bleeding. Unfortunately, our comrade in charge of first aid was away for a study course at regiment headquarters. After using my handkerchief to bandage Tseng's leg and picking up his reel, I told him to rest where he was until I came back to help him down the mountain.

Tseng struggled to his feet. "No, I'm all right, I can go on."

"There's no need. We've almost finished..."

The company commander caught up with us again just then saying, "Since Tseng came along, he's a combatant in the exercise." He looked at Tseng's knee again before asking, "Can you manage?"

"Yes."

"Go, then."

Without another word, Tseng picked up the reel of line and dashed up the trail. In a flash he had reached the top and disappeared down

the other side. For the first time I heard the word "Good!" escape from the firm, determined lips of our company commander.

The rain had stopped some time ago and the sky was clearing. As soon as our line was connected, the telephone operator called and told us we had taken exactly 110 minutes. When I looked for the company commander to report this, I found him sitting with Tseng's leg on his lap, carefully drying the boy's kneecap. Then tearing a strip of cloth from his shirt-tail he neatly bandaged the boy's cut.

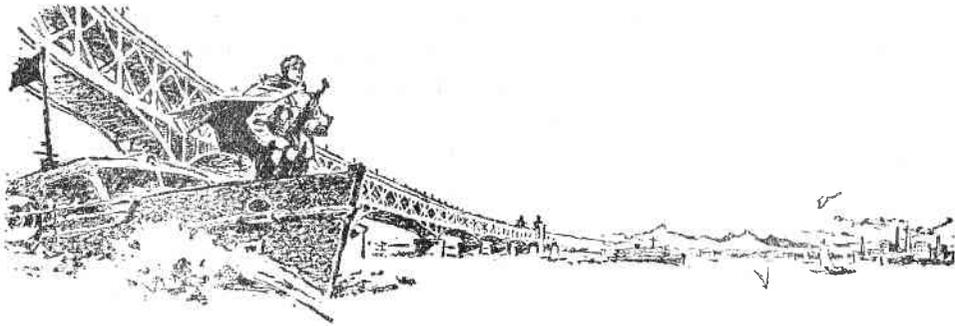
"First squad leader, your task's accomplished. You can dismantle your line now," he told me as he pulled Tseng to his feet and swung the boy on to his back.

Tseng strained to get off, crying, "Company commander, where's your shoe!" I looked down. All the commander had on his right foot was a mud-covered sock. I was so shocked that by the time I began shouting at the commander to put his own shoe on, he had already gone a long way down the trail.

"What happened to his shoe?" asked Chang.

"Tseng's wearing it..." I muttered, my eyes on the commander's back. Suddenly I felt my nose tingle. Since the comrades were gathering round me, I hurriedly wiped my face with the back of my hand, cursing, "Damn... this rain. Come on comrades, get on with it and dismantle the line."

Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng



River Patrol

Spring comes early south of the Yangtse. Last year's snow had not yet melted away, but the river bank was already turning green and there was warmth in the breeze. Willows by the water trailed new gosling-yellow tendrils. Everything was tinged with the verdant hues of spring.

I left the train at the foot of the bridge and made for the sentry post. This was my second visit here. I had collected a good deal of material for my poems the first time I came to this bridge across the Yangtse and heard the tales of the sentries guarding it. The one who had made the strongest impression on me was Hua Yun-sung, a young soldier from the Tapieh Mountains. Now that I was here again I meant to look him up.

Skirting the bridgehead, I climbed the winding embankment and saw the long bank stretching out before me. Striking east, I heard lusty singing ahead. Two young goats white as snowballs were frisking in the distance. Behind some clumps of willows I glimpsed a whole flock of kids as well as several soldiers. All of a sudden the

goats took fright and came careering towards me like a stampeding herd of wild horses. A soldier with a lasso chased after them. Crack! Crack! Each time he cast his lasso the kids cavorted even more wildly. I wondered what the young scamp was up to and was on the point of intervening when his hearty laughter rang out as he finally succeeded in catching a kid.

"Got you, young fellow!" he chortled, dandling the kid in his arms. "I got you this time!"

At the sound of that familiar voice I halted. The young soldier looked up. Our eyes met. It was Hua Yun-sung, the man I wanted to see. He put the kid down and came forward to welcome me, wiping a broad grin off his face to salute me. Then still panting he seized my hand.

"Well! Fancy seeing you here!"

"I was attracted here by that act you just put on."

He let out a whoop of laughter.

Hua was a typical highland lad of medium height, solidly built as a young bullock. The eyes in his ruddy face sparkled with wit and humour.

"What are you up to here, Young Hua?" I asked.

"Herding goats." He winked mysteriously. "I'm giving the goatherd a hand."

"Don't you believe it. Call this herding goats?" retorted the real goatherd, a plump young soldier. "At this rate, if your squad has another week's herding, I shall lose my job."

The other soldiers near by roared with laughter.

Since several of them were dripping with sweat, I urged them to sit down on the grassy bank. From last year's experience I knew that to loosen Hua's tongue I must touch on his favourite subject, namely hunting. As soon, then, as they had mopped their perspiring faces I asked him: "Do you lasso wild beasts like this up in your mountains?"

"Sure." Hua blinked. "But different game must be caught by different methods. That takes special training."

"Special training?" I had seen all sorts of training in different branches of our armed forces, but never before had I seen this lassoing.

I gazed blankly at young Chung beside me, but he said nothing. Since the other soldiers, even including the goatherd, seemed in tacit agreement with Hua, I had to take his word for it for the time being.

When I reached the river patrol headquarters I learned that Hua was now a squad leader. I decided to stay with his squad, taking part in their study of Marxist classics and the works of Chairman Mao, as well as in their military training and patrol duty. Before many days had passed I was treated as a regular member of the squad and assigned patrol duties in both fair weather and foul. I went out with the other sentries many times, but nothing particularly noteworthy happened.

One afternoon our squad set out by boat on another routine patrol. The day was clear. Not a wisp of cloud flecked the blue sky. The river seemed calm and unruffled. When we reached midstream, however, we found that the current was flowing rather strongly. As we made slow headway upstream a rapid undercurrent rocked our boat, tossing it up and down in a froth of white foam. Hua, his automatic rifle slung over his back, was crouching in his usual place at the prow, his eyes intent on the river. Young Chung and I stood behind him keeping a look-out on both sides of the Yangtse while the other squad members manned their respective posts.

Our craft zigzagged between the spans of the bridge, carefully checking up on every pier before continuing upstream. The current was stronger now. Waves breaking over our boat threw up so much spray that it was hard for us to keep our eyes open. I turned to look at Hua. Wet through, his face drenched with spray, he was still keeping a careful watch, his feet firmly planted on the rolling deck. As for myself, after more than an hour of patrolling my eyes were aching and my head was swimming.

Just then Hua rapped out an order: "Eyes front!" He stretched out flat at the prow gazing ahead.

"What's up?" I asked, straining my eyes upstream. Dazzled by the light of the afternoon sun I could see nothing but a vast misty expanse of water.

"Look over there." Hua pointed ahead. "What do you think that is floating slowly this way?"

Chung and I crouched down and gazed in that direction. I was of course no match for the trained patrolmen. Young Chung spotted the object first and pointed it out to me. Then, vaguely, I glimpsed what seemed like a speck of foam bobbing up and down on the waves as it drifted towards us.

On Hua's face was that look of alertness you see when a hunter has sighted his quarry. With bated breath he fixed his eyes on the floating object. Our boat put on speed and the dot grew larger and larger until soon we were able to distinguish it clearly. It was a straw dummy something like those used in target practice, with the upper half projecting out of the water. Tossing up and down on the current it was approaching fast.

"What can we do about it?" I asked.

"Wait." His eyes on the straw dummy, Hua did not turn his head.

"We mustn't let it slip past us."

"Don't worry. It won't."

As the dummy drew level with us Hua calmly turned, opened a hatch and took out a coil of rope. With one deft movement he made a noose and as the floating figure was racing past he cast the rope and lassoed it round the neck. So this was the use of the special training I had seen.

When the dummy was hauled aboard, we all crowded round to examine it and speculate on its function. It seemed to me nothing but a scarecrow nailed to a wooden frame which had kept it afloat. I was puzzling over this when Hua asked young Chung his opinion.

"Could there be people having target practice upstream?" Chung suggested.

"You've walked all along the river bank, haven't you? There are towns and villages everywhere. It's no place for target shooting." Still scrutinizing the dummy, Hua dismissed Chung's theory.

"It may come from further up."

"No, it doesn't look as if it's floated very far. Besides, this isn't the sort of target we use," replied Hua decisively. "Remember our old squad leader? Once a perfectly ordinary-looking bamboo pole came floating downstream. After fishing it out he gave it a careful

going over, then chopped it open to examine the inside too before letting it pass. That's how vigilant he was. We're a river patrol. We must investigate every blade of grass that comes floating down the river."

"Right," I agreed. "It's very queer, an object like this turning up."

"Queer? No." Hua shook his head thoughtfully. "This is decidedly fishy. Someone's chosen this time of day when the sun is sinking to float this camouflaged device towards No. 5 pier of the bridge. There's more to this than meets the eye."

Glancing up at the slanting rays of late afternoon sunlight I was convinced by this analysis.

Hua ordered the signalman to report this incident to the patrol office. After that he gave the order to put back and guided our small craft to a quiet bay.

At sunset the wind blew harder, the river swirled faster. Our patrol boat moored in the bay rocked like a cradle as high waves slapped against it.

Hua and his men analysed the situation, then he gave instructions to some of the squad before he went ashore and strode swiftly towards a sentry post on the bank.

The rest of us waited impatiently on the boat, sometimes talking in low voices. Standing at the prow, I turned to look at the towering piers and spans of the mighty bridge. A freight train loaded high with goods thundered southward over the bridge; then a long whistle rent the air as a crowded passenger train rumbled towards the north. After I had watched several trains shuttling over the bridge, the order rang out behind me: "Man your posts! Start the engine."

I wheeled round and saw Hua running down the embankment. As he came aboard he rapped out another order: "Quick. Section 3. Full speed ahead!"

Ploughing the waves, the patrol boat raced forward against the rushing current. Hua at his usual post kept a sharp watch ahead. Stepping over to him I asked quietly: "What did you go to the sentry post for just now?"

"I went to organize this operation. Sent out a signal and rang up headquarters, then reported our analysis of the situation to the riverside militia in the communes upstream." With pride Hua added: "We have a well-tested army-civilian joint defence system here."

I nodded approvingly and turned to look at Section 3. Now that I had had some training, I could see a round object some distance away floating towards us through the mist. Drifting closer, it proved to be something like a brown sealed vat.

Knitting his brows Hua exclaimed: "Just look at this! What new trick are they up to?"

Young Chung grabbed hold of a long bamboo pole and tried to intercept this object. Another man picked up a second pole to help him. But the vat, bobbing up and down on the waves, kept rolling away whenever the poles touched it. When we drew alongside, the wash from our boat submerged it. Several times we circled round it but failed to secure it, and all the time it was getting closer to the bridge. Hua, however, remained unruffled. He handed his rifle to young Chung, took off his cartridge-belt and with a splash leapt into the torrent.

A strong wind was blowing, the river was running fast, but breasting the roaring waves Hua swam with quick strong strokes to the pier. As the object floated up to him, guarding the pier with his body like the goal-keeper in a football match, he shoved the vat away. Then, plunging forward and swimming with one arm, he propelled it along in front of him like a captive across the wide expanse of water between two piers.

I heaved a sigh of relief as our boat followed Hua downstream. Although buffeted by the waves, he kept one hand on the vat and presently turned to swim towards us.

We found that what he had salvaged was a pitcher with a sealed top. When I picked it up and shook it, it seemed quite empty. "If we'd known this was all, we could have let it pass," I commented.

"No, that wouldn't do." Hua added with a smile: "It's our job to check up on all objects big or small which float downstream, no matter how innocuous they look, and find out the whys and wherefores of their being in the river. As you can see, this pitcher is empty."



In that case, why is it sealed? We must investigate anything suspicious. That's our duty as a river patrol."

I nodded. Then Hua changed his clothes and we headed back.

Our PLA men don't let grass grow under their feet. I had barely finished supper when I discovered that Hua had gone off again. The next minute young Chung darted past me and disappeared too. I went out to take a look at the bank where the patrol boat was still moored. As the plump young goatherd came back with his flock just then, I asked him where the other two had gone. He told me that he had seen Hua heading for the bridge.

Now that the sun had set, the western horizon was red and the rippling surface of the river glistened crimson. The early spring wind from the north was chilly that evening. After questioning the sentry on the bridge, I hurried towards the middle of it. When I reached No. 5 pier the sentry there pointed down below. "There he is, in ambush."

Leaning over the railing, I looked down the narrow ladder. Sure enough, under the framework of No. 5 pier I could see a soldier crouching. A rifle in one hand, a lasso in the other, he remained quite motionless gazing upstream. He reminded me of a soldier in a trench near the enemy line, waiting for the order to begin the offensive.

As night fell the distant towns and hills were swallowed up by the mist. Before long I heard a gruff voice below call: "Chung, watch out!"

Turning, I saw young Chung crouching in the same position on No. 4 pier close by. At the same time I caught a glimpse of a tiny black dot floating down towards us. Before I could make out what it was, Hua lassoed it and pulled it up. This was an even queerer sort of flotsam — a long bamboo pole with two bricks tied to each end making it barely visible as it drifted, half-submerged, downstream.

Hua climbed up the bridge and telephoned the office a detailed report of this new discovery.

"What do I make of it?" Hua thought this question over and answered decisively: "Putting all three together, it seems fairly obvious. A secret enemy is reconnoitring. I suppose they want to

find out how long it takes different kinds of objects to float down to the bridge under different weather conditions. They're testing our vigilance too, to see what sort of camouflage will fool us...."

The man at the other end of the line said something. Hua answered: "No matter what it is, we'll catch it by the tail. It won't get away."

The mighty Yangtse rushing towards the sea is as well-guarded as an impregnable fortress. By the time the second floating object neared the bridge, the militia upstream had already sent out search parties. On the basis of the information supplied by Hua's squad, they searched the villages along the river. By the time a third object appeared, the cordon had tightened. In co-ordination with the search upstream several dozen fishing boats blockaded the river downstream, while the sentries on the bridge redoubled their vigilance. Then army and people together drew in their net. The men who had launched the floating objects were trapped.

The outcome showed the correctness of Hua's judgement. This had been a planned reconnaissance on the part of a hidden enemy. With the people helping the security forces, this plot to sabotage the bridge was smashed.

On Saturday evening the river patrol decided to put on a performance of song and dance items prepared by the soldiers themselves to celebrate the success of Hua's squad. And in honour of the occasion I wrote a new poem *Song of the River Patrol*. After supper I looked for Hua and his men to ask them for their comments, but I could not find them anywhere. Had they perhaps gone off for some more special training? I hurried to the riverside. There were no goats there at this hour nor any men off duty enjoying themselves. But in the distance, among a clump of willows, I saw a young tree swaying to and fro. When I reached the spot I found that Hua and his men were busily making a net of nylon thread. They had clustered round the willow to fasten the net to it, and as they plied their bamboo shuttles the whole tree shook, reminding me of the way the pitcher had bobbed about in the waves.

"Good work!" I said. "This will catch not only sealed pitchers but trickier devices too."

Hua turned to me with a smile. "Never mind what contraptions they send or what tricks they use, we're ready to deal with them. Nothing will escape our net."

At the performance that evening I recited my new poem. Though it failed to do justice to the subject, I wrote it with heartfelt feeling, dedicating it to the heroic patrol guarding this bridge across the Yangtse.

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien



A Matter of Principle

Aochuangtai Production Brigade lies in the upper reaches of the Sunghua and the lower reaches of the Itung rivers. This being so, the output of the brigade cannot but be closely linked with water.

It was an unusually wet summer. The hottest period was followed by torrential rains till all the ploughed land of the brigade was flooded and several hundred *mu* of crops were completely destroyed. The disaster, of course, substantially affected the brigade's plan for the next year. Its deputy leader Chou Fa was particularly worried, this being his first experience of such a serious calamity.

One day he received from the commune administration a summons to a meeting of brigade leaders to decide the coming year's production targets.

"This is a crucial meeting," he exclaimed, "yet Brigade Leader Li isn't back yet from that study session in the county town. What target shall we set for next year? It's difficult to decide. . . ."

"Difficult? What did Old Li say?" cut in Little Li, a middle-school graduate who had newly joined the brigade. "We must be realistic in fixing our target. At the same time we should go all out and aim high."

Chou Fa stared at him blankly, then produced a chart from his pocket saying, "Look, how about this?"

"*Aiya!*" exclaimed Little Li on seeing it. "Our average annual yield has been around two hundred kilos per *mu*, but now you are cutting that figure by half! What a drop!"

This caused a general uproar. From the hubbub of voices there emerged two completely opposite views.

"We're a disaster area," argued Chou Fa. "As the old folk say, it takes three years' hard work to make good one crop failure. Let's not bite off more than we can chew. Better play safe."

"You think Old Li would agree to this?" someone asked.

"Of course. Because facts are facts," replied Chou Fa.

"Facts are facts, bah!" cried Little Li, staring Chou Fa in the face. "The fact is that you're leaving far too big a margin of safety. . . ."

While the argument was going on, the door flew open and in walked the brigade leader Li Chiang, his clothes covered with dust from the road.

"Thank heaven you're back, Old Li," cried Chou Fa in great relief. "Look, here's a notice from the commune."

Li Chiang took the notice and read it. "Good," he said cheerfully. "Let's go right away."

"But what production target. . . ."

"We'll do as our members want: Fix it in a realistic yet forward-looking way."

"How about my suggestion?" asked Chou Fa, showing Li his estimate.

"One hundred kilos?" Li Chiang shook his head and said in a serious tone, "If a man fails to do his best, he's a slacker. If he leaves resources untapped, he's conservative. This involves a matter of principle."

"A matter of principle?" Chou Fa flushed. "Then what do you think the figure should be?"

Li Chiang took up his satchel and nodded to the crowd, saying, "They've figured it out already, haven't they? Let's start, Chou, or we may be late for the meeting." He quickly turned and went out.

Chou Fa was in a quandary. He asked the accountant for some charts and figures to show the extent of the flood damage and crop losses. When he finally set out, he saw that Li Chiang was already out of the village and striding up the mountain path.

Later, hurrying into the commune's conference room, Chou Fa did not see Li Chiang at first; so he picked a seat in the front row. Then wiping his sweating forehead he looked around and discovered that the brigade leader was sitting at the very back of the room. Pointing at the empty place next to him, he beckoned Li Chiang to come over, but the latter just gave him a smile and kept his seat. Soon the meeting began with a report from the Party secretary. When Secretary Chang started to outline the Party committee's tentative proposals for each brigade's production plan next year, Chou Fa heard heavy footsteps behind him. He looked round. It was Li Chiang. Tapping Chou Fa on the shoulder with the brass bowl of his pipe, the brigade leader whispered: "Hey, don't say they're going to leave us out?"

"Never mind," said Chou Fa complacently. "Ours is a flood area so we can't boost production anyway."

It turned out as Li Chiang had feared. When Secretary Chang finished reading the names of the brigades followed by their respective targets, no mention had been made of Aochuangtai.

Li Chiang prodded Chou Fa again with his pipe. "You see, we're not on the list."

"Just as I thought," replied Chou Fa, much relieved. "It's because of our flood damage."

"Nonsense! Flood this year doesn't necessarily mean flood next year," retorted Li Chiang.

"Then I suppose they want to lighten our load."

"Lighten our load? Why? That means a heavier load for the other brigades."

The two of them were hotly debating this when the meeting broke up. Secretary Chang came over in high good humour and called out, "Well, Old Li?"

Li Chiang gripped the secretary's arm and demanded: "Why leave us out?"

"Your brigade has been hard hit by flood, so you're not being set new tasks," was the reply.

"What? No new tasks just because of a flood! Don't you know the saying: Heavy setbacks make a man stronger? It's true our land has been badly hit but our men are as tough as ever."

"Yes?" The secretary looked with concern at Li Chiang's flushed face. "The Party committee thinks you need to take it easy for a while after being so hard hit."

"Take it easy? We've a long way to go to catch up with the other brigades. How can we take it easy? Give us a target."

Li Chiang's determination and the serious way he spoke made Secretary Chang reply equally seriously, "How much do you think you can produce then?"

"Two hundred and fifty kilos per *mu*."

"Are you sure?"

"Our Aochuangtai soil is fertile, our men are tough," replied Li Chiang, a smile beginning to appear on his face. "We know how to cope after a flood."

By this time Chou Fa could contain himself no longer. He jumped up from his seat and blurted out: "No, no. After a heavy flood, how can we fix such a high target? Impossible, simply impossible!"

"It's not impossible," Li Chiang rejoined. "If we go all out, there's no hill that we can't climb over."

"That's the spirit." Secretary Chang nodded. Gripping Li Chiang's hand he added, "Come on, let's go to the Party committee to talk it over and see what specific measures you have in mind. The kind of spirit you have just shown is fine. We all need that spirit if we want to increase the output of the whole commune."

Li Chiang turned to take Chou Fa's arm and urged, "Come along too, Chou."

"I'm not up to shouldering such a heavy task."

"It's not just your job or mine to shoulder it. It's a job for the whole brigade."

Then Chou Fa reluctantly followed the other two into the office of the Party committee. . . .

Li Chiang's action won the support of the whole brigade. People said: "Good for Old Li! He's absolutely right. We Aochuangtai folk don't farm just to feed ourselves, we want to produce more for the state."

For a solid winter that year the whole Aochuangtai Brigade worked hard—levelling all the hundred or so low-lying fields around the village, making ridges between furrows and digging ditches and channels—to set up a drainage network. All these measures were calculated to prevent water-logging by heavy downpours or mountain freshets. "Let no water stay in the fields a minute longer than necessary" was their slogan. Sure enough, in spite of the usual heavy rainfall the following summer none of their plots was flooded and not a single plant was washed away. A good harvest was in the offing all around Aochuangtai. Even Deputy Leader Chou Fa, who had worried all spring about the production target, was now happy as a lark and no longer knitted his brows. Very often he would stand on the mountain slopes feasting his eyes on the thriving crops and lustily singing ballads of his own composition in praise of the leap forward they were making.

It was harvest time. The winnowing-machines whirred rhythmically while the threshers poured out golden grain under a blue blue sky.

Chou Fa was busy with his abacus. His deft fingers kept the beads clicking and rattling. After several days and nights of threshing, storing and weighing, the harvesting was complete. Silence reigned on the threshing-floor and in the adjacent store-house. The click-click of Chou Fa's abacus and the figures announced by the accountant had attracted the brigade members like a magnet. They gathered around the two cadres, eager to know the results of their calculations.

The accountant had reported his last figure. They were only waiting now for the deputy leader to reckon the average yield per *mu*. But Chou Fa kept manipulating the abacus as if he had got stuck at the last digit and found it hard to complete the calculation. What was the trouble? According to the abacus, the average yield per *mu* was 249.9 kilos, falling short of the target by one tenth of a

kilo. However, this discrepancy, though small, affected the reputation of Aochuangtai. Chou Fa did not know what to do. He recalled how he and Li Chiang had offered to fix a high production target at the commune office, and how later Li Chiang had said: "Our target's been approved at our own request, we must work hard. We have given our word to Secretary Chang to fulfil our quota." What was to be done?

"Well," Chou Fa told himself, "it's common practice in arithmetic to count fractions of one half or more as an integer in order to make a round figure." So he flicked one final bead on the abacus and announced: "Two hundred and fifty kilos per *mu*!"

The villagers' doubts had been aroused by Chou Fa's long hesitation. "No more no less, just up to the mark?" someone asked. "Old Li once said we should never overstate our production, not even by one gram, because every grain we produce represents the hard-working spirit and devotion to the revolution of us poor and lower-middle peasants."

"Yes, there's no mistake," responded Chou Fa loudly, pushing away his abacus.

On hearing this Little Li leapt for joy. He darted towards the stable, led out a waiting horse and mounted. With a flourish of his whip, he rode off like the wind to carry the glad tidings to the commune.

Now Li Chiang was coming back from a visit to some neighbouring brigades to exchange experience. On the way he was thinking over this year's crop and the steps to be taken next. Striding hastily over ridges and streams, before long he came in sight of Aochuangtai. Suddenly he heard drumming and gonging from the village. Curious, he put on a fresh spurt.

"Hey, Old Li, it's good to see you back," cried the villagers at the entrance of the brigade office.

As soon as Li Chiang entered, Chou Fa jumped down from the platform rigged up in the courtyard and pointed at the bunting spanning it. There was written in big characters: "In Celebration of Fulfilling the Production Target."

"Look," he said to Li Chiang with a smile. "We are only waiting for you to preside over the meeting."

"Oh?" Li Chiang beamed.

"We've fulfilled our task."

"Really?"

"It's the truth I'm telling you. The day before yesterday the secretary of the commune's revolutionary committee rang up saying they had decided to commend us. Tomorrow he'll be coming to attend our celebration rally. And he wants us to make a report on how we succeeded." Chou Fa grew more and more excited as he talked.

Li Chiang waited till Chou Fa had finished, then unstrapping his satchel said, "Let me see the books."

When he opened the ledger he saw neatly written there: Total weight: 500,000 kilos; Total acreage: 2,000 *mu*; Average yield per *mu*: 250 kilos. No odd numbers or decimals to spoil the effect! These neat round figures made Li Chiang suspicious. "Not a single kilo less or more?" he asked.

"No more no less, just right!" replied Chou Fa.

"Not even a single gram short?" Li Chiang persisted more loudly.

"Well. . . ." Chou Fa's eyes met those of Li Chiang. His heart missed a beat. He stammered: "No, not a bit short."

Li Chiang saw at once that there was something wrong. Frowning, he walked to the store-house, looked around and pushed open the door.

"What are you going to do?" asked Chou Fa in dismay.

"Check up to make sure that there's no mistake either way," Li Chiang answered, adjusting the scales to weigh the grain again.

At this Chou Fa realized that he could no longer fob the brigade leader off. He pulled him aside and whispered, "Don't weigh it all over again. We're a fraction short of the target — only one tenth of a kilo."

"But you reported two hundred and fifty kilos?"

"It was only a fraction short. If we count in all the inevitable losses during harvesting — in the fields, on the roadside and on the threshing-floor — that comes to more than one hundred grams per *mu*. Besides, nine-tenths can count as one. . . ."

"How could you do such a thing?" retorted Li Chiang, almost choking with disapproval.

At that moment Little Li and some others approached them.

"Don't worry," said Chou Fa in a low voice. "None of the commune cadres or villagers knows this."

"This isn't a question of the figures involved but of your attitude," replied Li Chiang sternly. "I've said many times that to make a false report whether to the commune or to our brigade members is a matter of principle."

"A matter of principle again!" Chou Fa raised his voice indignantly, seeing that the quarrel had come out into the open. "That's common practice in arithmetic. Besides, what does it matter, only a tenth of a kilo to a *mu*!"

"A tenth of a kilo is one hundred grams! Even one gram short won't do. It's like a race — you must take the last stride to finish."

The drumming and gonging subsided as the two brigade leaders argued heatedly, and the members began to gather round them.

"It won't do to play down a discrepancy, no matter how small," Li Chiang continued in a calmer tone. "Chairman Mao has said, **'Communists should set an example in being practical. . . .'** When you report even one gram more than what is actually reaped, you are ignoring Chairman Mao's instructions and casting away our Party's glorious tradition. We poor and lower-middle peasants till the soil to grow grain for the revolution. Every single gram is a contribution to the revolution. But when you report a hundred grams more than we actually reap, does this show our brigade's sincere feelings for the Party and the people?"

Every word of Li Chiang's had gone home to Chou Fa's heart, but he couldn't quite bring himself to admit his mistake. So he asked, "As it is, what do you say we should do?"

"Tell our brigade members the true facts and own up to the commune."

With a heavy sigh Chou Fa walked aside to squat down burying his face in his hands.

Li Chiang turned to the crowd then and said, "If we overstate as little as one gram, it's a fake. We Communists must do things hon-

estly: black's black; white's white." Then he walked over to pat Chou Fa on the shoulder. "Don't be pig-headed," he urged. "Tell our members the truth so that they can talk the matter over. I'm going to the commune to make a self-criticism."

With this he started to leave. But after taking a few steps he turned to Little Li who was standing puzzled near the platform. Pointing to the bunting above, Li Chiang told the lad, "Go up and take that down. Change the words to . . ." He paused a moment and then continued decisively: "Sum up Experience and Forge Ahead!"

"Fine!" exclaimed the villagers approvingly. Only Chou Fa was deeply perturbed by this change and the fact that the brigade leader was going to the commune to take the blame for his mistake.

Li Chiang hurried without stopping straight to the commune. In the commune office he found Secretary Chang. "We haven't fulfilled our target, Secretary Chang," he blurted out. "Our report wasn't truthful. We are short of the goal by a tenth of a kilo."

"What happened?" asked Secretary Chang, greatly interested.

Li Chiang told the whole story, concluding, "It was all my fault. I'd failed to convince our people of the importance of making honest reports." He suggested that the celebration rally decided on by the commune be turned into a meeting for another purpose.

All this time Secretary Chang had been looking appreciatively at this honest and trustworthy Communist. Clapping Li Chiang on the shoulder he exclaimed, "Good! We'll do as you say. Use what happened at Aochuangtai to point out the need to speak honestly, act honestly and be honest people. Come on, let's go to your village and make a success of the meeting."

The next day dawned clear and bright.

Having been previously notified by the commune, the first batch of leaders from over a hundred production brigades, big and small, arrived at Aochuangtai early in the morning — some on horseback, others on bicycles and still others on foot. They had come to attend a celebration rally at which Aochuangtai Brigade was to receive an award for having fulfilled its target in spite of handicaps. They were

surprised by the slogan over the platform: Sum up Experience and Forge Ahead!

"Strange. It doesn't look like a celebration meeting," remarked several brigade leaders.

Meanwhile, Secretary Chang had appeared on the platform. "Let's begin," he said. "But first I have to point out that the purpose of our meeting today has changed. . . ."

In absolute silence the audience waited, wide-eyed, to hear what was to follow.

"After a careful check-up, Aochuangtai Brigade found they hadn't reached their production target. Their average yield per *mu* falls short of the goal they set by a tenth of a kilo."

His listeners put their heads together again.

"Just one tenth of a kilo short? Too bad!" someone remarked. "One hundred grams isn't much. They more or less reached the target," another said, while some others clapped to express congratulations.

Secretary Chang raised his hand to silence them. "Even one gram less would mean falling short," he continued. "It's just like running a race — you must take one last stride to reach the winning post."

The audience quieted down again and fixed their eyes on the speaker as they weighed these words in their minds.

"I'm only repeating what Comrade Li Chiang said. The Party committee fully supports such an honest attitude and profoundly realistic spirit. Li Chiang, I think it would be better if you came now to explain."

Amidst warm applause Li Chiang stepped to the front of the platform, a yellow cloth bag in his hand. He was silent for a while, searching for words. Finally he burst out: "We haven't reached our goal. We've a step more to go!" At the same time he put the bag on the table and from it took some corn cobs, sorghum ears and soyabean stalks. Holding them up one by one for all to see he said, "Look, this shows how we failed—cobs bald at the tip, sorghum grains shrivelled and stunted soyabean stalks. These poor specimens I picked can only mean something wrong in our thinking!" He turned towards Chou Fa who was also on the platform and addressed him with sincere

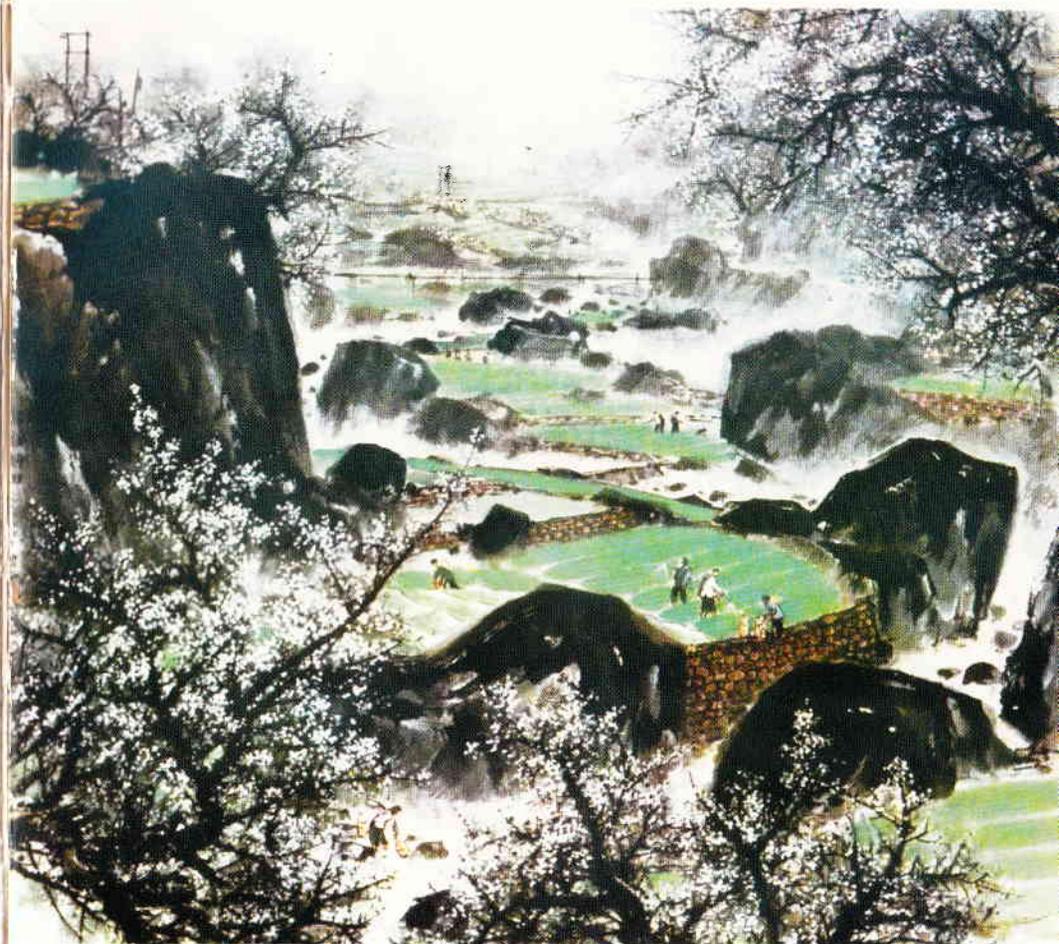
concern: "This is where our discrepancy lies. It may look small but it's very significant, and there's much we can learn from it. If we fail to see this, we're really blind and bound to go astray. We can't use so-called common practice in arithmetic to justify making a false report."

Chou Fa nodded, too agitated to speak. Putting one hand on his shoulder, Li Chiang continued, "Why did we fail? The key is water. These days I've been to various brigades and learned a great deal. I find that they not only store their water but try to make full use of it. But what have we done? Just tried to prevent water-logging by draining. We haven't made full use of the water so vital to our crops. Am I right, Chou Fa?"

Without waiting for an answer, Li Chiang went on: "When our sorghum began to ripen there wasn't any rain for a fortnight. Remember? These lean ears show that the plants were short of water. The same thing happened to our corn cobs; the bald tips are a proof. . . ." The more he talked the more animated he grew. Li Chiang, usually so reticent, held forth that day like water pouring from an open sluice. Finally he said, "What's to be done, then? Only one thing: recover what has been lost — invite the water we sent away to return." He tapped Chou Fa on the shoulder with his pipe. "How about it?" he asked. "Shall we lead back the river water?"

"I'm all for it!" Chou Fa answered with a smile.

Gripping his deputy leader's hand, Li Chiang laughed.



New Fields in Stone Valley (painting in the traditional style) by Lin Feng-su ►

*Lu Yao and
Tsao Ku-chi*

*An Old Eighth Route Armyman
Comes to Yen-an*

Down the clear highway
lined with poplars and willows
come PLA marchers to Yen-an
led by an old political commissar
who after thirty springs and autumns
marches a thousand *li* as if
to see his old mother; with a smile
asking Pagoda Hill if it
recognizes the "Little Devil"
of Eighth Route Army days.

Hills and streams
welcomed him, the Pagoda
looking down as if to hug him.
Political commissar? No!
We should just call him
"Little Cowherd", for was

there not that year of famine
when his parents died of hunger,
and he just seven years old
became an orphan, the savage
landlord making a slave of him
in exchange for back rent due.

Each day he herded cattle
by valley sides, each night
lying by an old cow for warmth
counting stars in the sky
weeping at times, and then
looking up at the Pagoda
and calling it "Mother",
no family folk, no name even
people just calling him
"Little Cowherd".

1935, and Chairman Mao came
to North Shensi; the Party
put my name in their "Family Records"
so now I return to look them up
for the Party is my family;
I was brought up on Yen River
water, steeled in the furnace
of revolution, going north and south
for decades; "Mother," how can I
forget the years I lived under
your hands?

I learnt to write
on birch bark, read the works
of Chairman Mao in cliff-side

caves, sharpened my weapons
and watered my horse beside
the River Yen; an old woman
at Date Orchard taught me how
to weave; an old man at Yangchialing
showed me how to grow millet;
so many times when as a messenger
I passed under the Pagoda
I saluted you, and you nodded;
then when the flames of the Resistance War
blazed, you sent your son
to fight at the front
and when I joined in a charge
on the enemy, red flag on shoulder
we braving the storm of enemy fire,
wiping him out, then would
the Pagoda often rise before my eyes,
the Yen River flow on into my heart.

Loving Yenan, thinking
of his old mother, not willing
to go from the old pagoda!
But now mother Yenan has
changed again, its new beauty
ever unfolding; smooth highways
reaching out everywhere, tall
buildings risen above poplars
and willows; where once but
thorny bushes grew, now
an iron smelt flows, and sparks
fly from steel furnaces; new
terraced fields wind up

a thousand hills, dams halt
summer floods in a thousand ravines;
flowers and fruit cover the hills;
lilting songs echo up the valleys.

Old memories, new songs
intoxicate him, and staring
up at the Pagoda, hot tears come;
lightly willow twigs
caress his face, as a mother's
fingers would to her child,
and the old fighter's heart
is moved, as he once more
listens to his mother telling him
to again drink of the waters
of the Yen, prepare and return
to the struggle.



Chang Chih-tao

Clear Springs in the Ordos Desert

Long, so long are canals carrying
waters out amongst the sands
of a seemingly borderless desert,
yet now one with silvery
streams gushing from springs.

Like pearls these spring waters
stream over the desert, making
a thousand bright girdles.
Just a fairy tale? Not so!
A dream? No again!

From ancient times down through
the generations, herdsman
have stared at mirages as if

they were peach blossom springs
of another world; ever have they
looked for the spring wind
and white clouds, as for
a longed for ship come to save.

Peach orchard in the heavens
a ship sailing into the desert;
each year the herdsmen's hope
vanished like wind and smoke,
never a breath of spring wind
freshening their hearts.

Herdsmen out in the desert
would travel great distances
to find some marshy pool; even
if they found a single drop of water
in this sea of sand,
to their hearts would come
a sweetness finer than honey.

The people had a proverb,
expressing their bitterness
"Just to find one patch
of green reeds here, wild
geese from the south weary
their wings in flying."

Old ideas, old tales now
part of a past chased away
like clouds before a hurricane;

today new life comes to us
its warmth melting the ice
that has frozen our hearts.

A miracle? Actually today
herdsmen hardly think that way!
Has some great cause brought it?
Yet really it is but a small success
when compared with the whole
revolution! Surely the coming
of clear waters into the Ordos
is but a starting point in the fight
to change all desert lands.

But when plans were first made
to master the desert, some said it
was just like a sea of fire;
others that to expect spring water
in the desert was like hoping for
the Milky Way to come down to earth.

The Party's teachings come
like the sun and rain;
Mao Tsetung Thought ever
a source of strength;
red flags lead and the people
surge on behind them, full
of spirit and determination.

Spades and shovels drive
deep into the earth; the desert

is forced, piece by piece,
to yield up green fields.

Waters so bright and clear!
How many long years have you
been held underground?
Farm lands, green fields
how could you ever have thought
to come into this desert?

Clouds in their varied colours
light up the horizon; wild geese
from the south settle on
the grassland; flowers in all
their beauty smile up at us,
and all over the land echo
songs of the people.

Li Kuang-yi

The Raftsman

Down swirling river waters
carried by a fast current
with an old cadre poling
on goes the raft.

Swiftly as a falling star
flashing through a blue sky
or like an eagle gliding
down a valley, it speeds ahead
carrying some of the fragrance
of forests, full of poetry, making
a real life picture.

“Where will this good timber
go, old comrade?” one asks, bringing
the usual reply, “For wherever
our country needs it.”

He poles through waves high
as little hillocks, waters
that swirl so fast they could
sink a feather; with a staunch
red heart he fights both wind
and wave, for he has toughened himself
to be as steel, just laughing
at difficulties, while doing his bit
for the whole world revolution.
Before liberation, he was
but a poor riverman, barefooted
the whole year, his few ragged
clothes worn by toil, body
thin after living off wild
water chestnuts.

Then he could not stand erect,
be himself; in this
whole world, with no place
to call home; never able
to come out of the dank mist, ever
amongst the waters struggling
against increasing bitterness....

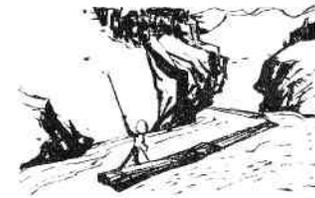
Until came the spring thunder
of revolution, and for him
a new world opened out; he
joining the Communist Party
fighting in the north, then
in the south without halt....

Today though his hair has
become grey, yet he is still

even more keen to carry on
revolution, making all say
"Always he will fight on,"
his spirit freshening the land.
Songs float over the river,
the raft is suffused in the colours of dawn,
tall poles as if propping up
heaven from earth, and all around
the waters ripple.

Driving down through the hazards
of gorges, negotiating
shallow sand spits, all with
a spirit as great as the river
that carries so many rafts.

Old comrade, why smile?
for all we can see is a raft
coming down through green hills
now riding on clear waters.



Tsui Cheng-chu

Weaver's Song

Golden thread
silvery thread
flash before my eyes;
shuttles, golden
and silvery too, weave
a myriad feet of cloth,
as if making thousands of songs
for the leap forward.

See how the colours
stream past like waves!
I feel as if I would like
to throw a shuttle right
up into the coloured cloud
and weaving in the Milky Way,
bring it down to earth.

Li Chun

Sentry Box Window

One square foot of window pane
in the sentry box, cleaned
by guards each day
making it shine ever brighter.

So small a pane, yet like
the frame of a lovely mirror
reflecting hills and streams
of the motherland into the hearts
of those who watch.

Just a little window pane,
Yet too like a radar screen
picking up the wiles
of the trickiest enemy.

Only a bright bit of glass
set in a sentry box window, yet
projecting the spirit, determination
of our fighters, their keen sight.

Truly an eye of our country, a
door window for our army men;
love for their people, hatred
for their enemy glittering from it.

Illustrated by Lu Yuan-lin



Tales

Kai Sheng

THE SAND-SPRINKLER

Liaopin Brigade now has a home-made sand-sprinkler. This machine, which scatters seeds mixed with sand, ensures the even and rapid growth of rice seedlings and cuts down on manual labour.

To tell the story, Chao Ta-tsai and Li Erh-feng who made the machine must first be introduced.

Chao Ta-tsai at the time was a young man of twenty-eight, taciturn but smart, adept in all sorts of farm work, whether ploughing, sowing, carting, threshing or making crates and baskets. He was a skilled blacksmith and carpenter too. He could make chests and trunks, hammer out a sickle or a hoe, weld and repair machine parts and utensils. If someone's transistor radio was out of order he was able to fix that too. If an alarm clock refused to work he could make it tick again, and if there was something other people could not handle he was always ready to help. Everyone in the village admired his skill and called him a "Jack of all trades".

Li Erh-feng was a young woman of twenty-five, open-hearted and outspoken. She rattled on like a machine-gun and, working,

went like the wind. Leader of The East Is Red Group in the brigade tractor station, she was a banner-bearer among the local women.

These two lived opposite each other and had hit it off well since childhood when they went haying and collecting manure together. When they were old enough to go to school they shared the same desk. After graduating from junior middle school in the county town they both returned to their village to become regular commune members. Later it was obvious that they made a fine couple. So it was with broad smiles of satisfaction that their two fathers, Chao Fang and the old Party secretary Li Cheng-yang, eventually announced the coming marriage.

Early this year during the preparations for spring ploughing, Old Chao noticed something unusual. Every evening after work in the fields, Erh-feng came to the Chao's house to talk something over with Ta-tsai in his room. Ta-tsai's mother said they were busy drawing diagrams. Old Chao thought this strange but decided to mind his own business. Then, however, he had a bright idea: Since the two young people had reached the age to marry, why not take advantage of the slack farming season for their wedding? He promptly climbed up to the rafters and took down some planks, good planks of fine-grained wood, which he had been saving for years to make a pair of marriage chests for his son.

Old Chao carried the planks to the west room where, as usual, he found his prospective daughter-in-law. Ta-tsai simply greeted his father with a smile. But Erh-feng clapped her hands and cried, "Uncle, you've brought these just in time. How did you know..." She broke off at a nudge from Ta-tsai.

Old Chao stood the planks against a wall and declared, "These will make you a pair of chests, which you'll be needing." Then off he went, obviously having no idea what the young couple were up to.

What Ta-tsai and Erh-feng had in fact been discussing was how to make a sand-sprinkler. Ta-tsai could do the blacksmith's work and the carpentering all right, but never before had he attempted to make anything like a sprinkler. Erh-feng had learned quite a bit about machinery at the tractor station, and in a scrap-box she kept



a few old nuts and bolts and used machine parts that might some day come in useful. So she was certainly the right person to help.

Erh-feng was hasty by nature. When she had first agreed to help Ta-tsai, she made straight for the door.

"Hey, where are you going?" Ta-tsai asked her.

"To tell dad and ask him for the materials we need."

"No, better not. Let's have a shot at it first on the quiet."

"What an idea!" Erh-feng spluttered, her eyebrows raised in surprise. "It's a good thing, isn't it? Why be so secretive?"

"Just listen," he argued, trying to calm her down. "There's no doubt the leadership will support us once they get wind of it. They'd buy us what we need. But that would mean whittling away the collective's funds and if our experiment failed we'd be wasting public property."

"But where shall we get all the steel and the wood we need?"

Ta-tsai laughed. He took down a sheet of rolled-up paper from the bookshelf, spread it on the *kang* and said, "Have a look at this." As Erh-feng bent over to look at the sketch he continued, "A home-made machine will be quite simple. We won't need nearly as much material as you think. If you bring all the used parts and scrap iron left over from repairing the tractors and we find some planks, that will do us."

"Where can we find planks?"

"My dad has saved some to make wedding chests for us. He refuses to use them for anything else. Now let's first look over this sketch. Then, when we've finished the designing, we'll talk him into giving us that wood."

So they had agreed to this and that was why Erh-feng had been visiting Ta-tsai in his room every day.

That evening after making many alterations, they had at last completed the sketch and decided to ask Old Chao for the boards. No wonder, then, that Erh-feng was delighted when he turned up with them.

Now that they had the boards Erh-feng hurried to the tractor station to fetch her scrap-box. By the time she returned Ta-tsai was finishing the carpentering.

When Old Chao woke up and heard the racket in his son's room he switched on the flashlight and looked at his alarm clock. It was nearly three o'clock.

"It's nearly done," he heard Erh-feng say.

"Hum, when my dad sees this in the morning...." Old Chao could not catch the rest of his son's reply.

Erh-feng began to laugh but abruptly stopped. Most likely Ta-tsai had warned her not to disturb his parents.

But Old Chao had heard enough. He was too excited to sleep any more. Many things flashed through his mind. He recalled how, following Chairman Mao's leadership, he had made revolution during the land reform; how together with Li Cheng-yang he had set up the first co-op with nothing but three mules and a cart; how he had contributed the timber he had prepared for the building of a



new house to make a shed for their first rubber-tyred cart. . . . He was proud to think that he had marched forward steadily along Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. Now his son had grown up and was working enthusiastically for the collective, doing everything he could to help the poor peasants. These thoughts were warm and comforting.

The noise from the west room disturbed these reflections. He started coughing and that aroused his wife.

"Listen!" he whispered to her. "It's long past midnight, but they're still busy making those marriage chests. What about cooking them some noodles to warm them up?"

Aunt Chao agreed, slipped out of bed and dressed, then went to the west room and pushed open the door. She stood open-mouthed with surprise at what she saw. The chest her son was making was wider at the top than at the bottom. It had two wheels too!

"What on earth are you making?" she burst out.

The young people were startled. "Well, er. . . this is a sand chest, aunt," quick-witted Erh-feng answered with a smile.

"Who ever saw such a chest? And with two wheels! They'll be handy when you move to your own place, eh?"

The two young people just laughed.

Seeing that she couldn't get a serious answer from them, the old woman shouted to the east room, "I say, old man, come quick and have a look. Your Jack of all trades has really invented something — a big chest with wheels!"

It dawned on Ta-tsai that his mother was upset. He hurriedly explained, "Ma, it's not a marriage chest. We're making a sand-sprinkler."

"A what? A sand-sprinkler?" echoed Old Chao as he entered. After one glance at the contraption on the floor he realized what they were up to.

Why do young folk keep biting off more than they can chew? Some years previously an experienced technician had come and tried to design a sprinkler. He wasted a couple of weeks and plenty of money but his machine would not work. This was no job for youngsters like Ta-tsai who had never had any training. It was just a waste

of good wood. Thinking in this way Old Chao nearly lost his temper but, in view of the presence of his future daughter-in-law, he simply grumbled, "Just look what a mess you've made!" Then he stumped back to his own room, sat on the bed and sullenly puffed at his pipe.

The old man's anger quickly put an end to Erh-feng's laughter. She stared at Ta-tsai and demanded, "Now what's to be done?"

But Ta-tsai, who knew his father, was not too perturbed. Once the old man took a notion into his head, neither nine oxen nor two tigers could move him. But if he didn't agree with something it was only a waste of time to try and talk him into it. It's not that dad begrudges us those boards, Ta-tsai thought. The trouble is he doesn't believe we're capable of making the machine. Once we succeed he'll soon stop looking vexed. So the young man said, "Let's keep cool and go ahead!" Bending down again he calmly went on with his work.

The next morning, the news that their Jack of all trades had produced a home-made machine spread like a gust of wind through the whole village. During the work break, a hundred or more people went over to the seedling-bed to watch it being tested. Fingering this part and that they nodded approvingly and declared that this was just the machine they needed. But when the box was filled with sand and pushed forward it not only failed to sprinkle the sand — the wheels refused to turn. They just dug into the earth like ploughshares.

"What did I tell you?" Old Chao wagged a finger at Ta-tasi. "You can't eat a sickle unless you've a curved stomach. Even if you can't count the stars in the sky, you should know how many bowls of rice you can eat a day. You're just not up to this job. So why try to cut a dash?"

Though Ta-tsai was not much of a talker, when a principle was involved he stuck to his guns. He looked up at his father, ready for an argument. "Trust you to say that, dad. But knowledge comes from practice. You don't learn how to make a thing after only one or two attempts. If you'll all point out where I've gone wrong instead of pouring cold water, we can make this sand-sprinkler work."

"What!" Old Chao's beard quivered. Angrily he asked, "Are you still going on with it?"

"Of course," affirmed Ta-tsai. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again."

"Well said," chimed in Old Secretary Li, jumping down from the bank. People made way for him. Striding up to Ta-tsai and Erh-feng he put his hands on their shoulders. "Your idea's a good one and you've done well," he said. "The Party branch committee will support you. Our brigade will guarantee any other material or funds you need. Be bold and stick it out." He paused to look at the two flushed young faces and then continued, "Chairman Mao teaches us, **'What really counts in the world is conscientiousness, and the Communist Party is most particular about being conscientious.'** So long as you follow Chairman Mao's philosophic thinking, sum up your experience, learn from the masses and practise continuously, there's nothing you can't do." He turned to Old Chao: "Old brother, come, let's have a chat."

This was the way the first test ended.

Late that same night when the village was wrapped in dreams, Ta-tsai and Erh-feng were still squatting on the floor, comparing notes and discussing the ideas others had given them. Why did the sand fail to sprinkle as it should? The noodles Aunt Chao had brought in for them had long since turned cold. Though she had urged them time and again to eat, it seemed that they had not even heard her. They mulled things over and over till suddenly Ta-tsai's face brightened.

"Suppose we add a vibration lever to the wheels?" he suggested. "That should loosen the sand and shake it out."

"I guess you're right!" exclaimed Erh-feng.

Striking the iron while it was hot, the two of them set to work to fix on a lever and loosen the axles of the wheels.

The following morning they pushed the improved sand-sprinkler to the seedling-bed once more. A crowd gathered to watch again. Ta-tsai pushed the machine forward and the sand ran onto the ground. Everyone applauded. But a closer look revealed that the sand had fallen in small heaps and ridges making the seedling-bed as uneven



as a ploughed field. Ta-tsai's shoulders drooped, while Erh-feng felt quite dizzy with exhaustion and disappointment. Old Chao sat on the bank smoking quietly.

Old Secretary Li broke the silence: "It's encouraging. You've

made quite an improvement today. Don't lose heart, you need to take another step."

All of a sudden Old Chao stood up, knocked his pipe against the sole of his shoe and dashed towards Ta-tsai in apparent exasperation.

You're my father, Ta-tsai thought to himself. You may be mad enough to beat me up, but if you try to stop me — nothing doing! I'm ready to argue this out.

But though Old Chao charged forward so fast, his old friend had caught the cheerful gleam in his eye. So the old secretary called out, "You've got the hang of it now, haven't you, old brother?"

Old Chao let out a roar of laughter. "You've guessed right, mate. You've guessed right. This is a worthwhile machine." Turning to Ta-tsai and Erh-feng he suggested, "All you have to do now is find a way to spread the sand evenly."

"That's right!" Erh-feng clapped her hands while Ta-tsai slapped his thigh. Both bent down to look at the lever. Finally Ta-tsai said, "If I fix a fly-wheel under here the sand should be scattered evenly."

"Right, that'll do the trick!" everyone agreed.

Another sleepless night. Ta-tsai's little room was jammed with commune members. Among them were Old Chao, Old Li and their wives. There were more suggestions, more enthusiastic ideas to prevent a further failure. The young couple worked till dawn.

At sunrise, the crowd gathered around the seedling-bed once again. Several nearby brigades had also sent members to watch the test.

On the rice seedling-bed the home-made sprinkler produced by two ordinary farmhands was whirring away. Seeds and sand were sprinkled evenly on the loose soft soil, ending for ever the drudgery of sowing by hand.

Illustrated by Tai Tun-pang

A Peasant Girl Goes to College (painting in the traditional style) by Wen Cheng-cheng ▶



**THE EAGLET SPREADS
ITS WINGS**

Hsiao-ying got out of bed at the crack of dawn when a tender new moon had but just dropped behind the roof top and the neighbourhood was still sound asleep. Why was she up so early? There were three reasons. First, today she would receive her red scarf and become one of Chairman Mao's Little Red Soldiers. Then, there was also to be a friendly ping-pong tournament among the Little Red Soldiers in her school. Not only was she to represent her own third form, but she was at the top of the list among the seeded players. Finally, her father, a railway worker often away from home was due back that day. Hsiao-ying loved her father and the exciting stories he told about guerrillas and the children's corps and about very clever scouts. . . . She never tired of listening to them. This time he had been away so many days, Hsiao-ying felt sure he would have some new stories to tell her when he came back. At least a good long one every single day. With so much to look forward to, no wonder the little girl could not sleep any longer. She was impatient for the day to dawn.

Having swept and cleaned up the front yard she went out, locking the street door behind her. But she only went next door. After digging a shallow trench around the big date tree in the middle of the yard, she took a small pail and went down the lane to fetch water, making three trips before she filled the trench. This done, she put away her spade and pail, went back to the date tree and nimbly climbed it. On the tree hung plump red dates, glowing like pretty little lanterns. But Hsiao-ying was not after the dates. She never picked a single one to eat, simply gathering up a few windfalls on the ground and putting them in a basket. Why, then, did she climb the tree?

The house next door belonged to the neighbourhood nursery which recently had moved into a new building close by. At present Granny Li, an army dependent, was living in it. Since the date tree was large and luxuriant, its branches spread out over the wall and the lane outside. In early summer when the dates were still green and small, mischievous children in the neighbourhood had tried to knock down some of the shiny green fruit, with their slings or with bamboo sticks. This worried Granny Li who told Hsiao-ying:

"The tree belongs to the nursery and we should all take good care of it. Besides, if boys keep slinging stones someone's bound to be hurt sooner or later. We ought to find a way to keep them from damaging other people's property." Hsiao-ying agreed with her. It looked very much like a bumper crop of dates that year and she determined that not a single one should be stolen or wasted. Even children shouldn't take what didn't belong to them. "I'll tell you what, granny," she volunteered. "I'll mount guard over the dates." And this was why she had taken the task of sentry upon herself.

At first, Hsiao-ying sat on her doorstep every day after school. When a child came in sight with a stick or sling, she'd shout, "Hey there, Little Hill, are you after the dates? I'll tell the teacher on you!" or "No, no, Ping-ping, don't do that. These dates are for the kiddies in the nursery." Later Hsiao-ying thought she might as well climb up into the tree to keep watch. Then other children would not dare to throw stones. Besides, she had a good view of the whole lane from up there and could see who was around. It seemed a good idea and her only regret was that she hadn't a red-tasselled spear, the



kind used by members of the children's corps when they caught traitors in the war days.

To tease her, some of the children played a trick on her. They would crouch close to the wall and inch their way along the lane so that they could not be seen till they were near enough to use a stick and knock down some dates. By the time Hsiao-ying discovered them and jumped down from the tree they had disappeared without a trace. It became a regular game of hide-and-seek.

Since the children all went to the same neighbourhood school, this matter soon reached the ears of the teachers. One day, Hsiao-ying's form-mistress told her, "It's very good to be responsible, protect the nursery's property and stop people doing what's wrong.

But starting squabbles isn't good. You should explain things to your schoolmates. Help them to understand."

Hsiao-ying mulled over what the teacher said. Back home she talked it over with Granny Li. They decided that in the afternoon when the children gathered to do their homework together, Hsiao-ying should invite some of the trouble-makers like Little Hill and Ping-ping home for a talk.

Hsiao-ying started by criticizing herself and her own mistake. Together they studied Chairman Mao's teaching about "**utter devotion to others without any thought of self**".

"I don't think this is such a small matter, this picking dates from the nursery's tree," Hsiao-ying went on to say. "Because, if we allow bad ideas to take root in our minds and think nothing of sponging on others and stealing community property, how can we become revolutionaries when we grow up?" The other children took her words to heart. They promised not to break branches or knock down dates any more and to try to be more disciplined in future.

But now it was autumn and the magnificent tree was loaded with large ripe red dates fine enough to tempt any undisciplined child to reach up and grab a few. Hsiao-ying couldn't help feeling uneasy. Whenever she had time, she still climbed up into the tree to keep watch.

This morning Hsiao-ying had just perched herself securely on a branch when she saw her father turning into the lane, his travelling bag in one hand. Eyes sparkling, Hsiao-ying cried out, "Papa!" He looked around but couldn't see his daughter. Before he had recovered from his surprise a peal of laughter rang out overhead. "Look up, papa. Here I am!"

He looked up. There was Hsiao-ying sitting astride the branch, her head cocked to one side and eyes shining mischievously. Her rosy cheeks were as red as the dates.

"Come down, Hsiao-ying," he called, beckoning to her.

Another peal of laughter. "Catch me, papa, I'm going to jump."

That Hsiao-ying was a tomboy was well-known in the neighbourhood. She sometimes jumped down from the high compound walls, something which few girls would attempt. Her father quickly put down his bag and stretched out his arms. But Hsiao-ying, arms

spread like a swallow's wings, had flown down by herself. She ran into her father's arms and locked her hands behind his neck while he kissed her rosy cheeks, tickling her with his unshaven chin.

"Where's your mother?"

"She's working the early morning shift today."

"What a bag of mischief you are, climbing the tree so early in the morning."

Looking up at him Hsiao-ying said seriously, "You've no right to say that before you've found out the reason. Understand?"

Her father gave her little head a gentle tap.

"Papa, guess why I climbed the tree. I'm sure you don't know."

Hsiao-ying looked most mysterious.

"Your mouth's watering for those dates."

"No, it's not."

"Then what were you doing up there?"

"Keeping guard."

"Guarding what?"

"The dates of course."

"Why do you have to guard the dates?"

"It's like this," Hsiao-ying said, then told her father the story.

"Good girl!" He stuck up his thumb approvingly. "My Hsiao-ying is doing the right thing."

"When you do something good, it's not because you want your father to praise you," Hsiao-ying answered seriously.

Her father chuckled. Only then did it occur to Hsiao-ying that she was holding him up. She took the key which hung on a string round her neck and unlocked the door for him. Inside, the ticking of the little alarm-clock reminded her of the time. As she snatched up her ping-pong bat and started for the door, her father pulled her back. "Where're you going?"

"To school."

"Why're you going to school on Sunday?"

"We Little Red Soldiers are having a ping-pong tournament."

"So my little girl's joined the Little Red Soldiers." Father was pleased. "Where's your red scarf?"

"I've only just been admitted. I'll be given my scarf at the meeting this morning. Our teacher wants us to get to school in good time because we're playing against the higher forms."

"So you're still a little sports-fan. Remember though, no tears if you lose."

Blinking, Hsiao-ying retorted, "Friendship first and competition second. Our teacher says the tournament is to strengthen our solidarity and help us to learn from each other so we'll all play a better game. We shouldn't be conceited if we win or disappointed if we lose. This is what we call 'Sports for the revolution.' See you later, papa!" She waved her hand and skipped out of the door.

Hsiao-ying's father was struck with the progress she was making and recalled with a smile that tearful match the previous fall.

The children in the neighbourhood had been playing table tennis. The excitement was at its height when Hsiao-ying, swinging her bat, asked to join in. Chen, the ping-pong "champion", looked scornfully at her. "You're barely tall enough to reach the table. Fancy daring to play with me."

Hsiao-ying pouted. Her eyes flashed with anger. "Who says I don't dare?" she fumed. "Dare you take me on?"

"If you want to play, let's start. But don't cry if you lose." There was more than a touch of condescension in the "champion's" voice.

Hsiao-ying swung her bat. "Come on, then. I'm not a cry-baby." The game started quickly and as quickly finished. The score was 3:0. Hsiao-ying lost.

"Now you know what it's like to be beaten," said the "champion" with a smug smile. "Bet you won't dare to compete with me again."

This was too much for Hsiao-ying. She was so furious, she couldn't finish her supper that evening and cried herself to sleep.

Now this little sports-fan was taking part in a tournament, her father thought fondly as he picked up the wash-basin. A whistle shrilled outside. Within a few minutes, the door burst open and Hsiao-ying rushed in again so suddenly that she knocked over the basin behind the door.

"What's the matter now, child? What's all this hurry?" he asked with a touch of annoyance.

"Granny was calling me. You see, I was only just round the corner when I heard granny's signal and I had to dash back." Hsiao-ying waved the small sack and ration-book in her hands. Before her father could put in a word she added, "Granny wants me to buy ten pounds of flour for her, but the shop doesn't open until eight. What shall I do, papa?"

Her father stared at the ration-book and sack which she had placed on the table in front of him. "Leave them there." He tweaked Hsiao-ying's plaits. "I'll buy the flour for her. But what's that signal you were talking about?"

"Ha, that's a secret I can't tell you." She was off again like a gust of wind.

Granny Li was not really related to Hsiao-ying's family. She was a widow who suffered so badly from rheumatism that she found it hard to get about. Her elder son, a soldier, was stationed far from Peking while the younger son who worked on the railway was often away from home. Of course both the railway administration and the local street committee saw to it that the old woman was given help in various ways so that she never had any real difficulties. But there were always odd jobs to be done and that was where Hsiao-ying came in. She went next door several times a day to help Granny Li with the housework or to run errands. She would sweep and dust, fetch water, buy flour, rice or fresh vegetables, carry in briquettes for the stove and remove the garbage. As she went in and out of the house, chatting gaily like a real grand-daughter, her voice warmed the old woman's heart. Granny looked upon the little girl as the apple of her eye.

Hsiao-ying's father bought the flour and took it next door. After a neighbourly chat with the old woman he asked about the signal Hsiao-ying had mentioned. Beaming, granny produced a shiny whistle from her pocket. "Hsiao-ying's such a clever child and so considerate. Knowing how difficult it is for me to get around, she lends me a hand. Once when my stove went out and I wanted some charcoal I called her. She was doing her homework and didn't hear me for some time. Later when she realized how long I'd been calling her, she had a brain-wave and gave me this whistle. Look,

here it is. I don't shout now, all I need is to give one blast and she's here in no time. . . ."

Hsiao-ying came home at noon, humming a happy tune, a brand-new red scarf round her neck and her cheeks flushed.

"Why did you join the Little Red Soldiers?" her father asked.

The little girl's answer was grave and solemn. "I joined because I want to follow Chairman Mao's teaching and be a revolutionary all my life."

"But how do you make revolution now?"

"I study well and make progress every day."

"Good. I must say I think my Hsiao-ying is a good Little Red Soldier."

Hsiao-ying smiled at her father's praise, her face as radiant as a freshly opened flower.

"Papa, guess if we won or lost this morning."

"You won!" Her father spoke with conviction based on the irrepressible joy in her voice and looks.

"This time you guessed right. We won three to two. I'm to be in the finals this afternoon."

Hsiao-ying quickly laid the table for lunch. Suddenly a gust of wind flung dust over the window-pane. Looking up, she noticed that the sun was already hidden behind dark clouds propelled across the sky by the rising wind. Swirling dust swept down the lane and thunder rumbled in the distance. Quickly Hsiao-ying put her rice bowl down. She darted past her father's chair, opened the door, leapt down the steps and reached the next yard just as Granny Li came hobbling out of her house.

"Don't come out, granny," cried Hsiao-ying. "It's going to rain. Be careful you don't slip." She picked up a stool, jumped up onto it nimbly and with one sweep of her arms pulled down the quilt she had put on the line to air earlier that morning.

As the wind tossed the branches of the tree some ripe dates were scattered in the yard. Hsiao-ying ran to pick them up as raindrops started to patter.

"Come in and don't bother about the dates now," said granny. "Pick them up after the rain."

It was only a short thunder-shower. The clouds rapidly dispersed. Soon the sun was out again and a rainbow arched over the roof tops. Raindrops like pearls still clung to the green foliage and the freshly washed dates looked redder and more luscious than before. There were quite a few more plump ripe dates on the ground. Hsiao-ying asked Granny Li for a basket and carefully picked them all up.

"Granny, let's wash these dates well then I'll take them to the nursery," Hsiao-ying suggested.

While they were doing this, in marched Little Hill and Ping-ping, each hugging a big straw hat filled with red dates.

"We picked these up outside your wall," they announced.



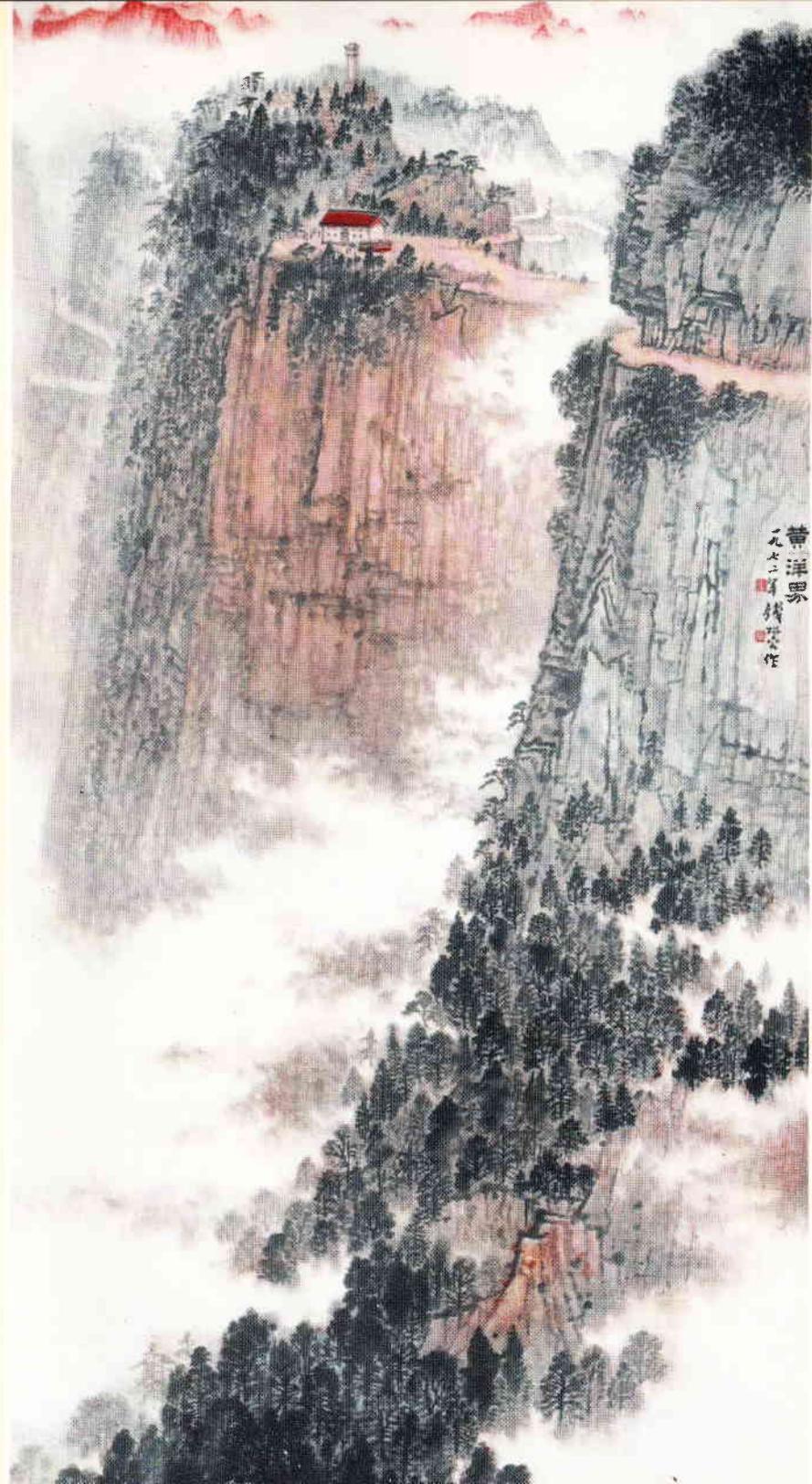
Granny Li's old eyes glowed lovingly. "What fine children they are!" she thought.

Looking at his daughter, Hsiao-ying's father felt that she had suddenly grown taller. Like a sturdy young shoot, she seemed to be growing almost visibly.

To be on time for her ping-pong match, Hsiao-ying dashed off to school. Arms outspread with her bat in one hand, she skipped along the road, now bright with sunlight. She was like an eaglet flapping its wings, learning to fly. Her bright red scarf fluttered like a dancing flame.

Illustrated by Lu Lu-hao

Huangyangchieh (painting in the traditional style) by Chien Sung-yen ►



*Many Hands Plant
Flowers of Friendship*

Gay banners float in the breeze,
Flowers bloom on every side,
So many flowers,
So many heartfelt smiles
Greet our friends from all parts of Asia.*
Bright blooms convey
Good fellowship
And silver balls link up
The whole wide world;
In the table-tennis courts
Spring reigns eternal,
For the seeds of friendship sown here

*Referring to the First Asian Table-tennis Championships held in Peking from
September 2 to 13, 1972.

Are watered by the fountains of our hearts.
Flowers fill the stadium,
Their fragrance wafts ten thousand *li* away;
These flowers of friendship
Sown by many hands
Will bloom through all
The centuries to come.



Wen Pien

Friendship and Unity

Welcome, friends from Asia!
From the bottom of our hearts
We welcome you,
With flowers and songs
We greet our well-loved guests.
From the dark green tables
Drift the voices of players
Comparing notes together;
Small snow-white balls
Are envoys of boundless friendship,
And different languages
Voice one common watchword:
 "Friendship and unity!"
Over high mountains,
Over mighty oceans

It floats over the Mediterranean
And Pacific,
Through trackless prairies
And palm-groves.
Listen! Throughout this vast region
Can be heard the tramp of feet
As the people of Asia march forward
In unity!

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien



Li Hsueh-ao

Written Deep Underground

The wheels race round,
The tip-cars speed like arrows,
As in the bowels of the earth
Deep underground
She keeps a firm grip
On her steering-wheel,
Revvng up for every climb
And steady as Mount 'Tai
On each trip down.
Every fragment of ore in the mines
Obeys her orders,
Her country's lovely landscape
Fills her heart,
And her path in life
Is paved with golden sunshine.

Born in the capital
She has seen stirring sights:

Artillery salvoes saluting National Day,
Boating on the lake in Peihai....
For her from childhood
Life was colour and joy;
Already in primary school
She had woven a garland
Of her high hopes and dreams.

How quickly those schooldays passed,
Then in a flash
Before she had time enough
To collect her thoughts
She found herself one of a host
Marching with banners flying to the mines.
There the old Party secretary led her
To a shaft and her new post —
Driving the tip-cars.
Such a long train of cars!
The sight
Was like cold water
Damping her fiery ardour.

“Driving tip-cars in and out
Is sheer drudgery.

Here in the black bowels of the earth
What poetry can there be?”

The secretary sensed her discontent,
Like a father he patted her shoulder.

“If it doesn't make sense to you, lass,
Sit down; let's talk of the old days.

The Ching kang Mountains cradled the revolution,
Then came the Long March to Yen an
And fighting here too in the Taihang Mountains;

All those years we were desperate for steel,
But we had no mines and no blast furnaces....
Now at last we have
Our own steel industry,
Our own steel mills, our own mines.
Chairman Mao's revolutionary line
Has helped us sweep all obstacles aside,
Has led us from victory to victory.”
Even the sparrows fold their wings
Perching on the rocks to hear
The heart-warming words
Of the old Party secretary,
While the hills around
Seem to be challenging:

“Young comrade, have you taken
These words to heart?
Will you act upon them,
Work like an ox for the people
And toil for the revolution?
Or will you be a little bird
Flitting from peak to peak?”

Wiping her tears

And smoothing her hair she answers:

“I shall remember
Every word you've said.
We owe today to our fathers
Who fought through long bitter years;
And how can we build socialism now
Unless we have steel mills and mines?
Party secretary,
Deeds speak louder than words;

Just watch me,
I shall never let the mine down.”
With that she jumps into the driver’s seat
Secretly vowing
To follow in her teacher’s steps
Deep into the mountain of iron.
Ever since that day
She has driven the train of tip-cars,
Ever since that day
She has battled in the mine.
In the bowels of the earth
Deep underground
She keeps a firm grip
On her steering-wheel,
Revvng up
For every climb
And steady as Mount Tai
On each trip down.
Every fragment of ore in the mines
Obeys her orders,
Her country’s lovely landscape
Is always with her;
Here are the artillery salvos
Of National Day,
The boating in Peihai;
All around her are stirring sights,
And everywhere she goes
Is paved with sunshine;
Everything here
Is dear to her heart;
Everything here
Is glorious poetry!

Li Hsueh-ao

Spring Comes to the Mines

Far and wide
The breeze of spring
Touches the willows with green,
Makes apricots bloom,
Bringing fresh loveliness
To each hill and stream.
Far and wide
Through the mines
Spring intoxicates like wine;
In the valley
New buildings rise high,
New housing to welcome new work-mates;
And further down

On a sunny slope
Is a window.

By the window
The old Party secretary
White-haired, bright-eyed,
Sits at his desk
Smoking a pipe.
His red pencil travels
Over a sheet of paper,
Marking here a hill
There a valley;
A hundred thousand
Families of workers
All have a place
In his heart.

As a boy the secretary
Went down the pit
In Anyuan Colliery;
When Chairman Mao came
Sunshine filled the miners' hearts
And taking up a spear
He joined the Red Army;
For scores of years
He campaigned over hills and plains,
Each step of the way he travelled
Dear to his heart.
On horseback he studied
Specimens of ore.

"China's countless mountains
Are treasure-troves," he said.
"Hidden in them is wealth untold."

The red banner of revolution
Brought in the spring,
The spring wind turned all things green.
The secretary climbing the Great Wall
Shed tears of joy
At sight of the hills
So rich in iron ore.
Stamping his foot he cried:
"Let's set to work!"
When he swung his heavy hammer
Birds took wing in fright,
Rocks trembled;
The thunderous clanging
Roused the ore
And, chortling, out it tumbled.

Wind blows —
The secretary stands unflinching;
Rain pours —
He leads each charge;
Snow falls —
He fights shoulder to shoulder
With the miners,
Sharing the same food,
Mingling his sweat with theirs.
His heart is one with the miners' ;

He is the dynamo
Activating the mines.

In the stillness of night
When the lofty sky is studded
With countless twinkling stars,
The night-shift workers
Passing his little house
Pause to look through the lamplit window.
They see the Party secretary reading
A book on Marxism;
Hard he studies
Revolutionary theory,
Chewing the cud
Of every sentence and word,
Loyal to Chairman Mao's teachings,
Holding his course
Through every raging storm.

Far and wide
The breeze of spring
Touches the willows with green,
Makes apricots bloom,
Bringing fresh loveliness
To each hill and stream.
Far and wide
Through the mines
Spring intoxicates like wine;
In the valley
New buildings rise high,

New housing to welcome new work-mates;
And further down
On a sunny slope
Is a window;
On the desk inside
Red flowers bloom!



Wen Shih-ching

New Puppet Shows

Dark clouds cover the sky. Eleven-year-old Kao Yu-pao has to work as hard for the landlord as the hired hands who are grown men. He carries heavy sacks of grain, hoes the fields and gets up late at night to feed the cattle. But however hard he works he cannot earn enough to stave off cold and hunger, and his master often whips and beats him. One day at midnight Kao Yu-pao is by the trough preparing fodder for the cattle when he glimpses someone prowling through the dark yard. Thinking it must be a chicken-thief, the boy hides behind the trough. To his surprise he hears the fellow imitating the crow of a cock, and the light of the moon enables him to recognize the landlord. Evidently this vicious tyrant has been rousing his hired hands every night in this way in order to get more work out of them. In-furiated by this despicable trick, the boy seizes a club to have it out with the landlord....

I was deeply impressed by the realistic portrayal of this poor boy's sufferings before Liberation in the puppet drama *The Cock Crows at*



A dancer in *A Golden Sun Shines in Peking*

New Puppet Shows



Kao Yu-pao and the hired hands swing their clubs in *A Cock Crows at Midnight*



The director and the puppeteers hold a discussion



The puppet orchestra



A puppet show

Midnight based on the novel *My Childhood*.^{*} It seemed incredible that any puppet could perform such complicated actions and look so human. After seeing the performance staged by the Peking Puppet Company, I went backstage where I received a cordial welcome from the puppeteers.

I found the backstage similar to that of other forms of drama. There were coloured lights trained at different angles, while the place was cluttered with stage properties of every kind — straw huts, cowsheds, mountain boulders, trees and so forth. Lantern-slides were at hand to produce the effect of drifting clouds and running streams on the back-cloth. The wooden puppets which I had seen moving about so nimbly on stage were now propped up motionless on their stands, while the manipulators who had given life to them were busily packing up the stage properties.

I examined the head of the puppet representing Kao Yu-pao and found it ingeniously made of papier-mache, looking thoroughly realistic. In addition to puppeteers, this company includes skilled handicraft artists who make the different puppets and design their costumes. There is also an orchestra composed of twenty musicians who play the accompaniment for the show offstage.

Puppet shows in China have a history of well over two thousand years. But in the past the exploiting classes looked down on this art created by the labouring people, and puppet troupes had a hard time making a living by touring China's small towns and villages. As a result the art failed to develop and the number of artists diminished, so that by the time of Liberation there were only three forms of puppet shows left: puppets on sticks, glove-puppets and marionettes moved by strings.

The year 1949 marked the start of a new chapter in the history of this popular traditional art. Puppet companies were set up in Peking, Shanghai and other major cities, and new puppet artists were trained. However, owing to the interference of the revisionist line in literature and art the puppet shows did not really serve the workers, peasants and soldiers or socialism.

^{*}See *Chinese Literature* No. 6, 1972.

During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution members of the Peking Puppet Company went to factories and villages to live and work with the labouring people. They gained a deeper understanding of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in literature and art, and on this basis they have made bold innovations in their art. They have now stopped performing reactionary feudal plays about the emperors, princes, generals and ministers of old and so-called talented scholars and beauties. Instead they are depicting the workers, peasants and soldiers of today.

The puppets used by this company are mounted on sticks with their arms attached to two wires and manipulated by artists behind a curtain under the stage. Previously one wire controlled the puppet's head and two other wires its arms. By this means it was possible to perform certain conventional motions from traditional drama such as lifting the skirts of a robe, waving its long sleeves, straightening a cap or stroking a beard. But this simple wiring was inadequate to portray the heroes of our present-day socialist period. So now the artists have given the puppets movable hands with movable fingers, enabling them to stretch out or withdraw their hands, clench their fists, pick up tools, take off their coats and hats or smoke a cigarette. They have also refined on the heads and added strings to make the puppets roll or close their eyes, open their mouths or turn their heads. All this renders the puppets more lifelike and better able to express a wide range of emotions.

I saw a puppet orchestra in which twelve new puppets, moving their fingers and wrists, perform like real musicians on the violin, oboe, flute, Chinese *erb hu* fiddle and other instruments. The puppeteers not only sing and speak for the puppets but have to express their appropriate feelings. Thus when the puppets turn or fight, the artists manipulating them tend to make similar movements; for only when these artists identify themselves with the puppets can they make the performance realistic and moving.

Our great leader Chairman Mao has called on us to make the past serve the present and to weed through the old to produce something new. The Peking Puppet Company by carrying out these ins-

tructions has assimilated and further developed many traditional techniques, making them serve the new contents. For example, in the Tibetan song and dance item *A Golden Sun Shines in Peking*, the artists have improved on such conventional gestures as sweeping the long sleeves. They have also made successful innovations in the puppets' features, stage lighting, scenic effects and the musical accompaniment.

The new puppet shows are very popular and have a particularly large audience among Chinese children. They are proving an effective means of educating the younger generation.



Innovations in Traditional Painting

Our experience in painting in the traditional style during the last year has deepened our understanding of Chairman Mao's directives **"Make the past serve the present and foreign things serve China,"** and **"Let a hundred flowers blossom; weed through the old to bring forth the new."** We are convinced that this is the only way to revolutionize our traditional art.

Renegades like Liu Shao-chi and Chou Yang have consistently opposed the policy of weeding through traditional Chinese art to produce something new. Sometimes they adopted a nihilistic attitude towards all traditional painting; at other times they attempted to take over everything from the past, urging artists to "preserve the whole ideological system of past ages in today's literature and art". Occasionally they advocated innovations too, but instead of stressing the revolutionary content they gave all their attention to form: composition, line drawing, colour, brushwork and so forth. As a result they failed both to reject what was outworn and to produce anything new. The aim of these renegades was to maintain the domination

This article was written by a group of painters of the traditional school in Kwangtung Province.

of the traditional school of painting by the ideology of the landlord and bourgeois classes, to facilitate a capitalist restoration.

Historical materialists admit that art develops on the basis of its national traditions; hence we must discriminate between what is good and what is bad in traditional art, rejecting the dross while critically assimilating what is useful for us. The old ideology and old content reflected in the traditional paintings of the past are mostly decadent. Some, it is true, reflect the lives of the labouring people of that time and convey a sense of revolt against the ruling class; but even these good works with their relatively democratic and revolutionary features are still basically different from paintings of our socialist period. However, we can and should critically inherit and use as examples certain traditional art forms and techniques. As Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Nor do we refuse to utilize the literary and artistic forms of the past, but in our hands these old forms, remoulded and infused with new content, also become something revolutionary in the service of the people."**

China's new socialist painting, under the guidance of the proletarian world outlook, must reflect our great socialist revolution and socialist construction, create heroic images of workers, peasants and soldiers, and remould and further develop the old art forms. Only so can we create the best possible artistic form to fit the revolutionary political content.

In recent years many painters in the traditional style have gone to the countryside or factories to be re-educated by the workers, peasants and soldiers. The excellent progress they have made both in their political thinking and in their experience of life has laid a certain ideological foundation for renovating our traditional art, and they are eager to reflect different aspects of our great socialist revolution and socialist construction. Those artists who formerly could only depict daily trivialities or express their personal feelings are now endeavouring to portray spirited heroes. Those who specialized in painting withered trees, grotesque rocks and scenes of desolation are now devoting themselves heart and soul to creating works with a new content — the mighty construction projects in industry and agriculture. Other artists, using traditional techniques, are tack-

ling great themes from revolutionary history which were hitherto considered too hard to express. It is difficult, naturally, to find ready-made methods of expression in traditional technique. As the content of art changes, the contradiction between the old form and the new content is bound to crop up. The newer the content, the greater the contradiction. The only way to solve this contradiction is by constant practice and innovation, by evolving different modes of expression to present the new content and new images. For example, the better to convey the spirit of heroic characters, we have combined the traditional use of strong colours with the Western-style depiction of light and shade, of warm and cold colour-tones. In brief, we employ all manner of techniques, old and new, to portray the spirit of China's workers, peasants and soldiers and give expression to the spirit of our new age.

To make innovations in traditional painting, we must first of all have a new ideological content. But taking themes from present-day life does not necessarily represent new thinking. If we choose only unrealistic themes and characters and use artificial or unnatural postures instead of lively images, the result is bound to be insipid. The only way for an artist to do justice to a new theme is by delving deep into the subject and, after painstaking study, choosing appropriate raw material to create artistic images which are truly typical.

Our second requirement is new artistic forms. Because a new theme will still fail to make a good picture if we lack rich artistic language in which to express it. Some works have new contents yet strike us as stereotyped. For instance, if we remove the new reservoir or new railway from certain landscape paintings, they appear no different from previous traditional works. Some paintings may depict present-day characters against an ancient background; and these, if the human figures are taken out, are simply imitations of traditional landscapes. This comes about when artists fail to make a profound criticism of the old forms and techniques in traditional painting and remain fettered by them. To make innovations in traditional painting we must, on the one hand, discover new themes through practice; on the other hand, to express this content we must create new forms based on the life of the masses of this period of

history, striving to achieve the unity of revolutionary political content and the best possible artistic form.

However, in our work of innovation we cannot cut ourselves off from the past or paint in a vacuum, ignoring the special features and style of Chinese art. Through long centuries of history we have evolved our distinctive national form with a vivid Chinese style and spirit which is loved by our people. We must study the laws governing traditional art. This does not mean fettering ourselves but will enable us to use these laws more successfully and freely to express our new ideological content, so that in our practice we continue to enrich and further develop our national characteristics.

For example, in traditional Chinese painting we stress both form and spirit, emphasizing the need to express the essential spirit of the objects depicted. We want artists to have a good knowledge of the structure, composition and special features of their subjects, and to pay particular attention to portraying the spirit, temperament, appearance and mood of the characters.

Traditional Chinese painting sets great store by concise brushwork, using a few strokes to convey complex images. It also emphasizes contrasts such as density and sparseness, solidity and space, skilfully achieving a harmonious relationship between the main subject and subsidiary objects, between lightness and weight, fluidity and compactness. All these traditional methods have a scientific basis and we must learn from this valuable experience. The brushwork techniques evolved by Chinese painters of old were distilled from their practice, but unless innovations are introduced these old techniques are inadequate to express life today. If we simply take over techniques created to depict feudal court ladies to portray our modern working women, the result will be disastrous. Conventions are needed because conventions reflect objective reality, but we cannot let art become wholly conventional, as that would be formalism quite counter to the truthfulness of life. No conventions are permanent: All must change and develop in the course of history. The old masters cannot supply us with the means to depict today's steel furnaces and terraced fields; these must be created and perfected by artists of our generation. Thus while making a serious study of the laws governing

traditional Chinese art and critically assimilating past conventions, we must continue to invent new methods of expression.

As for foreign art, we must also reject its dross and absorb its fine essence. Chinese painting has its own special characteristics, but certain laws of art are applicable to both Chinese and foreign art. We should therefore take over the best features of foreign painting to enrich our own technique. But this again calls for discrimination, and we must digest the good points of foreign art well to make them truly our own. For instance, the sketching of human anatomy and the study and application of colour are good things for us to learn from Western art. In the process of critical assimilation we must conform to the aesthetic tastes of our people and the special characteristics of our traditional art. Some fear that the study of Western painting techniques may lead to the loss of our own distinctive style, to something which is not "pure" Chinese art. Actually, if we look back at the historical development of our national art, we can see clear evidence of foreign influence as early as the fourth century A.D. in the Tunhuang mural paintings. A national style of art can never develop in complete isolation from the outside world. All nations must absorb good things from abroad and incorporate these in their own art. Of course, to ignore the special characteristics of our own national traditions and take over or copy foreign things uncritically would be wrong. Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Uncritical transplantation or copying from the ancients and the foreigners is the most sterile and harmful dogmatism in literature and art."**

The work of critical assimilation and innovation in the realm of traditional painting is an arduous, painstaking task. To revolutionize traditional painting, we must first revolutionize the ideology of Chinese artists and raise their political consciousness in carrying out Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line on art as well as general directives and policies. China's painters must have a sound political grounding; at the same time they must work hard to master basic techniques of their art and become true adepts. Only when we combine the correct political ideology with a mastery of artistic technique shall we be able to hold the art front firmly for the proletariat and working people.

Creating New Paintings in the Traditional Style

I was a painter of the traditional school for more than thirty years before Liberation. Since at that time I had the old way of thinking, the contents of my paintings were also old and I restricted myself to the use of the old techniques handed down from the past.

After Liberation I studied Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art*. I began to realize that for more than thirty years I had been serving the landlord class and the bourgeoisie, but that now I should act on Chairman Mao's instructions and serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, serve the politics of the proletariat. To me at that time this seemed a simple matter. After having mastered the traditional techniques in more than thirty years of painting, it would surely be easy for me to use my art to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. Actually, it was by no means as simple as that. The problem was that my ideology needed to be remoulded: I must gradually establish a proletarian world outlook. If my ideology remained unchanged and I failed to shift my stand to the side of the masses, even if I chose new themes my mode of expression would still

be old and I would be unable to convey the new spirit of the age. In the course of study I also realized that political content was the first thing to consider in any work of art. I began to regard my painting as a political task assigned to me by the Party and the people.

Chairman Mao has taught us: **“If our writers and artists who come from the intelligentsia want their works to be well received by the masses, they must change and remould their thinking and their feelings.”** Change in thinking and feelings is the crux of the matter. This can only be achieved by making a serious study of the works of Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao and of our society, by going deep among the masses and plunging into revolutionary struggles. Although I am growing old, I am determined to remould myself. To help me do this the Party has given me opportunities to travel all over China, visiting places of significance in the history of our revolution and keeping in touch with our mighty socialist construction in order to share the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses. This has proved a very great help to me in my work.

During the last twenty years and more of painting, the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary thinking on art has helped me to solve many problems. Formerly I had confined myself to traditional techniques, accepting the heritage of the old masters in its entirety. Now I discovered that this method of painting was inadequate to express our wonderful new socialist period. However, it would not do to negate all past technique, for in that case I would have nothing on which to build. I was on the horns of a dilemma until Chairman Mao's directive to make the past serve the present and to weed through the old to bring forth the new made me see light.

Ancient and modern, old and new are opposites but there is a dialectical relationship between them. The important thing is to make the old serve present-day needs, to reject the dross of the past and to let something new emerge from past traditions. To paint in a Chinese style, we cannot and should not discard all past traditions, but we must assimilate them critically with the help of proletarian ideology. Then we can make the past serve the needs of our revolutionary masses today. We can use traditional techniques, but it must be our aim

to create something new. The world is constantly developing, and as art's content changes so must its form. To depict the new world, we must constantly weed through the old to produce something new. This is the only way to retain the vitality of traditional-style painting.

While being re-educated by our workers, peasants and soldiers, I have tried to revalue old conventions by testing them against real life and so, through practice, to create new techniques. Guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on art, after much study and practice I have made some progress, discovering certain ways to renovate our traditional school of painting. For example, when I paint some place renowned in the history of our revolution, I try to achieve the unity of revolutionary political content and fresh artistic form by using bright warm colours. Thus *Morning Sun in the Mountains* glows with vivid cinnabar and azurite, two traditional colours. Since both real life and traditional technique provide such strong vivid colours, on the base of the requirements of the theme I made use of traditional treatment.

I can cite another example in my painting *In Praise of Yenan*. The old masters used sharp abrupt brush-strokes and a rough surface to depict the “wrinkles” in mountain rocks, but there was no technique in traditional art to portray the undulating contours of the loess plateau. In order to give praise to Yenan the former centre of our revolution and our great leader Chairman Mao, I made up my mind to disregard tradition and find some new mode of expression. Accordingly I invented a new type of “wrinkle” to depict the loess plateau of northwest China. This was another of my experiments.

Not long ago I decided to paint the scene at Huangyangchieh in the Ching kang Mountains described in the famous lines Chairman Mao wrote in the autumn of 1928:

**From Huangyangchieh comes the thunder of guns
Announcing the enemy's flight into the night.**

I went to Huangyangchieh. It stands impressively on the crest of a mountain overlooking a deep chasm. In my painting I look upwards from the foot of the mountain to emphasize the height.

There are a few clouds in the valley, and the peak looms magnificently above the clouds, while the bamboos and trees which grow in green profusion set off the powerful grandeur of the view. While painting I recalled Chairman Mao's directive to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army in those days to smash the Kuomintang "encirclement" campaign, "**Rolling back the enemy as we would a mat.**" My heart overflowed with admiration and I burned to give praise to our great leader and express the majesty of the scene.

I am now seventy-four years old. But I have determined to study and improve my art as long as I live, plunging myself whole-heartedly into the revolutionization of the traditional school of painting. I mean to devote my whole strength to painting the new scenes in our motherland in this socialist period, creating paintings which have a distinctive national style.

Chronicle

Shanghai Dance-Drama Troupe Returns from Japan

Having concluded its friendly tour of Japan, the Shanghai Dance-Drama Troupe returned to China on August 16. This troupe went to Japan on July 4 at the invitation of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association. During its visit the troupe performed for the Japanese people the revolutionary ballets *The White-Haired Girl* and *Red Detachment of Women* and the piano concerto *The Yellow River*.

Exhibition of Photographs and Paintings of Viet Nam

An exhibition of photographs and paintings by Chinese journalists and artists who have visited Viet Nam opened at the Peking Art Gallery on September 1.

More than 140 exhibits vividly reflect the heroism of the Vietnamese fighters and people in war and productive labour and their firm resolve to battle on and defeat the U.S. invaders.

The exhibition is being held under the auspices of the China-Viet Nam Friendship Association and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries in celebration of the 27th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.



Directing the Traffic (oil-painting)

by Kao Hung

PLA Art and Photography Exhibition Concluded

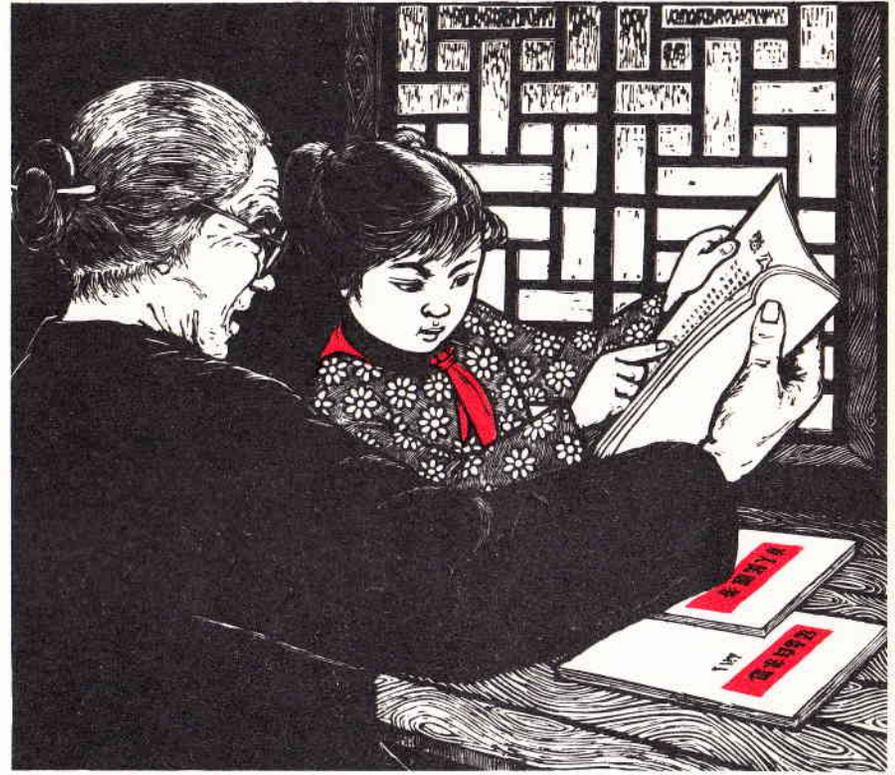
The art and photography exhibition of the Chinese People's Liberation Army held in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art* was concluded on August 23. Since its opening in Peking on May 23, this exhibition had been visited by some 670,000 people, all of whom were impressed by the fine works displayed. During

the exhibition, leading organizations of different sections of the People's Liberation Army arranged for many professional and amateur artists and photographers to come to Peking to see this exhibition and to discuss their own experience in work.

New Developments in Chekiang Handicrafts

Chekiang Province, rich in resources, is famous for its handicrafts. The people there have long used stone, bamboo, wood, straw, metal and other materials near at hand to produce fine handicrafts. These include Chingtien stone carving, Tungyang wood carving, Wenchow pottery, lacework, embroidery, Lungchuan celadon, woven bamboo and straw objects and inlaid bone and wooden articles. Now there are also new types of handicrafts such as carpets, painted eggs and shell carving.

The Chekiang handicraft workers keep making innovations as they strive to raise the artistic level of their crafts. For example, the workers in the Shenghsien Bamboo Works have produced more than fifty varieties of woven bamboo-ware including vases, bowls, pots and cases in the form of lifelike birds, beasts and fish. These beautiful objects which serve a practical use are widely popular.



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Grandmother and Grand-daughter Study Together (woodcut) by Hu Wang-shu



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