

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Spring Festival (New-Year picture)

by Ma Yun and Yeh Chien

STORIES

Hsi Hui-ting

Four Trips to a Desert City

It was on a hot summer's day that I first went to the new desert city, which, to be exact, only existed on paper then. With our designing group's blueprints for the non-ferrous metallurgical enterprise in hand, I set off to ask the builders for their comments.

When I got off at the bus terminal at the edge of the desert, a middle-aged man dressed in a thick sheepskin coat ran up to greet me, leading two camels.

"You must be Engineer Tang."

I looked him over. Broad-shouldered, husky, with warm, deep-set eyes in a bronzed face, he looked like a local peasant. Before I could reply, he'd got the camel ready and was ordering it to kneel down.

"Please get on, I've come to take you to construction headquarters."

I eyed those two huge animals and hesitated.

"Don't be afraid. You'll be more comfortable than in a sedan-chair." He helped me climb up and we set off side by side.



For the first time in my life I was travelling across the boundless desert. My initial uneasiness was soon dispelled by my warm, open-hearted companion. In high spirits, I turned to ask him:

“Are you a native of this place, comrade?”

“Yes!” he answered proudly as if I’d praised him for something, then mopped the perspiration from his face. “Born and brought up here,” he continued with a hearty laugh.

The sun blazed and waves of hot air rose from the ground burning my face. As I gazed at the desert I exclaimed: “Water is vital!”

“Water?” He took a flask from his belt. “I have some for you.”

I cast a glance at that honest face. “I meant that we need a lot of water to build big factories here.”

“Don’t worry, comrade,” he replied. “There are more than enough sources of water around here. When the commune members heard a factory was to be built in the vicinity, they began mobilizing at once to build reservoirs and dig trenches for the water pipelines. In a word, water will come in good time.” He tossed his coat on to the hump behind him.

“Why carry a sheepskin coat in such hot weather?” I asked curiously.

Shooting a glance at my clothing, he laughed. “I brought it along for you. The weather’s extremely changeable here. One minute

it’s hot, the next the wind comes up and it begins snowing. A newcomer has to be careful.”

“Thank you,” I responded. “Your leadership’s too kind; not only have they sent you to meet me but they’ve thought of absolutely everything. I’m most grateful.”

“And sometimes the air’s so close, it’s almost suffocating. That’s when it’s the worst here.”

“Because of low atmospheric pressure,” I explained.

“Yes, that’s it.”

Several green tents appeared in the distance. I got as excited as a swimmer who, lost in the vast ocean, suddenly spots a small island. “People seem to be living there!” I exclaimed in delight.

“That’s right,” he beamed. “The desert city construction team lives in those tents pitched where the main street will be. That one with the red flag on top is the ‘guest house.’” He cupped his hands to his mouth and boomed: “Hey! Engineer — Tang — is — com — ing!”

His voice was still echoing when door curtains swung aside and people swarmed out. Friendly eyes smiled at me; and hands shot out to greet me. I was led to the guests’ tent, where my “local” friend fetched a basin of water, urging me to have a wash. The desert people’s hospitality warmed my heart.

“I don’t know how to thank you for all you’ve done for me, comrade,” I said to my “local” friend. “By the way, do you know where Engineer Chao is? I’ve brought the draft plan for the new city and I’d like to go over it with him.”

“Chao Fa?” He grinned at me. “He’s both far away and very near.”

“You’re Engineer Chao?”

He nodded.

I couldn’t believe my eyes. So this was worker-engineer Chao Fa!

I thought back to the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution when the workers rose to criticize the revisionist line in our institute. Chao Fa was among them. He put up a most caustic big-character poster denouncing my mistakes in designing a metallurgical factory. My plan had meant using many fields of Fire Dragon

Production Brigade and uprooting many of the date-tree windbreaks with serious consequences for the brigade's production. The factory's smoke and liquid wastes had ruined the crops and trees in the vicinity. Chao Fa had earnestly written in conclusion: "The Cultural Revolution, initiated and directed by Chairman Mao himself, has shown us a bright road in industrial designing. We warmly welcome the engineers who designed the factory to come to Fire Dragon Valley and join us in devising a way to get rid of pollution."

As I hadn't the courage to accept that challenge, I'd refused, making up some excuse. I learned later that he and his comrades had transformed the factory, completely solving the problem of pollution. In addition, after two years' hard work, shoulder to shoulder with the brigade members, they'd managed to restore the crop yield to its original level. They provided agriculture with chemical fertilizer, machines and electricity.

As these thoughts ran through my mind, my face turned a bright red before this worker-engineer whom I'd taken for a "local" peasant. But he grasped my hand, warmly declaring: "Old Tang, I'm truly happy to meet you here on the desert. Without the Cultural Revolution, this meeting wouldn't have been possible. I would have introduced myself sooner, but I wanted to have a chat first to break the ice."

"Quite right," I responded frankly. "I wouldn't have known what to say if you'd told me point-blank."

"We're here today to build a new city in the desert, we're comrades-in-arms now."

"Comrades-in-arms." What a heart-warming expression!

Having washed my face, I took out the designs and spread them out on the ground, then briefed him on the plan covering everything from the lay-out of the city to the site of the metallurgical plant. Chao not only examined the drawings in detail, but took into consideration every aspect from the overall point of view to the smallest details. Every comment he made showed good sense and convinced me that he had rich experience. Thinking we'd wind up the discussion there, I began to fold up the drawings, but Chao stopped me.

"Shouldn't there be one more drawing?"

"What drawing?"

"The one for the shelterbelts."

"Oh, that's not our department. Later on, the city planning group or the afforestation committee will take care of that."

"You can't say it's our department or another's." He leapt to his feet, waving his arms. "Every aspect of building this new city concerns all of us." He suddenly stopped and squatted down to roll up the plans. "How impolite of me to forget you're our guest. You must go and eat now. Then have a good night's rest. Tomorrow morning, I'll show you round the suburbs of the new city."

A surprise was in store for me the next morning. We were walking across that sea of sand towards a ridge. When we reached the top, a dense forest suddenly appeared below and farther in the distance clear water gurgled in ditches and canals — a beautiful lush landscape! "Marvellous!" I exclaimed. "Really marvellous!"

"That's Fire Dragon Brigade."

"Fire Dragon Brigade!" I repeated mechanically. "Old Chao, you've brought me here on purpose to remind me of..."

"So you still remember that, eh? Regard it as a blunder of Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line." Resting one hand on a date tree, with the other he pointed to the forest stretching into the distance. "The poor and lower-middle peasants of the brigade have re-planted the shelterbelt and built up their socialist new village, making new contributions to the revolution."

"This really is a case of 'seeing is believing'!" I exclaimed, carried away by the sight. "Of course, shelterbelts are vital to agriculture."

"And to industry too," he added quickly. "If we don't stop the sand-storms, both our factory and the machines will be damaged too. And our city will disappear under the sand."

Thinking that adding a few shelterbelts to the plan was a simple matter, I assured him: "Of course, I'll draw up a plan. It's not difficult. Don't worry. You'll be satisfied with it."

"And with our picks and shovels we'll make up for what you can't work out on paper," Chao said laughingly.

I didn't quite understand what he meant by that, but felt I'd learned a lot from our conversations. So it was with a sense of satisfaction that I left the new desert city after my first visit.

2

I returned to the new city early next spring, taking the revised plans with me. The vast desert was still covered with patches of snow, swept by gusts of bone-chilling wind which sent the sand and snow whirling.

Despite the weather, the bus terminal now had become a small town swarming with people and trucks. This time Chao Fa met me in a Peking jeep.

"Where're the camels?" I joked as he walked up to greet me.

Chao roared with laughter. "Everything's mechanized now. While you were drawing up the plans in your office, with our picks and shovels we were bringing them to life. Look at that gleaming asphalt highway."

The fine highway ran like a silvery belt into the distant desert. The changes were quite astonishing.

In the jeep our conversation quickly turned to the revised plan, including the date-tree shelterbelts.

"Have a look at it." I quickly produced the plan and handed it to him. "To the north, west and east are all the shelterbelts you'll want."

He ran his eyes over the plan, taking in every detail. His eyebrows seemed to be doing an intricate dance as he arched, then puckered them. He finally heaved a long sigh, and his mouth twitched in dismay.

"You've forgotten the Fire Dragon Brigade lesson, comrade."

"Have a better look at that plan," I retorted. "When I drew it up I gave much thought to the problem of pollution. That's why I've designed a chimney one hundred and thirty metres high — something unprecedented. Besides, the factory's located in the middle of this vast desert."

"And what about the low atmospheric pressure?"

"I've thought of a way to tackle that. We'll put a powerful exhaust system at the bottom of the chimney to blow the smoke far away so that the air in the factory will be nice and clean."

"But the soot will settle somewhere no matter how far it drifts."

"In our work we must give priority to what's most important. We can't put secondary considerations first."

Chao looked thoughtfully at the landscape.

"Our economy is rapidly expanding," I went on. "To meet its needs, we must start production as quickly as possible. That's all we can do about pollution for the moment. As for the shelterbelts, we can leave them for later on."

"For later on! We don't seem to be speaking the same language." Chao's tone had turned harsh.

"We don't have the conditions at present," I hedged.

"What are the conditions here?" His eyes were still fixed on the desert outside. "A stretch of desert. I think we can build the factory and the shelterbelts at the same time, killing two birds with one stone. And by doing the two simultaneously, we might find a way to solve the problem of pollution."

"What basis do you have for saying that?"

"The masses. As the masters of the new desert city, they've taken the initiative and have resolved to crack this nut." Then he abruptly turned to the driver: "Stop, quick!" The jeep screeched to a halt. Chao smiled at me. "You've come at just the right moment. Look, a desert duststorm is coming to welcome you. It'll help you to realize what the conditions are like here."

He climbed out of the jeep. I followed him.

"Look!" He was pointing to the sky.

"Look at what?" I was mystified.

"That mountain."

"Mountain?" I scanned the obscure sky at the horizon. "I remember there being a mountain somewhere over there, but it seems to be tipping over." Even as I spoke, the monstrous "mountain", dark at the peak and yellow at the foot, began racing towards us like ten thousand galloping horses blotting out the sky and earth. I

looked back over my shoulder. Behind us the sky was a boundless expanse of blue, dotted by drifting white clouds. I stared, amazed.

"Get back into the jeep, quick!" Chao shouted, pushing me in.

Scarcely had we closed the door when fierce gusts of wind rushed upon us, sand hailed on the jeep from all sides. In great alarm I glanced at Chao beside me. He was leaning back comfortably in his seat, his eyes closed, as if nothing were happening outside. I realized this was his way of continuing the debate.

When the storm had swept past, mounds of sand surrounded our jeep, almost engulfing it. On the road too sand-drifts now blocked our way. Never had I witnessed anything of the like before. "Planting shelterbelts certainly isn't a secondary consideration!" I thought to myself.

During the meeting Chao called that evening, I gave a brief talk on the revised plan. Chao and the other comrades thought this new plan was much better and made many constructive suggestions for solving the pollution problem. They were very ambitious, especially the workers. "We Chinese workers will take our own path in developing industry," they declared.

Those words set up a turmoil in my heart. When I thought back to the debate in the jeep, I felt discomfited by the fact that I'd argued against shelterbelts.

Noticing that I looked a bit off colour Chao took me to my room to rest. "I'm too hasty," he apologized. "I called the meeting without even letting you rest after such a long journey."

"It was a fine meeting," I replied. "Now I think..."

"Don't think of anything now!" he cut me short. "Just rest for the moment." After tossing a shovelful of coal into the stove, he left.

Only the crackling of the coal burning in the stove broke the silence of the room. The storm I'd witnessed and the workers' ardent words seethed in my mind. I felt hot as the fire in the stove. I'd learned a great deal from the workers about building shelterbelts. Although I still had to come to grips with the problem of pollution, a new and complex problem which had formerly baffled me, the workers' daring to scale the heights of science encouraged me and gave me new

strength. I was more eager than ever to become one with the workers and peasants.

3

It was late autumn when after many a night spent at my desk I finally worked out a scheme to solve the problem of pollution — we would build the plant's chimney up the side of a hill. I immediately sent off the blueprints to our headquarters in the desert. After completing other work, I left full of confidence for my third visit to the new city, eager to see how the construction of the chimney was getting on.

The new city was going up fast. This time a brand-new train took me directly to the urban district. As soon as I arrived at the hostel I looked for Chao. Then I telephoned around asking for him.

"Secretary Chao's in hospital."

"What's wrong with him?" I inquired anxiously.

"Oh, that Engineer Tang's design for the chimney was all wrong. Secretary Chao worked round the clock to improve it until he finally wore himself out and fell ill."

"All wrong!" I repeated mechanically, my mind spinning. I slammed down the receiver and made for the hospital.

I entered his room, only to find it empty. I was wondering what to do when a young nurse hurried in, complaining loudly:

"Why have you been away so long, Secretary Chao? This won't do. Lie down and rest now. And be quick about it. Otherwise..." Realizing her mistake, she flushed, then scrutinized me suspiciously. "You're..."

"I came to see Comrade Chao Fa."

"About the chimney again?"

"That's right."

She gave an exclamation of annoyance. "If it weren't for that wretched chimney, he wouldn't have fallen ill."

"He's ill because of the chimney?"

"Have a look at this." Taking a clipboard from behind the door, she handed it to me. "To choose a site for the chimney, he climbed two mountains and trekked to over forty places, but none of them

would do. He came back leaning on a stick, his clothes tattered and his feet bloody. But when he got home he refused to rest, insisting that he must revise the design. He finally collapsed."

"Oh!" I grabbed the clipboard. On it was a rough sketch. "Where is he now, comrade?"

"Some while ago he received a phone call informing him that a cold front had struck last night; sand and snow have engulfed No. 7 Construction Site, blanketing the foundation. Construction headquarters is mobilizing the workers to fight the snowstorm. He was also told that the technical innovation group has re-designed the chimney and sent their draft to the committee for approval, and the shock team that left for Fire Dragon Production Brigade to study afforestation has returned. Secretary Chao was both glad and anxious at this news. As soon as he put down the receiver, he ran off, telling me he was going to No. 7 Construction Site and would be back very soon. But he still hasn't returned."

As I was too impatient to wait, I ran towards the construction site, despite the heavy snowstorm.

The wind was howling, sand swirling, but everyone was working like a house on fire. I dashed past the shuttling carts and groups of people towards No. 7 Construction Site. On arriving I looked round and sure enough spotted Chao in a wicker helmet and high boots, boring with a pneumatic drill into the frozen layer of sand covering the cement foundation. His whole body shook as the drill vibrated yet he worked on in the melting snow, without a thought for himself. Like a miner drilling far below the surface or a fighter charging the enemy on a battlefield, he was oblivious to the fierce wind slashing his face and the stabbing sand and snow. He seemed ready to melt the frozen ground with the heat of his own body, in order to lay the foundation for a huge factory.

"Old Chao!" I shouted, ploughing my way through the knee-deep mud. But the howling of the wind and the roar of the machines drowned out my voice. A sudden onslaught of wind nearly knocked me off my feet, sending me reeling back a few steps.

Having spotted Chao working so hard in the mud, several people ran up, snatched the drill away and helped him out. When he caught

sight of me his eyes shone and he came over. "What are you doing here, Old Tang?" He gripped my hands firmly.

"I..." The sight of his worn face made me gasp.

"Old Tang, although you went wrong in planning the chimney, the new type of dust-collecting mechanism you invented was a great help to us in designing a new chimney, it started us thinking along new lines. So you see, the advantages of your plan outweigh its disadvantages."

"Well," I said, somewhat relieved. "What is wrong with my plan?"

"Come to the top of the ridge and have a look at the site you proposed."

In one breath we were at the top, and I let out a cry: "Oh! So this is what it looks like!"

Before us lay fields in checker-board pattern, all bordered by curved windbreaks; tractors were turning over the recently harvested fields; and water flowed along a network of ditches. On the slope below us red flags fluttered as peasants worked busily on a canal. Far away, on the compound walls was a crimson slogan: "In agriculture, learn from Tachai!"

"Engineer Tang," Chao said solemnly. "If you climb every hill in the region, you'll see that the other side looks like this. Your chimney simply doesn't work."

Those words, though simple, carried weight. If my plan were carried out, the chimney would climb to the top of the hill and spew smoke on to those fields. The new city would be free of pollution, but the commune members on the other side of the mountain would be plagued with it. Chao's thorough investigation had prevented this blunder. When I'd designed that first factory I'd forgotten the poor and lower-middle peasants of Fire Dragon Production Brigade; now I'd planned the chimney without taking into account the situation on the other side of the hill. How pig-headed I was!

That night I couldn't sleep for thinking. So I got up and draping my jacket over my shoulders paced aimlessly about in the room. Then I sat down at Chao's desk. A steel tape-measure, a hammer, pincers and other tools lay on the desk. There was also a pile of reports written by the workers. I picked one up:

Secretary Chao,

We've just completed the cement foundation of No. 8 Construction Site ahead of schedule. We've defeated the sand-storm! Before our shock team moves on to the next work-site, we'll plant all the date trees sent by the production brigade. The technical innovation group we sent to learn from the experience of Fire Dragon Metallurgical Factory has returned with plenty of useful information. In close co-operation with the mechanics, we have succeeded in working out a plan to filter the smoke and purify the waste water. We've sent a report to the technical department for approval.

Wang Hsiao-tieh
No. 8 Construction Site

In the right-hand corner Chao had jotted down his reply in a vigorous hand:

Comrade Wang Hsiao-tieh, director of No. 8 Construction Site,

I must learn from young people like you and from all the comrades of No. 8 Construction Site. Since we are responsible to the people in carrying out this task entrusted us by the Party, we must not only build a fine plant here, but also transform the land. For we're not casual passers-by, but the builders and masters of the new city.

As I read those ardent words, I seemed to see Chao towering before me. But what did he mean by "responsible to the people", "passers-by", "masters"? My heart was pounding like the waves of the sea. I must talk with him, I thought. I set out to find him.

A light, invigorating breeze caressed my face. Far away in the distance rose a hum of voices amidst a flood of light. I hurried there.

"How many seedlings did Fire Dragon Production Brigade send us?" It was Chao's voice.

"300,000!"

"We'll have another forest!" exulted Chao.

"Then the sand-storm won't come to sweep the streets of our city any more."

A roar of laughter.

That dialogue and hearty laughter were a challenge to me. I quickened my step.

Then the conversation recommenced. "Engineer Tang worked with an eye to the future when he drew up that plan," put in a young-

ster. "For he kept in mind the workers, the poor and lower-middle peasants and the later development of our city as well as the plant's production."

"He also planned on afforesting the desert," a girl added.

"That's true," chimed in Chao, delighted. "Engineer Tang's contributed a great deal to our new city. He's over sixty, you know, and he still works so hard."

I felt ashamed. But the workers' confidence and the expectations of the Party and people acted like a great force pushing me forward. I made for the site of a new windbreak. Picking up a bundle of seedlings, I placed each one in a hole and covered their roots. Then I went to fetch water for them. As I battled shoulder to shoulder with the masters of the desert, my heart filled with joy.

"Listen, comrades," shouted Chao close by. "In autumn the holes should be dug twice as deep so that the roots go deep. Otherwise the trees won't survive the sand-storms." He walked up to me, examining the trees I'd planted. "You're working hard, comrade, that's good, but your work isn't up to standard." Taking the seedlings from me, he went on: "Let me show you how to place the seedlings and cover them. Look..." I raised my head to watch. He started, then roared with laughter. "So it's you!" he cried. "How come you're here again!"

"I understand now, Old Chao. Our argument about the shelter-belts is in fact a difference between two ways of thinking — those of the 'masters' and the 'passers-by'."

"Old Tang!" he exclaimed, stretching out his big hands to clasp me by the shoulders. His eyes shone with surprise and joy. After a while he said warmly, "We must have a good talk."

I told him frankly: "These three trips to the desert city have taught me a great lesson. They've helped me to see what path I was following. Your remarks about the 'passers-by' and the 'masters' hit the nail right on the head."

"Let's go back and talk." Squeezing my hand, he pulled me along.

Back in my room, I took out the blueprint of the dust-collecting plant and showed it to him. "We can send the smoke back to the

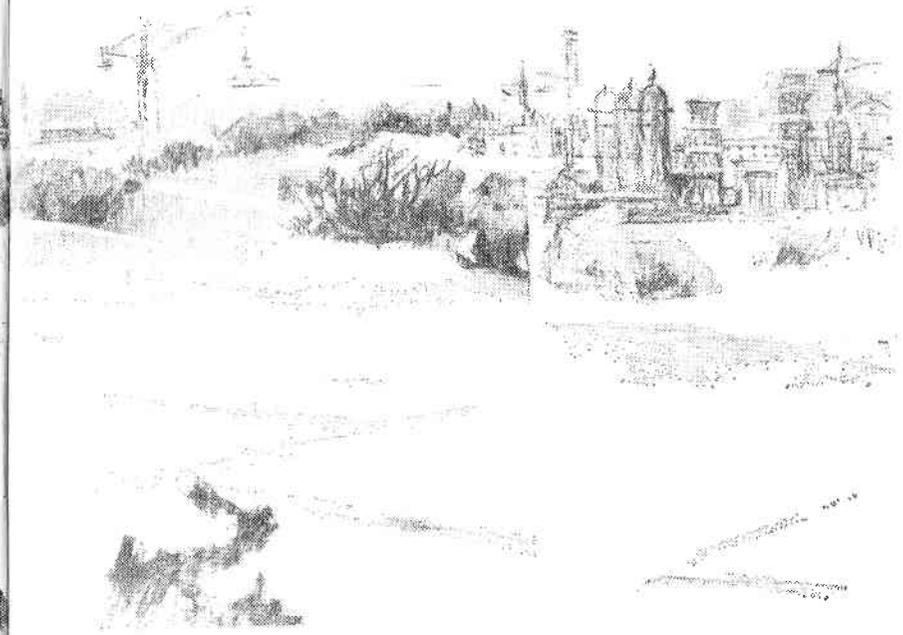


furnace and re-burn it to get rid of the metallic particles," I explained. "Then we'll have the smoke pass through water."

"And the water?" inquired Chao.

"It'll flow into an uninhabited part of the desert where there are no fields."

"Engineer Tang," he stopped me, "we're like athletes who've managed the 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9-metre high jump. But when the bar is put at two metres or even higher, can we clear it by making still greater efforts?" He went into the next room and came back with a roll of drawings. "Look, getting the idea from your plan for a dust-collecting mechanism, several workers and I designed this new equipment. This filter will remove the metallic impurities in the smoke. And look at this draft, it's the storage basin for waste water we'll purify for irrigation. This way, the sky over our new city will be a clear blue and the fields round it a lush green. Don't you remember that teaching of Chairman Mao? **What joy it is to struggle with heaven! What joy it is to struggle with earth! What joy it is to struggle with man!**"



As I listened to those inspiring words and studied the blueprints, my heart filled with emotion. I burst out: "Old Chao, now I fully understand the truth that intellectuals can't do a thing if they don't integrate themselves with the masses of the workers and peasants."

"That's true." He clapped his hands. "When we've eliminated pollution, the shelterbelt trees will become tall and sturdy, and we'll open up the waste land to grow fine crops. We'll build our industrial sector quickly and reap a bumper harvest at the same time." He finished with a joyous laugh that shattered the stillness of the night.

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The reddening morning clouds tinted the curtains. Delighted, Chao pushed the window open. Like an ocean awakening, the vast desert enveloped in mist came to life and the sun's dazzling rays soon made the sand sparkle. People say that the sunrise on the sea is magnificent, but I felt that nothing could compare in beauty with sunrise over the desert.

Now, in charge of a group of scientists and technicians, I was on my way to the new desert city for the fourth time — this time to stay there. No longer a passer-by, but one of the city's masters!

As the train sped on, a magnificent view unfolded before my eyes: roads criss-crossed the land, no longer a desert; towering chimneys dotted the landscape; tall poplar trees flanked the highways; and everywhere date-tree blossoms embalmed the air.

The train slowed down as it approached the new city. The sight of the blue sky round that chimney awakened me from the reverie induced by the balmy air. As I was avidly taking in the new city, golden date blossoms were wafted through the window and came showering down on me. What fragrant flowers!

Illustrated by Chiu Sha

Holding the Ferry

That autumn night in 1946, the full moon rode high in the sky, cascading its silvery light like shimmering water over the fields. A cool breeze set the sorghum leaves souging and the maize tassels waving. The willow trees bordering the river joined in, their branches rustling.

All was quiet in that part of the north Shantung plain. But in Pengyun Village, on the east bank of Feilung River, the villagers were making tense preparations for battle. All the gates were wide open and men and women silently streamed out of their homes carrying bundles and rifles, whispering and gesticulating in the darkness for they had lit no lanterns. Solemn commands were passed on in muted tones.

"To the ferry, hurry!"

"Quick! Cross the river."

The villagers swiftly complied with these instructions, grouping here and there.

Then through the entrance of the village appeared two soldiers. The broad shouldered one in the lead with wide eyes, thick eyebrows

and a square jaw, marched in long steady strides, stirring up a gust of wind. In his wake, a short round-faced soldier trotted, trying to keep up with his leader. Tung Cheng-shan, head of the scouts platoon of the sub-area independent regiment, and Wu Meng-tzu had crossed the river the night before to carry out a mission. Now they were anxious to rejoin their unit. At the sight of the evacuating villagers, they asked what had happened. They were told the village had just received a message from the district Party committee warning them that the reactionary KMT army, with the landlords' revanchist corps, were going to attack Fengyun Village that night. The enemy planned to take the ferry on Feilung River, then "mop up" the east bank before crossing the river to strike "decisive blows" at the liberated area. The villagers and militiamen were told to cross the river immediately. In the meantime, Tung's regiment which had slipped back to the east shore was manoeuvring rapidly round the enemy's flank to launch a surprise attack from the rear. The enemy was to be wiped out on the east bank before they could disturb the liberated area on the other side.

This sudden change in the situation made Tung's eyebrows pucker characteristically. He looked at the sky reflecting: It'll be dawn in a few hours and the ferry's four or five *li* away. What if the enemy takes the ferry before the villagers can cross?

A shot rang out in the eastern part of the village. Meng-tzu stood there stunned. Tung resolutely swung his rifle from his shoulder. "Come on, Meng-tzu. We'll help the villagers get to the other side." Then he strode off to catch up with them.

The cunning enemy did not enter the village but was already stealing along to its west end, for the peasants had scarcely left the village when Tung saw shadows flitting along a footpath behind them.

"The enemy, Meng-tzu. Be ready to fight," he whispered.

The villagers quickened their pace but the silhouettes pushed on doggedly without firing. So they mean to reach the ferry first and cut us off, Tung thought. "Planning on taking the ferry, eh? Well, you've got another think coming!"

Without taking his eyes off the enemy, he murmured to Meng-tzu, "Help the cadres and militiamen lead the villagers to the ferry quickly.

I'll stay behind and cover you. If I don't rejoin you when you get across, you must try to send in a report on our mission to the leadership."

Meng-tzu and the others disappeared into a sorghum field. Tung took cover behind a ridge and fired, changing his position often. In the darkness the enemy couldn't tell whether they'd encountered the main force or the militiamen, so they dug in and returned his fire. Their plan had been foiled. When he was certain the villagers had had enough time to cross to safety, Tung slipped into the sorghum too and ran for the ferry.

On the north Shantung plain day breaks suddenly. That morning was no exception. In the twinkling of an eye the obscure contours of the landscape took form: Feilung River meandered across the vast plain like a glittering ribbon. In the east the sky lightened little by little then flushed red as the morning sun rose over the horizon and the stars faded. It was already day.

The enemy entered the village only to find it deserted. But crafty Chin Yao-tsu, vicious commander of the KMT regiment, had sent a second unit to the river by another path even as Tung was fighting his delaying action against the first. When Tung reached the riverside, he found the ferry and its access controlled by enemy soldiers. Shouts and shots rang out all over the slope. Rifle in hand, two sentinels nervously patrolled the ferry. It was impossible to cross the river.

His swordlike brows arched, Tung riveted his sharp eyes on the enemy sentinels. "They may control the ferry now, but when the time comes, we'll show them a thing or two." He looked round, then slipped into a copse of willows where he sat down, rifle clasped in his arms, to observe the sentinels. He thought back to the battle of that night, wondering if all the villagers had made it across. Were there any casualties? And Meng-tzu? Had he crossed too? An eagle soared high over the river cleaving the morning mist with its powerful wings. Tung gazed at that swift eagle, pondering how to deal with the enemy. It suddenly occurred to him that the enemy might move quickly to attack the west bank since the villagers had slipped through their fingers. What would happen then to the army's plan of exterminating the enemy on the east bank? Of course, they're

probably prepared for that eventuality, he reflected, but it would be much better if I could take the ferry and hold it until our main force arrives. It shouldn't be difficult as, judging from the firing in the village, we're mainly confronted with the landlords' revanchist corps.

His mind made up, he was about to carry out his plan when he heard a splash. On the alert, he cautiously parted the willow branches. The small ferry boat emerged from a grove of reeds then stopped a short distance from shore. The two sentinels squatting aboard were busy chatting. Tung wondered why they'd decided to use the boat to guard the crossing, then remembered how jumpy they'd been. Contempt leapt into his eyes. He began crawling towards the ferry, gripping his rifle. He'd already covered a good distance when out of the corner of his eye he saw the willow branches quiver and glimpsed a girl wearing a red tunic. She too seemed to be moving stealthily towards the ferry. He glanced at the spot again, but the girl had vanished. Some of the villagers are still on this side of the river, he realized in a flash. If I can make contact with them, we can join forces then we'll have a better chance of holding the enemy here. I must find out how many villagers there are and organize those who can fight into a combat team. But first things first — to the ferry! He slithered on until he was close enough to make out the sentinels' features and hear what they were saying.

"It's a good job boasting's no crime. The officers kept saying we'd surrounded the Eighth Route Army's* main force. But after several days' wild-goose chase and dozens of casualties we haven't even laid eyes on them."

"And just think!" put in the other sentinel, still jittery. "Last night Li Erh-kou was chasing after some villagers who seemed to have disappeared into thin air. But when he squatted down to relieve himself, a hand flashed out and his gun vanished. Isn't that eerie?"

Both men clutched their tommy-guns and stole nervous glances round.

Tung kept his eyes glued to the boat, waiting for an opportunity to act. Ripples, then bubbles, appeared near the boat, followed by

*The precursor of the People's Liberation Army.

a boy's head. His hands closed like grappling hooks round the bulwark. As if struck by a typhoon the boat tipped then overturned altogether. Before the sentinels could even utter a cry, all three had disappeared into the river. Tung sprang up and swinging his rifle on to his right shoulder dashed for the river edge where he plunged and swam vigorously towards the capsized boat. One sentinel, half-drowned, struggled wildly to the surface, then began swimming for all he was worth. The boy surfaced nimbly, despite the tommy-gun in his hand and the ammunition bag round his neck. He tossed his head, spluttering, then gave chase without loading his gun. That strapping lad looks familiar, Tung thought as he sliced through the water after them. He was wondering where he could have seen him before when the other sentinel suddenly surfaced and went for the boy like a shot. He'd re-emerged so close to the boy that Tung could do nothing to help. With great presence of mind, Tung shouted, "Don't move!" and dived.

That warning came like a bolt of lightning. Stunned, the sentinel stopped an instant to look around, but saw no one. He was swimming after the boy again when powerful hands seized his feet, lifting them high. Tung thrust the soldier head first into the mud. When he broke surface the other sentinel was climbing ashore like a bedraggled dog with the boy close on his heels. The boy was so eager to catch the enemy that he hadn't even noticed Tung who was now quickly analysing the situation: It's risky chasing the sentinel with all these enemy soldiers around, but we can't let him get away and warn the others. Besides it was just the chance to take the ferry. Yes, get rid of him and seize the ferry! His decision taken, Tung began treading water. He was raising his rifle when a shot cracked from the willows near the ridge. The sentinel dropped in his tracks. The boy swiftly disappeared among the reeds.

Who had fired that shot? Tung went ashore hoping to find the hidden marksman. Presently, a volley of gunfire clattered across the ridge. The enemy was charging in the direction of the shot. Tung's heart was with that unknown comrade. Without a second's hesitation he took aim and fired. One of the soldiers in front threw up his arms and flopped to the ground. Tung cocked his rifle again and

picked off another. Afraid that a large force was lying in ambush, the others ran for their lives, leaving the two dead soldiers behind.

Then, his gun at the ready, Tung was moving swiftly towards the willows near the ridge when he heard a tense "Don't move!"

What a familiar voice! "Meng-tzu! It's me!" Tung exclaimed softly. "What are you doing here?"

Meng-tzu peered out vigilantly from the hiding-place where he lay gripping his gun. His face lit up with pleasure, as if he'd come across a long lost brother. He greeted Tung softly, hanging on to his hand. There was so much to say he didn't know where to begin.

The night before, Meng-tzu and the militiamen had led the villagers away from the pursuing enemy, then across the river. But Tung had failed to show up and he began to worry, anxiously watching the shooting across the river. When the village head dispatched a militiaman to contact the army, Meng-tzu sent along a report on their mission for the leadership of the independent regiment. Then he headed for the river and plunged into the rushing water to emerge once again on the east bank. All morning he'd combed the copses and the ridges in vain, but his one shot seemed to have made Tung fall from the sky. They'd parted in battle and a battle had reunited them.

Overjoyed now, Meng-tzu urged, "All the villagers have reached safety, platoon leader. Let's cross quickly."

"No, Meng-tzu. Our regiment and the other units have moved to the enemy's rear in a manoeuvre to annihilate them on the east bank. It seems to me that this enemy vanguard has come to the village to find a crossing for their troops. They'll probably try to cross to the west bank sooner than we'd expected." Tung's eyes gleamed. "Wouldn't it be better if we pinned them down here until our main force arrives?"

"Of course, but with only the two of us . . ."

Tung waved his arm. "We aren't alone. All along Feilung River, our comrades, soldiers and villagers, are fighting the enemy. And there's that boy — and a girl in a red tunic too."

"Where?"

"I haven't been able to find them yet," said Tung.

Just then Tung spotted another group of soldiers in the distance. He observed their movements attentively, trying to guess their intentions.

He'd sized up the situation correctly. The unit in Fengyun Village was a commando led by Chin Yao-tsu, who'd brought along some light artillery to cut off the ferry. Shaken by the firing that he interpreted as an attack by our army on the west bank, Chin grabbed the binoculars hanging round his neck. He scanned the dense groves of willow trees and choppy Feilung River. Nothing was moving there. Irritated, he sent some men ahead to reconnoitre the ferry area.

Tung and Meng-tzu were in a tight spot. For the moment, they lay concealed beside a ridge leading to the ferry, but the approaching enemy would easily discover them.

"The enemy, platoon leader! Let's open fire."

Keeping his finger on the trigger, Tung drew aside the willow branches with his free hand and observed the soldiers closely. "There's no hurry, Meng-tzu. They've no idea how many men they're fighting as yet and won't dare come near."

Meng-tzu nodded. "Supposing we make use of this respite to shift to a more sheltered position. We can then find the other villagers and get ready for battle."

Tung made no answer but surveyed the ridge, the nearest access to the ferry. Under his thick brows so tightly knit shone two steadfast solemn eyes. He dusted his rifle with his sleeve and checked it carefully.

"Have you any grenades, Meng-tzu?"

"Two."

"How many bullets?"

"Twenty."

"Fine. When we run short we can get more from the enemy." Resolve ringing in his voice, he ordered, "Get ready to fight here."

Understanding flashed in Meng-tzu's eyes. "Right. We'll throttle them right here," he responded bringing his hands together as if to choke the enemy.

"That's it! If they dare poke a head out we'll snap it off."

"They won't get away let alone cross the river!"

Tung laughed with pleasure, then turned to look at the enemy. His smile faded slowly — they were advancing at a snail's pace.

Exasperated by their slow advance Meng-tzu pointed to the ridge above. "Let's move up to the top. We'll be able to see farther and aim better." He crouched, ready to put his words into action.

Tung pushed him back down. "Go and find the other villagers hiding round here so we can co-ordinate our attack."

In a dilemma Meng-tzu looked in concern from his platoon leader to the enemy in the distance. "What about you?"

"I'll stay and keep track of their movements. Go quickly. We must each do the work of several men now."

Meng-tzu gave his two grenades to Tung, then crept off murmuring, "I'm going now, platoon leader."

Tung gazed after Meng-tzu who disappeared into the willows. Feeling much better, he turned to scan the area again. As the willow-lined bank was as spongy as a bog, the only access to the U-shaped point where the ferry was located was two ridges. Tung was at the foot of one ridge and the other was about a hundred metres away to his left. Though not very high, the ridge beside him was nevertheless a vantage-point. Meng-tzu was right in saying the terrain was in their favour. If they held this ridge and covered the other no one could get through, even if he sprouted wings. And if the enemy managed to take the ridge the willows would provide good cover for continuing the battle. Right, he would occupy that position. He tightened his grip on his rifle, then leapt up to the top of the ridge. There he commanded a vast expanse of fields and a long stretch of the river-bank.

The soldiers scouted carefully, slowly advancing towards the ridges. Presently Tung made out their ugly features in his rifle sight. Those gleaming eyes — cruel, but frightened — staring out of sweaty, dirt-smearred faces made him think of a pack of wolves. They crept nearer. Tung's rifle cracked twice. Bullets of hatred flew straight to their mark, bringing down the soldiers in front. Like bees fleeing their hive before an intruder, the others scattered, shooting wildly. Bullets buzzed like maddened locusts boring into the corpses, breaking off

branches and sending leaves flying. From his hollow on the ridge, Tung fired calmly, aiming carefully. At first the enemy cowered, afraid to take even a step forward, but soon they realized from the shots that they were dealing with only a few opponents. At their leader's howl, the crouching soldiers rushed the ridge.

Glaring at them, Tung grasped a grenade. Before he could pull the pin a tommy-gun hidden in the willows near the other ridge spewed whistling bullets into the group of enemy soldiers who ran for cover once again. This time Tung was not surprised. He knew from that morning's experience that a comrade-in-arms had fired. His heart leapt for joy as he gazed towards the ridge. Suddenly, among the foliage, he glimpsed what seemed to be a red flag fluttering. Looking closer, he recognized the red tunic the girl had been wearing that morning. This "flag" scared the enemy into a hasty retreat. Thinking our main force was before him, Chin Yao-tsu deployed his men again for battle. Shells screamed over the ridges, bursting near the ferry. Amidst the flying shrapnel and acrid smoke that "flag" glowed crimson.

The branches near Tung quivered, then parted to reveal Meng-tzu, whom Tung had been longing to see. "I've found them, platoon leader," he murmured warmly, pointing behind him as he wiped the sweat from his face.

A boy of fifteen as swarthy as an iron weight sprang from behind a tree and bounded over. It was the boy who'd overturned the boat. "I'm Little Tiger," he declared above the din of enemy fire. "I have a gun and some bullets." He held up his tommy-gun and patted the bag of ammunition slung over his shoulder.

"Why didn't you cross over with the others, Tiger?"

"I did. But when you didn't turn up both our village head and militia leader sent me back to look for you."

That earnest yet light-hearted answer made Tung's heart bound. "Are you all alone?" he asked.

"I'm a good swimmer." Then Tiger added, "My sister's here too. She stayed on last night to bury two mines at the ferry landing, but the reactionaries arrived before she got a chance to. When I came back she insisted on helping me to find you before crossing over."



"Where is she?"

"She's. . . . Oh, there she is."

Tung looked up to see a girl of about eighteen, now wearing a green tunic which blended perfectly with the lush willows. Bobbed hair framed her healthy copper-tanned face, and her leather belt from which hung two glossy black mines set off her well-proportioned figure. She was holding a rifle in one hand and steadied the light machine-gun on her shoulder with the other. She came up to them briskly and placed the machine-gun on the ground.

"I'm Cheng Tieh-ying, member of the Fengyun Village militia, Platoon Leader Tung," she said crisply.

"You've fought well, Comrade Tieh-ying," Tung responded. "They thought they'd set a trap for us but they've fallen into one themselves."

"It'll teach them they can't have their way here in the liberated area!" Tiger burst out.

"They seem to have taken us for our main force," Meng-tzu commented.

Another shell shrilled overhead exploding among the trees. Tiger glanced that way.

"They're still firing at your tunic, sis."

Tieh-ying tossed her head and laughed. "Let them fire to their heart's content." Then she turned to Tung. "Comrade Meng-tzu told us your plan. We're waiting for your orders, platoon leader."

"Good! Now let me see — how many guns and rounds of ammunition do you have?"

"Eight grenades and fifty bullets — taken from the enemy," Meng-tzu reported.

"One rifle and two mines — plus this machine-gun I got from the enemy last night," announced Tieh-ying.

"A tommy-gun and a mock machine-gun," Tiger chimed in.

"Where is the machine-gun?" asked Meng-tzu.

"My sister has it."

Tieh-ying laughed as she pulled from her pocket a string of fire-crackers which she handed to Tiger.

"Good. We'll turn every blade of grass and every tree in this liberated area into a weapon. Like the red tunic, Tiger's 'machine-gun' will come in very useful." Tung scanned the ridges and the dense copse again. "We must continue to give the enemy the impression we're the main force, then they won't dare move about freely," he declared resolutely. "Our task is to hold these two ridges at all costs and keep the enemy from approaching the ferry. We'll divide into two groups. Meng-tzu and Tieh-ying will stay here. Tiger and I will go to the other ridge."

Tiger was happy but both the others protested for they too wanted to go to that ridge which was now the target of the enemy's fire.

"Don't argue," said Tung. "Remember: we're using sparrow warfare* to confuse the enemy. This isn't a pitched battle so it doesn't matter where we are."

The enemy fire ceased. They peered out between willow branches, the soldiers were crawling towards the other ridge.

Tung arched his bushy brows. "The enemy's poking its head out again. Let's go into action."

Meng-tzu nodded as he prepared for battle. Tieh-ying handed the machine-gun to Tung and gave Tiger her two grenades, saying, "Go now. And follow the platoon leader's orders carefully." Tiger nodded, then vanished among the willow trees after Tung who was moving rapidly towards the other ridge.

Torn by doubt and uncertainty, Chin Yao-tsu had sent men out to reconnoitre once again. His bombardment didn't seem to have disturbed the Communists and that red flag was still defying him. He was reluctant to retreat but afraid to advance lest he fall into an ambush. After much hesitation he'd sent these men out to scout the ridge where the red tunic was fluttering.

But Tung was already there, digging holes to bury the two mines. Tiger quickly hung his fire-crackers on a branch. Then, they waited for the enemy.

"Set off your mock gun, Tiger," Tung ordered, pressing the trigger of his own machine-gun.

*A type of guerrilla warfare in which groups of three to five persons launch surprise attacks on the enemy.

As both their machine-guns, the real and the bogus one, chattered, volleys rang out from the other ridge and from the trees. Crisp shots sporadically ripped the air, sounding up and down the river-bank. Before the enemy could recover from their surprise and open fire, Tung and Tiger had already slipped down into the copse, leaving Tiger's "machine-gun" still coughing and emitting acrid smoke like a real gun. The enemy was too frightened to rush this "impregnable" position.

The "firing" suddenly stopped. An enemy officer looked up cautiously then rapped out, "Charge! The Communists have run out of ammunition." The soldiers stirred from their hiding-place and began climbing up the ridge to charge that billowing red "flag".

When the firing ceased, Meng-tzu and Tieh-ying stopped shooting too. Light flared on the ridge followed by two blasts.

The mines sent the enemy soldiers rolling and screaming in all directions. The survivors beat a hasty retreat, leaving the dead scattered over the ridge. Shots sounded in succession from the willows below the ridge. Meng-tzu and Tieh-ying glanced that way, their eyes gleaming, then whispered simultaneously, "Listen, Tung's signalling to start shooting again."

The two combat teams fired at the retreating enemy, continually changing position and making full use of the terrain to save ammunition. They darted in and out of the copses, up and down the ridges, then in and out of the sorghum fields — everywhere from furious barrels avenging bullets hailed on the enemy. Choppy Feilung River seemed to be defended by thousands.

Frantic as an ant on a hot pan Chin Yao-tsu hastily reported to his superior, "The main force of the communist army has cut off the entire Feilung River. . . ."

Grenades and gunfire thundered in the rear before he could finish. Our independent regiment and the other units had launched the attack with the force of a mighty avalanche.

The battle to annihilate the enemy had begun.

Illustrated by Hsu Hsi

“Just Call Me Sea Girl!”

At daybreak the sea like a roll of emerald satin unfolded towards the horizon until it merged with the morning mist that seemed a length of translucent silk mantling the waves. The far-away fishing villages and nearby rocks were hidden by this flimsy veil. All this made a magnificent and wonderful landscape.

I rowed my sampan over the blue waves. A breeze smelling of ozone blew open a corner of my white plastic parcel and the tip of a pine seedling came into view. In the parcel were cabbage seeds, three little pine seedlings and a book on growing kelp, in between the pages of which was a pressed snowy plum-blossom from Mount Hsihsia in Hangchow. The parcel had been given me in Hangchow by a former superior of mine whom I hadn't seen for years. She asked me to take it to East Sea where I was going and give it to her daughter Kuo Hai-lan. She told me elatedly that Hai-lan had gone back to East Sea to settle there. Then she fished a photograph out of her wallet and let me have a look. It was a coloured picture of Hangchow's rippling West Lake with weeping willows and lotus blooms beside a little bridge. An innocent smiling girl in her teens

with a Red Guard armband on was rowing a boat. Her serene and lovely features reminded me of a child I had met eighteen years ago.

In the spring of 1953 when I was about to be transferred from the marine products bureau of Chekiang, a middle-aged fishing couple from East Sea came to see our deputy bureau leader Kuo Ying. With them they brought a little girl of four with plump rosy cheeks and sparkling big black eyes. She had two short pigtailed and, around her neck, a shiny silver necklet attached to which was a small net of coloured thread. In the net was a gleaming round fragment of mica. On her small wrists she wore two green-threaded bracelets of shells. She was bare-footed, her toes spread out in comfort; but in her plump hands was a pair of new embroidered shoes. On entering the door, the fisherwoman pointed to Kuo Ying and said to the little girl:

“Hai-lan, that's your own mother. Call her mom!”

Staring round-eyed, the child shook her head. “No, I won't.” Then she turned and nestled closer to the fisherwoman, fondly calling her, “Mom!”

On Sunday Kuo Ying took us to the West Lake. While we were cheerfully chatting on a pleasure-boat, the little girl stood on the deck pouting.

“Isn't it fun on the West Lake, Hai-lan?” the fisherman asked her.

“No, it isn't.”

“Why not?” All of us were curious.

“Because there're no winds or waves here and the boat doesn't bob. I'd rather go out to sea with my dad.” After a pause she muttered, “There are no shells, no dragon-flies or crabs either.”

This child had actually been born out at sea. Before Liberation Kuo Ying was a leader of the underground Party organization on Crest Island. One day she went on urgent business to Rock Island. No sooner had she carried out her task there than the Kuomintang dichards started searching for her. Lin Szu-hai and his wife, two fisherfolk there who served as messengers for our Party, stealthily carried her away in a little sampan on a windy night. And that very night Hai-lan was born prematurely. Her mother, Kuo Ying, could not help but leave her baby to the Lins. Having brought her up on

the sea for four years, they were now returning the little girl to her mother.

Since then eighteen years had passed. It was hard to recognize the girl in the photograph as the child of eighteen years before. In that case, would I know her when next I saw her?

The mist was very thin at the outset, but it grew thicker later, so thick that nothing more than a few paces away was visible. Soon I was completely enveloped by white mist.

Anxious to reach my goal, I rowed hard and made headway slowly. But after a while I discovered that all the time I'd been rowing round in circles.

In fact my boat couldn't be very far from Rock Island. Had it been fine, I would have seen the island clearly. But now I had completely lost my bearings. I knew it was foolhardy to carry on blindly, for my boat might strike a reef or be caught in an eddy. On the other hand, as the tide was up it wouldn't do to stop rowing or my sampan might be carried away by the current. I was really at my wits' end. Drops of sweat mingled with mist trickled down my forehead and cheeks.

Suddenly I heard the creaking of oars paddling towards me. It sounded clear and close, then faint and far, as the waves tossed and fell.

In the fix I was in, the sound delighted me. I hastily rowed towards it through the fog. My sampan was shooting forward when abruptly it lurched and began to rock violently, waves breaking over its side. Confound it! I had run into an eddy! Surf was thundering in front of me. There must be reefs not far off. I tried frantically to put about and get clear. But it was no use; my small craft seemed caught fast by the current.

"Catch hold!"

The clear cry drowned the angry roar of the billows. In a flash, a hawser flew through the mist and thudded down by my feet. I snatched it up.

"Make it fast, quick!"

As I tied the end of the hawser round the mast, I heard the creaking of oars again and slowly my sampan was tugged out of the eddy. I heaved a long sigh of relief.

Our two boats were only about six metres apart, but I could not see the one before me clearly. By straining my eyes I managed to make out the figure of a girl bobbing up and down in the mist.

"I don't know how to thank you, comrade," I yelled. "If not for you, I'd have had it!"

"You have to row carefully in a mist," she said calmly. "Are you going to Rock Island? The fog's so thick, I'd better show you the way."

She put on speed then, towing my sampan behind her. I marvelled at the ease with which she rowed through the mist just as if the sky were clear. She must have been born and bred by the sea, I decided.

"How come you knew I was caught in the eddy?" I asked admiringly.

"I could tell by the sound."

"Tell by the sound?"

"Sure. If we train our ears well to recognize different sounds, and keep mentally alert, it can be done. We fisherfolk have to have sharp eyes and keen ears. Sailing in darkness or mist we can only depend on our ears."

Hearing this, my admiration for her grew. "Where're you from?" I asked.

"From Rock Island." After we had continued some way through the mist she told me, "You're only thirty metres from the wharf now. Row straight ahead and you'll be there in no time."

"You're not going ashore, then?"

"No, I'm going to go the rounds of our kelp grounds to the south-east."

"Why? What can you do there in a fog like this?"

"*Aiya*, it's foggy weather like this that tempts the 'sea rat' out of his hole."

At this, I unfastened the hawser and she paddled her boat away.

As I took up my oars I turned to shout to her: "Hey, comrade! what's your name?"

"Just call me Sea — Girl!" she answered. Then her hearty laughter floated over the sea, as gay and clear as the chime of silver bells and with the characteristic warmth of the East Sea fisherfolk. Little by little the creak of her oars receded into the distance. I was once again surrounded by the fog.

I rowed to the wharf as instructed, made fast my sampan, jumped ashore and headed towards the village. On my way there I bumped into a man. Before I could see who it was he had let out a shout.

"Oh, so it's you! Heavens! How did you cross in this mist? You're lucky not to have been swallowed up by the Dragon King!"

It was Yang Yin-hai, just the man I wanted to see. The head of a fishing brigade, he was about forty, a jovial, clear-headed fellow. After we had greeted each other, he led me to the brigade office.

"What brings you here so early in such a fog?" he asked me seriously.

"When I set out there was only a light mist; I expected it'd clear very soon. Instead, it turned into a dense fog when I was halfway across. It was a near thing, I can tell you! If not for one of your islanders who towed me out of the eddy, I'd be in the Dragon King's palace now, under the sea." Then I told him all that had happened.

"What was that girl's name?" Yang asked.

"I don't know. She only told me she's called Sea Girl."

"That's an odd name," he chuckled. "Never mind, you can't miss her, if she belongs to our island."

"I won't recognize her even if I meet her," I said hopelessly. "With the fog so thick between us, I wasn't able to see her clearly."

"You'll have to use your ears to recognize her voice then," he suggested humorously.

There was no sign of the heavy fog lifting. While walking I asked how Hai-lan had been getting along since she came to settle on the island.

"Isn't it interesting that she was born on the sea and brought up by the West Lake in Hangchow, and now she's come back to the sea? The sea's really become her home," Yang said cheerfully. Then he told me more about the girl.

Three years ago when she finished middle school, Hai-lan determined to respond to Chairman Mao's great call, "**It is highly necessary for young people with education to go to the countryside to be re-educated by the poor and lower-middle peasants.**" Having taken leave of picturesque West Lake she returned to the shore of the rolling East Sea. With a bedding-roll on her back she arrived at our branch Party secretary Lin's home. Stepping through the doorway she cried, "Dad, mom, I'm back again." Lin's face wreathed in smiles. His wife hugged the girl and stroked her lovingly.

Some people, however, thought her too delicate to stay long on the island.

It happened that the brigade had just decided to try growing kelp. The first day of her arrival, Hai-lan asked to join in the experiment. As everybody knew, growing kelp called for skill in handling a fishing-boat, so she insisted on going out to sea with the others on her second day on the island. On their return, however, it was a white-faced girl whom they helped ashore.

Hai-lan's seasickness worried Old Lin. Would she be daunted by difficulties? After supper, he went quietly to her room and found her door ajar. Peeping through, he saw her sitting at the table, a jacket draped over her shoulders, a notebook before her and a fountain-pen in her hand. Gazing at the picture of Chairman Mao hanging on the wall, she muttered, "... The sea's nothing to be afraid of, nor are high winds and waves..."

Much moved, the old Party secretary turned to go back. At this point his wife arrived, a bowl of chicken soup in her hand. About to knock at the door, she was stopped by her old man. And when she too peeped in she was surprised to see what Hai-lan was doing. So she took away her soup.

Two days later a high wind sprang up, but the girl still insisted on going out to sea. This time she was even more seasick. With great concern Aunt Lin cooked all kinds of dainties for her. When she saw her husband she grumbled: "*Aiya*, old man, can't you see the state Hai-lan's in? You must tell her not to go out to sea any more. If you let her go on in this way her health will break down. Since her mother's sent her daughter to us, we must build her up not let

her wear herself out. Otherwise, how'll we account to Kuo Ying next time we meet?"

"Old woman, your way of growing plants in a hot-house is out of date now," he retorted as if nothing was amiss. "Going out to sea to brave the winds and waves will do her a lot of good. She'll learn to stand up to storms and acquire skills."

Indeed, the old couple did not see eye to eye about Hai-lan's going out to sea. As Aunt Lin was not able to convince her husband she made up her mind to talk the girl out of doing it. Dinner cooked, she went quietly to Hai-lan's room. Outside the door she overheard her old man say:

"Everything's hard to tackle at the outset, lass. But where there's a will there's a way. I remember when your mother came here she used to be seasick too. But, sick as she was, she kept going out to work on the sea. She struggled against both waves and class enemies until she became really skilled in handling a boat, outdoing ordinary fisherfolk."

"Don't worry, dad. However rough the sea, although it may affect my health it can never undermine my determination."

"That's the spirit. It won't take you three months, I think, to get over your nausea."

Hearing this, Aunt Lin knew that the two of them were of one mind. She softly withdrew.

A week elapsed. Hai-lan hadn't overcome her seasickness yet, much less begun to learn skill.

One day when she jumped ashore and sat down on a rock to rest, she heard somebody near by sneering:

"Ha, a hen can never pass herself off as a duck."

The speaker was a short wrinkled man in his fifties with beady eyes, sparse moustache and two fang-like incisors. Hai-lan knew who he was: Han the Ninth nicknamed "Shark", who had worked before Liberation as manager of the fishery belonging to the biggest local despot.

"Sure, like rotten kelp, she can't strike root here," a former rich fisherman chimed in.



"Yes, as the saying goes: the fruit drifts away from torn vine and rotten roots. She'll drift away some day," Shark added.

At their malicious jeers Hai-lan flared up. She sprang to her feet and shouted angrily at the two scoundrels at the foot of the rock:

"Listen, Shark and your lot! Whether I can master the sea or not, wait and see!"

Taken aback by Hai-lan's appearance and warning, the blackguards cringed before her like whipped dogs.

"Do you know why Shark hates Hai-lan so much?" Yang asked at this point. "There's a reason. Before Liberation, Shark who was the manager of the biggest fishery on the island oppressed and exploited the poor fishermen working under him so viciously that Hai-lan's mother, Comrade Kuo Ying, led them to fight back. During the Cultural Revolution two more of his crimes were disclosed. One was that he was the informer who sicked the enemy on Kuo Ying when she came on a mission to our island before Liberation. Another was that as a result of Shark's betrayal, the enemy raided our houses to find little Hai-lan after her mother secretly left her in the care of the old Party secretary and his wife. The old couple risked their lives to take the child out on a sampan in the darkness of the night and rowed to a cave at Dragon Head Shoal. There they hid for three months until our island was liberated. When these crimes were disclosed, the masses were furious and denounced Shark more indignantly than ever. But after one accusation meeting, Shark told his wife with clenched teeth that they'd have to put up with this for the time being — they could get their own back after the childless Lin Szu-hai died. Hai-lan's return here enraged him because if the girl follows in her foster-parents' steps and carries on the revolution he's no hope of staging a come-back now. That fellow hates proletarian dictatorship to the marrow of his bones."

We skirted Little Dragon River and crossed a stone bridge while Yang went on talking.

That day after Hai-lan angrily berated Shark, she headed for the shore where her sampan was moored. Untying the rope, she jumped on board and was about to punt the sampan away when a resonant voice from behind called: "Wait a minute, Hai-lan."

Turning round she saw the old Party secretary with a bedroll on his back, striding up. He had just been to a meeting in the county seat. Coming near, he said, "Let's go out together." With that he jumped on to the sampan. Hai-lan began to row. The old man, squatting by the helm, gave her a hand and chanted:

"One, two, stand firm — *hai* — *yo*."

Take a tight hold, *hai* — *yo* — "

As Hai-lan succeeded in rowing rhythmically in time with his chanty, the old secretary relaxed his grip on the oars.

After three months' hard work with the old secretary as her coach, Hai-lan overcame her seasickness and became a good rower. But the stubborn girl was not satisfied with that. Every night when the fisherfolk and their families were in bed they could hear the creaking of oars from the harbour. Only after some time did they find out that it was Hai-lan practising rowing at night.

One dark stormy night, a child was dangerously ill — it must be rushed to hospital. But all the fishermen were out at sea. What was to be done? All the villagers were anxious. At that critical moment Hai-lan stepped forward boldly. She took the helm, braving the wind and waves in the pitch-black night for over three hours to escort the child to the county hospital. On her return she brought back the first batch of kelp seedlings the brigade urgently needed.

Pointing to the southeast, Yang said excitedly, "Green Port over there's where we have our kelp-cultivating grounds. It's our battle field for conquering the shallows. You must have a look at it when the fog has cleared. This year our kelp is very promising, each plant six to seven feet long, a glossy black. Two years ago when we first succeeded in raising kelp, we considered the development of kelp cultivation as one of our important tasks and decided to go ahead with deep-sea fishing, coastal fishing and kelp cultivation at the same time. Since Hai-lan's return, with the old Party secretary's keen support, kelp cultivation in the shallows has taken a big leap forward." Yang paused before he continued, "Now Hai-lan's become our Number One fisherwoman. She's well-educated, intelligent and daring, and has high political consciousness. Our success in raising kelp owes a lot to her."

When the cultivation of kelp seedlings started, Hai-lan led a group of girls to build a thatched shed out of old nets, straw and bamboo at Green Port. Then they drove stakes in the harbour and roped off an area for the kelp grounds — building these up from scratch. In bitter winter, the hardest season for the trial cultivation, they had to dip their hands into barrels of icy water and carefully insert the kelp seedlings between strands of strings. Then, braving storms, they hitched these strings of seedlings to the kelp ground ropes. After about a month they had done most of the job. A few more days' work would bring the whole thing to a finish. But just then a strong cold wave struck the East Sea. The northwester whirled snowflakes as big as goose feathers. The water in the barrels began to freeze, so that the work was held up. The brigade office decided to stop the job for some days.

Having prepared a meal, Aunt Lin lit the hand-stove and waited for Hai-lan to come back. But after all the other team members were back, there was still no sign of the girl. Aunt Lin became worried. Picking up the girl's new cotton-padded coat and wrapping up the stove in a padded cover, she hurried to the work shed.

There she found Hai-lan, squatting by a barrel with both hands in the icy water, hard at work. At sight of the girl's hands red and swollen with cold the old woman burst out with deep concern, "Child, you. . . ."

Lifting her head, Hai-lan saw it was Aunt Lin. She said smilingly, "Ma, I'm on the last batch, won't be long now. If we wait we'll miss the boat. Why don't you go on home first? See how fierce the snowstorm is!"

Aunt Lin put down the stove, draped the coat over the girl's shoulders, then sat side by side with her and joined in the work.

"Ma, you . . . you can't. . . ." Hai-lan objected.

The old woman glanced at the girl with a loving smile. "Oh yes, I can. My hands have been steeped in sea water since I was a child."

The two of them, one old one young, sat together by the barrel stringing seedlings. The northwest wind was howling outside. From time to time snowflakes were blown into the shed so that very

soon their hair was dotted with white as if sprinkled with snowy plum-blossoms.

"So mother and daughter are here carrying on a competition, eh?" exclaimed the old secretary, entering abruptly. He was white with snow and wet from head to foot.

Mother and daughter cried out in surprise.

"It's nothing," the old man chuckled. "I've been having a look at our kelp grounds. Hai-lan, some ropes near the wind gap were snapped by the waves."

With an exclamation Hai-lan sprang up to rush out. The old man hurriedly stopped her. "No need to go. I've already fastened them."

The girl turned round, gazing at the old man in his sixties, and cried with emotion, "Dad. . . ."

The kelp seedlings, transplanted in time, grew green then emerald, and finally turned a dark greenish brown. After more than a hundred days, the trial cultivation turned out a success.

Filled with admiration, I asked Yang to take me to see Hai-lan at once.

"All right," he promised readily. "You can have a look at our kelp grounds while you're there."

As we were heading for Green Port an anxious voice called to us: "Hurry up, brigade leader. There's trouble at the kelp grounds!"

Startled we broke into a run along the gravel path skirting the sea-shore. Around us the fog was so thick that we could not make out the surface of the sea, nor the shoals. As we approached Green Port footsteps sounded before us. We halted promptly.

"Who's there?" Yang asked.

"Oh, brigade leader, it's me," a clear voice replied promptly.

"Ah-hsiang, what's happened?" Yang asked again.

Three figures appeared before us: two militiawomen and a lean fellow of over fifty with his hands bound behind his back. Like a hen hauled out from the water, he looked both bedraggled and baleful. His cheeks were hollow and pale, his eyes goggled like those of a shark. The two militiawomen, one holding a gun, another an



axe, kept their alert eyes on him. Taking a step forward, Ah-hsiang reported to Yang:

“Shark was cutting the ropes of the kelp grounds. Hai-lan caught him at it.”

“Where’s Hai-lan?”

“Out rejoining the rope.”

By now some militiamen had arrived. Yang ordered, “Take this devil to the brigade office first. We’ll call an accusation meeting when the old Party secretary comes back.” Then he said to Ah-hsiang, “Come along, let’s go to the kelp grounds and have a look.”

On the way Ah-hsiang told us what had happened.

Early that morning, Hai-lan had ferried the secretary to the commune to attend a meeting. On her return trip the fog became thicker. Hai-lan thought: The kelp harvest’s at hand. The class enemy may take advantage of the weather to sabotage it. There were militiamen and team members on sentry duty and patrolling the grounds but the unexpected thick fog worried her. She made a detour to the kelp grounds.

As she approached the grounds the visibility went from bad to worse. But thanks to her skill gained from night practising, she ma-

naged to steer the right course. Finally she neared Cuttle-fish Shoal where the main ropes were fastened. There were some submerged reefs around here so that even on a fine day an experienced boatman had to be very careful to steer clear of them, let alone in such bad weather. However, these dangerous places were precisely the ones, she thought, where evil-doers were likely to make trouble. So, she made straight for the perilous shoal. Deftly she rowed the sampan quietly forward through swift currents steering clear of one hidden reef after another till the little craft reached the outer part of Cuttle-fish Shoal. She stopped rowing and looked round, but could see nothing suspicious. Suddenly a low clanking sound mingled with the roar of the waves roused her to vigilance. She quickly rowed into the shoal. But the sound broke off. After quite a while a dark figure emerged from the water two metres from her. A hand with an axe reached towards the ropes. At once Hai-lan struck out with her oar. A yell burst out, the axe plumped into the sea, and the dark figure submerged. But his arms, numbed by the blow from the oar, were unable to move in the water. Three blasts of a conch pierced the fog. Then Hai-lan plunged into the waves.

When the patrolling militiamen rushed to the spot, Hai-lan already had the fellow’s hands tied and had pulled him on board. The “sea rat” was no other than Shark. Handing him over to Ah-hsiang and the others, she led some team members to check the ropes and found one of them was cut.

When we arrived at the kelp grounds the fog had begun to scatter. Rays of sunlight penetrated the curtain of mist and shed their light on Green Port. Now we could see some girls, each on a sampan, headed by one in a faded blue jacket, the kind worn by students, rowing to and fro through the dispersing mist.

Cupping his hands round his mouth Yang shouted, “Hey, Hai-lan, how is it now?”

“Oh, brigade leader,” a crisp voice replied, “we’ve already rejoined the ropes. No harm has come to our kelp.”

I looked in the direction of the voice and saw a vigorous girl in her

early twenties with a tanned face bathed in sunlight. She was rowing swiftly towards the shore.

She seemed to me like a petrel soaring over the waves to brave the tempest.

A gust of wind blowing in our faces flapped the white plastic parcel at my waist, disclosing the pine seedlings. Glancing at them I said to myself: Under the loving care of their masters they will strike root on this East Sea fishing island and stand erect in the sunlight.

Illustrated by Huang Ying-bao



Liu Tsan-hsiao

Uncle Yang of Red Brook Valley

Yangshan District was an old revolutionary base. In the autumn of 1946 when the Chiang Kai-shek bandits launched an offensive against our liberated areas in Shantung, in order to whittle down the enemy's effective our forces moved away from the base to fight; so this district became temporarily occupied by the enemy.

One day, my squad passed through this mountain district after escorting some cadres to another area. It was already nearing midnight and we were racing fast to get back to our base. As we were climbing a peak overgrown with brambles, we heard the tramp of footsteps somewhere below us and angry cries of protest. I nudged the vice squad leader and whispered:

"Watch out!"

Then at our signal our comrades swiftly took cover behind some bushes, peeping through the leaves at the scene at the foot of the peak.

Soon we could see blurred figures down below. The dim moonlight enabled us to discern some villagers, their arms fastened by ropes, being hustled up the slope by a sizable contingent of Kuomintang

troops and some landlords' armed forces. I turned to glance at the vice squad leader and found he was watching me too. As I moved closer to discuss with him how to deal with this situation, the enemy halted. Over a dozen of them, fanning out, forced the bound villagers to the edge of a cliff. Then their officer barked out an order, and they raised their guns ready to fire. In a flash it occurred to me: The enemy's in the open, we're under cover; we can surprise them, rescue the villagers and quickly withdraw. Glancing at the vice squad leader and my other comrades I rapped out the order:

"Fire!"

Some dozen hand-grenades whizzed through the air. As the smoke from the shattering explosions cleared we saw that quite a few of the enemy had fallen while the rest were crawling away or milling about in confusion. I was just about to dash down to help the villagers to get away when a sturdy figure darted out from some nearby bushes and rushed to the cliff. Swiftly he cut the ropes from the villagers' wrists and led them off at a run. All this was boldly and adroitly done. However, the enemy troops soon came to their senses. They began to fire back at us and to pursue the villagers. Leaping to my feet I shouted:

"Comrades, stop the enemy!"

We rushed down to intercept them, seized a stone enclosure built by hunters in the mountains, and kept the enemy at bay on a small patch of open ground.

There were about two platoons of enemy troops. When they found that the villagers had escaped they concentrated their fire on us. Their bullets, descending like a horde of locusts, chipped the stones of our enclosure and sent sparks flying. Though we were numerically inferior, the terrain was in our favour and it was so dark that the enemy could not tell the size of our force. So I kept my squad on the move, shooting at the troops further off and throwing hand-grenades at those close by. In no time that small clearing was strewn with enemy corpses.

Still the remnant troops, urged on by their officer, were edging forward towards us. When next I raised my revolver, I suddenly got hit on my left thigh. Gritting my teeth I hurled another grenade

and, under cover of its explosion, tore a strip from my trouser-leg and hastily bandaged the wound.

The situation was now critical, for the gunfire had alerted the enemy in the village near by and reinforcements were coming. As I fired back with my revolver, I stepped over to the vice squad leader and told him to lead the squad away from the rear into a gully. He made no move, just crouching by the stone wall and firing at the approaching enemy. I repeated my instructions, saying sternly it was an order. They were to slip away first and I would follow. For I knew that if we waited for the main force of the enemy to arrive, they could surround us on all sides and then our situation would be desperate. After a second's hesitation the vice squad leader laid several of his own hand-grenades in front of me, then turned and led our men off through a gap on the west side.

Just at this moment, however, the enemy bombardment suddenly stopped. I saw that the bandit troops, using the bushes as cover, were converging on our enclosure from two sides. I felt the ammunition in my pocket: I still had several dozen bullets left in addition to six hand-grenades. I could put paid to quite a few of the enemy, giving our men time to move away to safety before withdrawing myself. Since our stone enclosure was the enemy target, I crawled away and hid behind a large boulder near by. As I did this, east of the stone wall I heard the Kuomintang officer bray like a jackass:

"Listen, you Reds in there! You are now completely surrounded. You'd better..."

I threw a hand-grenade in that direction. As it burst another grenade exploded, to be followed by the sound of running footsteps through the bushes on the southeast side.

"Look out!" yelled a Kuomintang soldier. "Someone's escaped."

"After him!" brayed the officer. "Catch him alive."

They rushed down the slope helter-skelter. From the foot then I heard a man call in a confident voice:

"Come on, you swine! Follow me if you dare."

I was surprised. Who could this be, this man risking his own life to help me get away? I remembered that sturdy figure who had rushed to the cliff to rescue the villagers. On no account must I let this com-

rade be captured. As I raised my revolver meaning to draw the enemy back to my side, I heard footsteps behind me and, whirling round, saw a boy in his early teens. Running towards me he grabbed my arm.

"Go quickly, uncle!" he panted.

Without stopping to ask where he came from, I shoved him away saying, "Clear off, it's dangerous here."

I had one idea only in mind: I must not let that comrade be caught by the enemy. But the lad grabbed hold of my arm again.

"Don't be stubbron," he urged impatiently. "Beat it, quick. Those devils will soon know they've been tricked and double back."

I looked ahead. The enemy had already disappeared from sight, so it was no use my trying to follow them. I let the boy help me up then and, limping from the pain in my thigh, started off along the path our men had taken.

On the way I asked the lad several times where he was from, but he gave evasive answers. From time to time he glanced back as if he had something on his mind. I deliberately stopped and pretended to be angry.

"If you won't tell me who you are, I won't move another step," I threatened.

He told me then that his name was Pillar, his surname Yang, and the man who had lured the enemy away was his father. Earlier that night the KMT troops had carried off some local cadres and other villagers, so this Uncle Yang had trailed them secretly. When he saw the scoundrels force the villagers up the mountain, he knew that they meant to kill them. A chopper in one hand and a hand-grenade slung from his belt, he followed the enemy with his son, hoping to find some way to rescue the villagers, little thinking we were in the vicinity. When we started firing at the enemy, Uncle Yang seized this chance to set the villagers free. Later, seeing us hemmed in, he gave Pillar certain instructions and threw his hand-grenade to lure the enemy away. This account of his heroism made warmth surge through me. I halted again.

"Pillar," I said, "I'm not going. I must see that your dad gets back safely."

Pillar grinned. "Don't worry," he replied confidently. "Dad will soon be back. We're close to our cave now, uncle."

Seeing how confident he looked I relaxed. We went on a little further till we reached Red Brook Valley.

This was actually a steep narrow gorge overshadowed by green pines on the cliffs on either side. A clear spring gurgled through it. With Pillar's help I climbed up the cliff overgrown with brambles and we stopped before a stone dam.

"We've arrived," announced Pillar.

He pushed aside some thick brambles to reveal the entrance of a cave hollowed out beneath the dam, large enough for people to take shelter there. The crops growing on top and the rocks covering the entrance ensured that no passer-by would suspect its existence. After Pillar led me into the cave I wanted to go and make a search for his father, but he wouldn't hear of it. When he saw how worried I was he slipped out himself.

Some rays of light fell through cracks in the rock, enough to enable me to examine my wound. The bullet had passed out through the back of the thigh-bone, so it was nothing serious. But the loss of blood while walking had left me rather limp. Leaning against the stone wall, I wondered whether Pillar had found his father, whether my comrades had withdrawn safely, and what my next step should be. Soon I dozed off. Some time later a cricket explored the tip of my nose and set me sneezing. Turning over I woke up to hear people talking outside.

"Did you tell the comrade who we were?"

"Yes," Pillar answered.

"Did he ask you to look for me?"

"Yes."

"Haven't I told you, lad, not to talk about the work we do? And how could you leave him here all by himself?"

I realized this must be Uncle Yang. Then a rock was removed from the entrance and a man appeared there.

"So you're awake, comrade," he said.

"Uncle!" I sprang forward to grip his hand.

A man of just over fifty, his coarse blue cloth jacket was torn in several places. His clearly etched features showed intelligence and character. While I was too moved to speak he examined my wound.

"Young fellow, I've come rather late," he said. "Sorry to have left you on your own here so long. At least I've taught those devils a good lesson. Pity I didn't manage to finish off that jackass. . . ."

Listening to his account of the action as I lay beside him, I felt like a child in its father's arms. The soothing touch of his big callused hands made me forget my pain.

He tore a strip of cloth from his white girdle and from his pocket took some medicinal herbs which he crushed with a stone and spread on the improvised bandage, then tied this round my wound.

"This is better than anything you'd get from a doctor," he chuckled.

Having dressed my wound he told me the situation in their village.

The name of the village was Yang Family Village. When the landlords' revanchist corps came back, they posted one brigade there and set up a security headquarters. The head of the security police, Chen Wan-liang, was now busily preparing for his daughter's wedding. In order to cut a dash, he had invited over some KMT troops from the town. These bandits murdered, looted and ran amuck in the village, savagely venting their hatred on the liberated peasants so that conditions there were most unsafe. This being the case, he had decided to bring Old Lo and Young Ho to the cave that night to stay with me. I asked him who they were, and he told me they were two of our wounded soldiers who had been entrusted to his care when our troops moved away. It struck me that in a situation so fraught with peril caring for three wounded men would add greatly to his trouble and danger.

"Uncle," I said, "now those devils are on the rampage, you'd better give us some crutches and this evening we'll slip away. . . ."

Before I could finish he stopped me with a laugh.

"To try to catch up with your units? You think I can't look after you well enough?"

I hastily explained that was not my idea.

Watching my embarrassment with some amusement he said, "You just take it easy and rest here till you're better. I've been doing

underground liaison work for our Party for some years. As long as I'm here and we have the villagers' support, those swine will never find you." He added quietly, "Take it from me: though our main force has withdrawn, our Party organization still remains. It's the Party that's sent me to look after you."

Pillar produced from somewhere a big pile of soft cushy grass which he spread out evenly as a mattress for me. He brought over some pine saplings too, then fetched another bucket of cool spring water. I asked him what these were for.

He winked knowingly. "I'm planting these outside the cave. They'll keep out the wind and serve as camouflage."

When father and son had cleaned up the cave and were ready to go and fetch Old Lo and Young Ho, I asked Uncle Yang to try to find out what had happened to my squad and the vice squad leader.

When night fell, Uncle Yang returned disguised as a tinker with his son, bringing with them Old Lo and Young Ho. As their wounds were more serious than mine, I washed them with salt water and changed the dressings. While Uncle Yang spread grass for them to lie on, he told me that my squad had got safely away with the help of the Party underground in Wang Family Village at the foot of the mountain. He urged all three of us to rest quietly here, promising that the village Party organization would get into touch with our units. We had to agree since this was the Party's decision.

I noticed that Uncle Yang had a whole tinker's kit on his shoulder-pole. It was a familiar sight to me as I'd worked as a blacksmith myself before joining the army.

"You look quite professional, uncle, with that tinker's outfit," I said.

He laughed. "Sure, I'm a tinker by trade. I can mend pots and pans all right."

"We can team up if you'll take me as your apprentice."

"What's that?" He clearly did not understand.

I explained with a smile, "Before I joined the army I worked as a blacksmith."

Uncle Yang clapped my shoulder and beamed. "Fine. When we've finished up those Chiang Kai-shek bandits we'll form a team.

I'll mend pots and pans for the villagers and you can make hoes and spades for them."

We chatted for most of the night before he went off with Pillar.

From then on, Uncle Yang brought us up our meals every day. He was an excellent cook, able to make simple cornmeal or dried sweet-potatoes taste delicious. He also made a tasty soup of turnip-tops.

Once I said to him, "Uncle Yang, you're a first-rate cook."

"Of course," he replied with a twinkle. "I'm a professional. I've been cooking for more than ten years so my dishes should taste good."

"Didn't you say you were a tinker? How come you're a cook too? What's your real trade?"

He guffawed. "It's very simple. I learned any trade I could use to beat those bandits."

"Where did you work as a cook?"

"In a Japanese fort and in a KMT army headquarters. Don't you believe me? Even Chen Wan-liang, now that he's preparing for his daughter's wedding, has asked me to cook him a feast."

He was a good talker and his jokes often set us laughing so that we forgot our pain. Sometimes when he was busy he sent Pillar up with our meals. Pillar would pack the food in a basket and cover it with grass, then come to the cave on the pretence that he was going to dry the hay in the mountains. This underground shelter was so well camouflaged that the enemy troops who often searched the mountains would scout through the thickets and bushes near by but never suspect the existence of a cave under the dam, and so they hardly ever glanced this way.

However, once we had a narrow escape. Coming out for an airing one night leaning on my crutch, I carelessly trampled some grass in front of the entrance. Early next morning a KMT patrol noticed the crushed grass and stopped to investigate. Luckily Pillar arrived just then with our breakfast. When he saw the enemy snuffing round like bloodhounds, he was worried. To alert us, he started singing lustily:

Our cattle graze in pastures green,
And plumper calves were never seen. . . .

A KMT soldier beckoned to him with a smile. "Come over here, boy. I want to ask you something."

Pillar casually put down his basket and went over.

"Have you seen any Reds here?" the soldier asked.

Pretending to have misheard, Pillar retorted, "How could there be any rats here? You've smashed our pots and left us with nothing to eat."

"Have you seen men wearing bandages and slings?"

"Bangles and rings? Not likely! You've robbed us of everything."

The soldier swore and slapped the boy's face. "How come the grass here is trampled down? Speak up."

Pillar set up a wail, "Didn't you see me cutting grass just now by the dam? Why beat me?"

The soldiers raised their heads and saw there was a path, sure enough, on the dam. Cursing, they went on their way. We breathed more freely then and put down our guns. Pillar came in quite unruffled.

"Sorry, uncles, for keeping you waiting," was all he said.

I clapped the boy on the back. "Weren't you frightened, Pillar?"

"Why should I be? We've seen plenty of those KMT and landlord bastards. They may look fierce, but they only frighten cowards. My dad says: if we can get you back safely to your units, we shouldn't care even if it costs us our lives."

I was very moved. So Uncle Yang was ready to sacrifice everything for our safety.

A fortnight went quickly by. Thanks to Uncle Yang's good care my wound gradually healed. Unfortunately my two companions' wounds had suppurated, and Old Lo had a high fever. Just herbs and salt water were clearly not good enough. We needed some other medicine. Yet Uncle Yang still seemed quite confident.

"What medicine do you think we need, Squad Leader Chin?" he asked me one day.

I listed some names and he carefully noted them down.

But when asked the reason for this question he said, "I just asked out of curiosity. Forget it."

After he left I felt extremely worried. Why had he asked me to recommend these medicines? Was he going to run further risks for us? All day I was on tenterhooks.

As soon as darkness fell, I told Old Lo and Young Ho what I had in mind, tucked my revolver in my belt and went out. Following the landmarks described to me by Uncle Yang, I reached a lonely thatched hut east of the village. There was a light inside. Peering through a crack in the door, I saw Pillar putting food into his basket while Uncle Yang sitting near the door was counting some money.

"Mind you don't forget their meals, lad," he said. "I'll come back as soon as I've bought the medicine."

"Don't worry," Pillar answered. "I won't let them miss a single meal."

So Uncle Yang really meant to go and buy medicine in town!

I called out softly, "Open the door, uncle. It's me."

After a pause the door opened with a creak. Uncle Yang and Pillar stepped out.

"What are you doing here?" they asked.

I slipped inside. Grasping their hands I said, "Uncle, why didn't you tell me that you were going to buy medicine? We can work out a plan together."

Uncle Yang made me sit on the *kang*.

"Well, squad leader, I'm worried about their wounds festering. Anything may happen if I don't get some good medicine. So I reported it to our Party organization and raised some money. As I've a friend in a pharmacy in town, it's been decided that I should make the trip." He paused and then continued, "I did want to discuss this with you, but that leg of yours isn't completely better yet and I was afraid you might insist on going too."

The town was a dangerous place, filled with enemy troops. How could I let him take such a risk? Since my wound was more or less healed, I insisted on going in his place. However, he was adamant in his refusal. He argued that he knew the town well and no one

would pay much attention to an old man. Finally we agreed to let the Party organization decide.

The next day there was to be a fair in town. First thing in the morning Uncle Yang came and told me that the Party had agreed to let me accompany him on this trip. We made our preparations and set off at once. He was dressed like a villager going to the fair to sell the home-grown produce in an old sack over his shoulder. I wore his tattered jacket, tied two strips of dirty oilcloth over my shoes as gaiters, and carried his tinker's kit on a shoulder-pole, taking up my old trade again.

Whether because of the fair or for some other reason, the enemy had redoubled their vigilance. Two guards had been posted at the city gate and everyone going in or out was questioned and searched. Having managed to get through the gate, we found a quiet little eating-house. I ordered a bowl of soup and drank it slowly while Uncle Yang went to the pharmacy. He came back just as I finished my bowl of soup. Apart from buying medicine, he had also bought some spices and condiments such as aniseed and pepper. I wrapped up the medicine in a piece of oilcloth and hid it in the tinker's stove, piling a thick layer of cinders on top. When all was ready, Uncle Yang paid the bill and put the change in the pocket of my jacket. I knew what he had in mind. The KMT troops were so greedy that a tip might be needed to get us past the check post.

The enemy's first check post was at a cross-road near the city gate. When we got there we found two landlords' thugs, one fat and the other thin, on sentry duty. They questioned and searched Uncle Yang then let him pass. When my turn came they looked more suspicious and ordered me to take off my jacket. Instead of doing this, I put my hand in my pocket. Their eyes were sharp. They rushed forward to grab all my loose change, then waved me on.

The second enemy check post was more strict. Two fierce KMT soldiers with rifles had planted themselves on each side of the gate like door-gods and were interrogating each passer-by. Anyone who aroused their suspicions was taken to their headquarters for further grilling. Uncle Yang gave me a look, meaning that I must keep my head, and I nodded imperceptibly in return. Going up to the



soldiers, I put down my shoulder-pole, wiped my sweaty face with the cloth over my shoulder and quietly let them frisk me. After they had searched me, they kicked at the tinker's kit.

"How many years have you been a tinker?" one asked.

I pointed at Uncle Yang and answered calmly, "I've been learning this trade since I came to my uncle's place when I was ten. First I learned to mend bowls and plates, then bigger things like vats. In busy farming seasons I also repair tools like pickaxes and ploughshares. If you've a job for me..."

The two men had lost patience during my rambling answer. The one who had searched me picked up the poker lying by the stove and started poking inside it. I had hoped they would get fed up by my long-windedness and just shove us angrily away. I had never thought

they would search so seriously. Now I braced myself for the worst. But because of the thick layer of cinders I had put in, the man poking at random didn't discover the medicine, so he threw the poker away. By then the other had finished searching Uncle Yang. I calmly straightened my clothes and bent down to pick up the shoulder-pole, ready to leave.

Just then an officer with a mauser on his back came down the street, followed by a soldier carrying a rifle and kit-bag. They seemed to be going out of town on some mission. As they approached, the officer glanced at Uncle Yang and a look of doubt appeared on his face. He turned and brayed at the two guards:

"Who is this old fellow?"

The two soldiers sprang to attention and replied, "A peasant going to the fair with his nephew. We've just searched him, sir."

"A peasant going to the fair? His face looks familiar."

I realized then that this was the officer with a bray like a jackass who had led the attack on our squad. Now we had met again!

Uncle Yang straightened up and said with a smile, "Quite right, officer. You came on some business to our security police headquarters about a fortnight ago. You tasted the dishes I'd cooked."

The officer, taken aback, at once demanded, "Where do you come from then?"

"Yang Family Village south of town."

"What's your job?"

"Cook."

"What's the security chief's name?"

"Chen Wan-liang."

"How old is he?"

"He had his fifty-second birthday on the Dragon Boat Festival. Weren't you at the feast that day, sir?"

He answered readily and looked perfectly natural, but still the officer would not let us leave.

"Detain them," he ordered. "Get somebody from their village to vouch for them and fetch them tomorrow."

Uncle Yang looked worried at that. "But, sir," he said, "don't you know that tomorrow's the wedding-day of the security chief's

daughter? She's his second daughter who studies in a high school in town. I've heard that the young man is the only son of an official. And I'm the one in charge of preparing the feast. Look at all the spices and condiments here. If I hold things up I shall get into serious trouble."

This convinced the officer and put him in a dilemma. Before he could speak again, another KMT soldier ran over and said:

"Report, Sergeant Shang, just now headquarters asked again for that money from south of town. They insist on us collecting it in full by tomorrow."

Jackass Shang turned and swore, "Shut up! Can't you see that I'm on my way now to collect the money?"

The soldier dared say no more and meekly withdrew.

The officer thought for a second, then told Uncle Yang, "No one gets away with monkey business with me. Today I'll escort you back to your village. If you really are the security chief's cook, I shall apologize for my mistake. If you're not..." He patted his gun with a baleful look.

Uncle Yang laughed. "We're certainly honoured! You'd better stay there for the feast tomorrow and taste the special dish I'll cook for you — a mandarin fish fresh from the river."

I felt confident too. I was thinking: Once we're clear of town we'll be able to deal with him.

So we went out of the city gate with Jackass and his guard following some paces behind. Yang Family Village was less than seven miles from town. The first half of the way was on a highroad but the second half ran through the mountains. Jackass remained vigilant, holding his gun at the ready as he walked. It would not be easy to take any action on the highway, I thought. We'd have to wait till we were in the mountains. Uncle Yang probably had the same idea. After we reached the mountains, he led us along steep paths till we came to Red Brook Valley. Apparently Jackass knew these parts fairly well, for now he stopped.

"Halt!" he brayed. "This isn't the way to Yang Family Village, is it?"

It was time for the show-down. I put down my tinker's kit and grasped the shoulder-pole, turning to Uncle Yang.

"Uncle, shouldn't we take that short cut lower down?" I asked.

He looked back at me meaningfully and clapped his hand on his forehead.

"Yes, I'm growing old and dodderly. That's the path by the bend there. Look."

The two men behind us turned their heads to look. I took this chance to swing my pole at the guard, felling him to the ground. When I whirled round to hit Jackass, he dodged and I missed him. In a flash he raised his gun, but dropping my pole I leapt forward and knocked it out of his hand. Then I tackled and threw him. We wrestled for a bit on the ground, rolling together to the side of the cliff. There he panicked and loosened his grip. I straddled him and throttled him till he went limp and lifeless. By this time Uncle Yang had dispatched the guard. He came over and with one kick sent Jackass hurtling down the cliff. I dragged over the guard's body and kicked it down too.

"Now they can go together to taste my mandarin fish," chortled Uncle Yang.

I collected my tinker's kit, taking the medicine out of the stove to give it to Uncle Yang and putting away the two guns we had got from the enemy.

"Looks as if there'll really be fun in the security chief's house tomorrow," I said.

"Let them have their fun," he answered. "We must hurry back to give this medicine to Old Lo and Young Ho."

In high spirits then we hurried back to the cave.

The medicine proved effective. Before long the two men's wounds healed. Then our units sent comrades to fetch the three of us back. One autumn night when the air was fresh and cool, we said a reluctant goodbye to Uncle Yang and Pillar and took our leave. Only then did I learn that Uncle Yang was one of the leading cadres of the village's Party organization.

During the next year our unit saw plenty of action, winning one victory after another. Though we never met Uncle Yang again, whenever I closed my eyes I had a clear picture of his wise, resolute face and of Pillar's too, radiant with youth and vigour. They seemed to be with us on our march to victory.

Illustrated by Tai Tun-pang



SONGS OF A WORKER

Huang Sheng-hsiao

I'm a Longshoreman

I'm a longshoreman.

Along the river I demonstrate my skills and mettle,
With my left hand I bring over the whole of Shanghai,
With my right I carry away the whole of Chungking.

I'm a longshoreman.

Ablaze with true revolutionary vigour,
Ten thousand suns have risen since I started loading,
Ten thousand moons have watched me at my work.

I'm a longshoreman.

Along the river a continual battle rages,
When steel bars slide down a hatch with crash and clatter,
The Dragon King cowers and hides in his watery pavilion.

I'm a longshoreman.
As a vanguard worker for the construction of our country,
I find Mount Tai but a small mound I can easily shoulder,
If need be I can shift this whole spinning planet.



Guarding Our Great Motherland (oil painting)
by Shen Chia-wei



Better and Better Every Day

The day before yesterday when a loaded freighter came,
We carried its cargo up the slope piece by piece,
But in one whole day and night,
Moved but one-tenth of it.

Yesterday another shipload of goods arrived,
We pulled them up in the small flat carts we'd made.
Faster than the previous day by quite a bit,
But our sweat would have filled several cauldrons.

Today there's another freighter waiting at the dock,
And we're prepared with a far better device,
Its load we'll place on our new conveyer belts,
One man then can do the work of dozens.

But tomorrow when another cargo ship arrives,
We'll move so fast it'll take your breath away,
Amazed, you'll see our new super crane,
Haul vessel and cargo both together to the warehouse gate.



Kueimen Gate Is Opened Releasing the Rafts

Flowers bloom now along the gorges' sunlit banks,
When sweet rains fall they gladden many hearts.
Now Kueimen Gate* has been opened wide to make a highway,
A thousand log-rafts can safely sail along it.

This grand procession is a magnificent sight,
The wide Yangtse is filled like a busy thoroughfare,
When the lead raft enters Hupeh Province,
The last still lingers in far-away Szechuan.

The east wind lends a helping hand,
As the rapids hasten our convoys along their way.

*Kueimen in Szechuan Province is also known as Kueichow. The Yangtse is so narrow here that in the old days it was known as the gate to Szechuan.

Steel hawsers link the scales of each long dragon,
So that from head to tail we can now walk safely.

We fear not either wind or rain,
Nor dread sullen, lowering clouds,
When valiant raftsmen boldly face the wild winds,
All evil fantasies fade into oblivion.

Though whirlpools gape like fearsome glaring eyes,
Fierce and monstrous in their depth and size,
Our convoy of rafts so tightly linked
Sweeps down the river straight on course.

Our gallant raftsmen, their hearts tuned to the Party,
Are tempered and steeled by storms and tempests,
Their loyal hearts remain firm and staunch,
Their gaze calm and steady, adapting to all change.

Brushing safely past the Yenyu Shoal,*
Devil's Pass they then leave far behind,
As the whistle from the launch vibrates along the banks,
The convoy, swift as an arrow, flies through the narrow gorge.

As the hoary helmsman steers the launch,
He recalls past events one by one.
A thousand memories fill his mind
Of the fierce battles he's witnessed through the years.

As a raftsmen in previous bitter years,
Daily he risked his life on the heaving waters.

*Yenyu Shoal is a treacherous reef in the Yangtse near Kueimen Gate.

His palms, rough and calloused by a thousand poles,
Were still unable to ward off poverty and debts.

Tying hawsers in winter froze his very blood,
In mid-summer's sweltering heat he still must pole.
Such biting cold and burning heat were scarcely to be borne,
But to see his family starve was the greatest pain of all.

A hatred deeper than the Yangtse's waters
Strengthened his arm and pole to smash the old.
When the people's army reached the great river,
Spring came to the town beside the narrow gorge.

The whole Yangtse now belongs to the people,
Wide the channel, less turbulent its waters.
He has cast his pole and oars away for ever,
To grip the steering-wheel of a river launch.

The swift rolling Yangtse may still have hidden reefs,
Lowering clouds may yet darken the brightest sky,
But with Chairman Mao's works to guide and put an end to fear,
There's no danger ahead but that can be overcome.

A red sun glistens on our rivers and seas,
An east wind caresses our great land,
Dispelling all evil mists and superstitions
As we haul timber from a sea of forests.

Now our propellers churn up the swirling water,
Across our motherland grand new buildings rise,

To fill urgent needs on both sides of the Great Wall,
Kueimen Gate has been opened to let the raft flotillas through.

The red sun lights up a thousand hills,
The log-rafts pass swiftly along the cliff-lined river,
Yangtse raftsmen now navigate the gorges with the greatest ease,
Their laughter can be heard far off on the horizon.



The Flowing River

Using the snow-white clouds for our manuscript,
And ink-slab ground by the churning whirlpools,
We'll use the river to write an ode,
Masters of the Yangtse now, we follow the Party.

Do you know how high our aspirations are?
You can compare them in height with the Tienshan.
Do you know how long our ode will be?
You can measure its length by the Yangtse River.

We shall sing of our brave river workers,
Who've battled the mighty river their whole life long.
Enduring violent storms, the fury of its waters,
Now they've opened it up for more than ten thousand leagues.

They've blasted the towering rock at Devil's Pass,
They've sheared the ridge off Yenyu Shoal,
Making a river highway through Szechuan,
Releasing the waters almost to their source.

Countless lights as signals have been placed,
Enabling big ships to sail both day and night,
Boats and barges sing in harmony with the water,
As their songs float up to the Omei Mountain peaks.

We'll sing of our stout raftsmen,
Always braving the swift flowing currents
They are the eager steeds of our new times,
Transporting the lumber needed by our motherland.

Strengthened by facing the raging tempest,
Caring for neither flood nor thunder's roar,
Gripping the tiller they now glide over the waves,
New skippers are born on this ancient waterway.

Their muscled arms can lift the peaks aloft,
Huge pillars now line the gorges and the port,
As if with wings, whole cargoes are unloaded,
While warehouses empty themselves into waiting freighters.

Accepting both the glory and the problems of our times,
They welcome struggle, fight all adverse currents,
Grappling with all that is evil and reactionary,
They fling off night's dark curtain to let in the shining sun.

The more we write, the more our strength grows,
Our shanties grow louder as we sing.
Music from the Yangtse reaches the great capital,
As we sing our ode to the red sun.



Huang Sheng-hsiao, Longshoreman and Poet

Huang Sheng-hsiao, a longshoreman from Ichang in the middle reaches of the Yangtse, is fifty-eight. Since Liberation in 1949 he has written over a thousand poems and six collections of his work have been published. Most of his poems describe the life of the longshoremen and sailors who ply up and down the Yangtse Gorges. Brimming with a militant spirit and working-class pride, they are very popular among the workers all along the river.

How did a longshoreman come to write poems? And what gives his poems their revolutionary fire?

Recently, with these questions in mind, I went to interview this longshoreman poet.

I found him on a steamboat going from Wuhan in Hupeh to Chungking in Szechuan. To give us plenty of chances for conversation, the captain of the boat put me in Huang Sheng-hsiao's cabin. By his bunk was a bamboo crate with shoulder-straps containing his clothes, books and writing material which he carries on his back when he travels on foot through the hills or along the towpath.



Huang Sheng-hsiao asking the workers' opinions

When first boarding the boat I had been struck by his weather-beaten face as I watched him pulling the hawser with the crew. So my first question was:

"How do you manage, working full-time, to write so many poems?"

His eyes on the rolling river, he answered with feeling: "I love my wharfs, my Yangtse. And I know from my experience all these years that if I stop working with my mates I lose my grip, my mind becomes a blank and my pencil grows blunt."

The facts bear him out. Many of Huang Sheng-hsiao's poems were produced in the course of work and mass struggles. To illustrate this, he told me the following story.

"For more than twenty years I've been living and working with other dockers. After knocking off from work I sometimes write and sketch or chat and sing with my friends. I'm learning all the time

from advanced workers and the splendid way they live up to their high ideals. I remember a labour contest we once had. After the job was finished one docker said cheerfully, 'Today's work went fine. One shake of our shoulders and the whole cargo was loaded.' I thought this remark of his showed tremendous spirit and put the feeling of all of us into words. So I wrote these two lines:

We longshoremen have tremendous spirit,
With one shake of our shoulders the whole cargo is loaded.

A bit later when I was loading another ship, I saw this fully loaded steamboat start upstream, its whistle blowing, belching white smoke; and that gave me the idea for two more lines:

So packed with goods is the boat that it starts complaining
As it steams up to Szechuan with white clouds overhead.

This poem made quite a hit with other dockers."

Huang Sheng-hsiao is now an executive member of the Ichang trade union council, but he still works as an ordinary longshoreman. He told me, "I wouldn't be able to produce a thing if I didn't live and work with my mates and learn from the masses. Even someone who comes from the working class as I do must follow Chairman Mao's instructions and steep himself for long periods in the life and struggle of the working people."

That prompted me to ask him another question: "I hear that before Liberation you were illiterate. How did you come to write poems?"

"I wanted to write about things I hated and loved."

In the grip of emotion he told me about his past.

"In the old society, the men of our family were longshoremen for generations. My granddad towed boats on the towpath all his life. My dad worked a ferry. As for me, before Liberation I knew what it was to be squeezed dry by Kuomintang diehards, local bullies and foreign imperialists. Because we were so poor, I had to start working when I was only nine selling fried fritters and melon-seeds; after that I worked as a blacksmith and later as a docker, doing coolie work with a shoulder-pole on the wharves. I towed boats and loaded and unloaded goods for the capitalists, yet my mother and my daughter

starved to death. Later on I described my life in those days in a poem:

Year after year we walked the gangway of terror,
Month after month raced along the bank of sorrow,
Day after day crawled up the slope of Hell,
Night after night climbed up the tower of Death.

How could I think of writing poems at that time when I was starving? Later on, thinking back on the past, I wrote these lines:

In the old society I worked as a coolie,
All the skin on my shoulders rubbed off;
I carried thousands of bundles of pens,
But not one of those pens was mine."

Then, his face lighting up, he continued:

"In 1949, Ichang was liberated. My mates and I joined in the struggle against the feudal gang chiefs who had lorded it over us. After that, we loaded and unloaded goods for socialism. I've lived all my life on the banks of the Yangtse and often remember what a hell on earth our life was in the old days. It excited me to see all the changes after Liberation and the fearless drive with which our longshoremen worked for socialist construction. That made me want to express my feelings in poems blasting the old society, praising our New China, and calling on my mates to work still harder. In 1969 I wrote some lines to explain my purpose in writing:

Chairman Mao has given me a pen,
Holding this pen I can prop up the vault of Heaven.
I shall write how our people are building a new world,
I shall write of the miracles in our motherland.

"At first because I couldn't read or write, I just made up some shanties about the strength of the workers and the glory of labour. In one of them I said:

We sing shanties as we carry loads of steel,
Our sweat drips on the iron plates.
We are scattering the seeds of revolution
To reap ten thousand years of happiness!"

After that Huang Sheng-hsiao eagerly set about learning to read and write. In the daytime he worked on the wharf; in the evening he wrote down on his cigarette packet the lines he had composed while working. When he came to words which he could not write, he would draw crosses or circles instead and then ask other people how those characters were written. Nurtured by the Party and helped by the masses, by dint of hard work he mastered the written language and matured as a poet. In 1958, as a worker-poet, he had the honour of being received by Chairman Mao in Peking, and this was a tremendous encouragement to him. Unable to suppress his emotion, he immediately wrote a poem to express the longshoremen's love for our great leader.

Before the Cultural Revolution those who carried out Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line in literature and art tried to lead Huang Sheng-

The poet at work



hsiao astray and make him leave the masses' fiery struggles. However, he resisted these attempts.

Having lit a cigarette he started to tell me the effect on him of the Cultural Revolution.

"Before the Cultural Revolution, although some of my poems were also about class struggle, I didn't see clearly or have much understanding. That comes out, for instance, in my long narrative poem *We Are the Proud Masters of the Yangtse*. In the spring of 1962, some people trotted out the slogan 'experience life', and I went with some professional writers on a trip to the Omei Mountains in Szechuan — only sightseeing actually. In a temple in the mountains there were some big bronze Bodhisattvas all of them trampling on a little devil, and that made me see red, it so clearly stood for the feudal rulers trampling on the labouring people. I decided to write a poem about a hero who opposed such superstitious rubbish. But because I didn't have enough understanding of class struggle at the time, and couldn't properly integrate revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism, the hero in the poem I wrote was pretty feeble."

Staring out over the river, Huang went on: "After being tempered by the Cultural Revolution I saw things clearer. It stiffened my backbone and gave me a stronger urge to write."

Because of his heightened political consciousness, in recent years Huang Sheng-hsiao has been writing more enthusiastically than ever and his voice too is clearer and more resonant. During the Cultural Revolution he wrote a long lyric *We'll Carry Mountains and Seas to Follow Our Party* which expresses the Yangtse workers' determination to oppose the attempts at retrogression made by Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, and their deep love for the Party and Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. This appears in a collection recently published by the People's Literature Publishing House, which includes several dozen later poems written after the Cultural Revolution; and these are better both artistically and ideologically than his earlier works, depicting heroic images of the working class more effectively. For instance, the narrative poem *Cleaving Through the Waves to Send down Fine Timber* describes the new captain Liu Hsiang-tung who fearlessly brings down rafts of logs through the gorges when the water

is low and who fights against a hidden class enemy, courageously leading his crew to ship timber for the state. Here the poet has created a convincing image of a sailor steeled in the Cultural Revolution.

Huang Sheng-hsiao summed up his experience by saying: "After making a serious study of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* and his various instructions on the Cultural Revolution, I grasped the fact that it's only by depicting heroes in the midst of class struggle and the struggle between the two lines that we can make their images vivid and real, radiant with the nobility of their thought."

One salient feature of Huang Sheng-hsiao's poems is their revolutionary romanticism. In the poem *I'm a Longshoreman* the artistic exaggeration of the lines: "With my left hand I bring over the whole of Shanghai, with my right hand I carry away the whole of Chungking," projects the heroic spirit of the Yangtse longshoremen in socialist construction. Since the Cultural Revolution, moreover, he has deliberately and naturally integrated descriptions of wind and waves in the gorges with the storms of class struggle and struggle between the two lines, using the specific environment of the perilous Yangtse Gorges to further enhance the images of heroes and express the spirit of the working class. Thus *Cleaving Through the Waves to Send down Fine Timber* has the following lines:

At Brass Gong Gorge brass gongs are crashing,
On Drum Platform Reef battle drums thunder;
I sing in praise of the Cultural Revolution,
Recording in poems the exploits of heroes.

.....

Behold, the Green Shoal,
There torrents sweep down several feet deep;
Our boat has sunk into the rapids,
But the raft behind is tilting to the sky.
Only staunch fellows are undeterred,
Only heroes dare to venture through the shoal.

By the time Huang Sheng-hsiao had finished telling me this, our boat reached Ichang through the Hsiling Gorge, and he went ashore. This gorge used to be so dangerous that an old folk rhyme compared



An Old Fisherman Builds a New Boat

Shihwan Stoneware



New Herdsmen of the Grassland

A Worker-militiawoman





Bumper Harvest in a Miao Village

it to the Devil's Pass. But since Liberation all the hidden rocks and treacherous reefs have been dynamited, there is electricity all along the Yangtse Gorges, and lamps mark the channel for boats so that they can travel all night. As Huang Sheng-hsiao says in one of his poems:

The Yangtse Gorges wear pearls now that shine at night,
The whole thousand *li* to Szechuan can be navigated!

At Ichang I followed Huang Sheng-hsiao ashore. He walked forward with giant strides, his bamboo crate on his back, on his head a wicker helmet.

CRITICISM OF "WATER MARGIN"

Chih Pien

The Current Criticism of "Water Margin"

A new mass movement has begun in China to discuss and criticize the novel *Water Margin* (*Shui Hu*). This short article deals briefly with the sort of book this classical Chinese novel written in the fourteenth century is, and the purpose and significance of the nationwide discussion and criticism of it today.

Chairman Mao recently pointed out: "The merit of the book *Water Margin* lies precisely in the portrayal of capitulation. It serves as teaching material by negative example to help all the people recognize capitulationists." He also added: "*Water Margin* is against corrupt officials only, but not against the emperor. It excludes Chao Kai from the 108 people. Sung Chiang pushes capitulationism, practises revisionism, changes Chao's Chu Yi Hall to Chung Yi Hall, and accepts the offer of amnesty and enlistment. Sung Chiang's struggle against Kao Chiu is a struggle waged by one faction against another within the landlord class. As soon as he surrenders, Sung Chiang goes to fight Fang La."

Here, a few words of explanation are needed.

Water Margin deals with a peasant revolt towards the end of the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1127). This peasant insurgent force had its base in the marshes of Liangshan and Chao Kai was the first leader of the insurgents. Sung Chiang, the chief figure in this novel, comes from the landlord class but because of his private feud with Kao Chiu, a corrupt official and the emperor's favourite, he is forced in desperation to join the rebels in the Liangshan marshes. He explains his action in this way: "I, Sung Chiang, would never have dared to turn against the government... but I was driven to this pass by corrupt officials." Soon after he joins the insurgents, Chao Kai is killed in battle, whereupon Sung Chiang usurps the leadership of the insurgent force. He then changes the name of the assembly hall from Chu Yi Hall (Assembly of the Righteous) to Chung Yi Hall (Loyal and Righteous). The original name implies that all righteous men should unite to overthrow the reactionary rule of the landlord class, but the later one denotes loyalty to the emperor and submission to his rule. As Sung Chiang says time and again: "I would rather be wronged by the court than betray the court — that I would never do." He also writes a verse to express his view:

May the Heavenly King soon issue an edict for our enlistment;
Only then shall I have the wish of my heart.

In this way Sung Chiang substitutes a capitulationist line for Chao Kai's revolutionary line for the peasant insurgents who are resolved to "oppose the Sung emperor". Finally Sung Chiang gets his men to surrender and re-enlist in the Imperial Army, after which he begs for the emperor's permission to lead his force to crush some other peasant insurgents led by Fang La. *Water Margin* describes the exploits of 108 peasant leaders of the Liangshan marshes, glorifying the capitulationist Sung Chiang while Chao Kai, the man who first rallies and commands this peasant force, is excluded from the 108 leaders. The novel describes certain corrupt officials as bad characters but the whole book is permeated by the idea that the emperor — the supreme ruler of the feudal state — is good.

Chairman Mao's recent comments have penetratingly pointed out that the essence of this novel is the glorification of capitulationism

and Sung Chiang is in fact a type of “revisionist” and “capitulationist”. On the basis of these instructions, in August all newspapers and periodicals in China started a discussion and criticism of this novel. This is because there has been a long-standing controversy over the main tendency of the book, and incorrect appraisals of it have been current. Since Liberation some critics have even praised this novel as “an immortal epic of peasant revolt” and Sung Chiang as the “most outstanding leader” of peasant uprisings. They went so far as to justify his capitulation to the feudal rulers as the inevitable result of the “limitations of the peasantry”.

Lu Hsun said in his article *The Evolution of Roughs*: “*Water Margin* makes it quite clear that because they were not against the emperor, they accepted the offer of amnesty and enlistment when the government troops arrived and set out to fight other brigands for the state — brigands who did not ‘carry out the true way on behalf of Heaven’. They were lackeys after all.” Thus this novel is guilty of distorting history. It presents capitulationists as revolutionaries, claims that peasant revolts are bound to end in surrender, confuses or glosses over the sharp contradictions between the peasantry and the landlord class and the principled struggle between the revolutionary line and the capitulationist line, making Sung Chiang’s surrender for the sake of an official post and personal gain appear as one and the same thing as meeting defeat although fighting to the end. All views such as these are clearly erroneous.

Chairman Mao pointed out in his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*: **“The proletariat must . . . distinguish among the literary and art works of past ages and determine its attitude towards them only after examining their attitude to the people and whether or not they had any progressive significance historically.”**

But *Water Margin* has Chao Kai killed off early in order to give more prominence to Sung Chiang, so that he can surrender and betray the heroic peasant revolt without meeting opposition. This novel approves his capitulationist line. We must analyse it from a Marxist viewpoint to free the study of this book from the contamination of class conciliation. Such discussion and criticism should benefit the

study of our classical literature and literary criticism in general. And as this novel is widely known in China, a mass movement of this kind is needed to refute the wrong views which were formerly prevalent.

A more important aspect of the current movement is that by analysing this teaching material by negative example we are educating our people to guard against and oppose revisionism.

Our country is still building socialism. Throughout this historical period there still exists the danger of the restoration of capitalism. To prevent this, we must carry out a movement in which everyone can take part, using methods which the masses can easily understand, to repudiate revisionism. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which started in 1966, the movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius which was launched last year, and the study of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat which started this spring, and which now includes the discussion and criticism of *Water Margin*, have all had this as their goal.

The more than fifty years’ history of the Chinese Communist Party has proved that whoever practises revisionism practises capitulationism — class capitulationism in home affairs and national capitulationism in foreign affairs. Leaders of the revisionist line in the Chinese Communist Party such as Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao both capitulated to Soviet revisionist social-imperialism. They were men of the same type as Sung Chiang who wormed his way into the peasant insurgents’ camp to sabotage the revolution.

We should draw a lesson from this teaching material by negative example, sum up historical experience, and learn to recognize the revisionists and capitulationists in complex class struggles. In this sense, the present discussion and criticism of *Water Margin* are of great and profound significance not only to the study of classical literature but also in the fields of modern literature, philosophy, history and education. They will help our Party and people to uphold Marxism, combat revisionism and adhere to Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line in our socialist revolution and construction. So this is another great struggle on the political and ideological front in our country.

What Sort of Novel Is "Water Margin"?

— *A Brief Summary of the Story*

Shui Hu or *Water Margin* is a classical Chinese novel about a peasant revolt at the end of the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1127). It was written during the 14th century. The novel describes how a peasant insurgent force with its base in the Liangshan marshes grows strong and powerful, then capitulates to the government and comes to a wretched end.

The novel starts by describing how some corrupt officials and local despots with High Marshal Kao Chiu as their representative oppress and persecute the common people till the masses rise in revolt. One such peasant revolt is led by Chao Kai who plays a decisive part in building up a powerful insurgent force in the Liangshan marshes. Chao Kai belongs to the landlord class but he betrays his own class, one of his chief exploits being the seizure of gifts meant for the Grand Duke Tsai Ching.

A certain high official named Liang of Taming Prefecture in the north is the son-in-law of the grand duke. To celebrate his father-

in-law's birthday, he collects gold, jewels and other precious things worth a hundred thousand strings of cash to send as a birthday present to the East Capital. When Chao Kai hears of this he consults his strategist, a village teacher named Wu Yung, and they decide to seize this ill-gotten wealth. With the help of three fishermen, Yuan Hsiao-erh, Yuan Hsiao-wu and Yuan Hsiao-chi, they lay cunning plans and boldly make off with this loot.

The government issues an order for their arrest. A friend of Chao Kai's, Sung Chiang, learns of this and warns him secretly. Then Chao Kai sets his own house on fire and goes off with the Yuan brothers, carrying the plunder. Having beaten the government soldiers sent in pursuit, together they make their way to the Liangshan marshes.

Chao Kai becomes the leader of these outlaws. He reorganizes the groups of outlaws already in Liangshan and rallies more men round him, until he has built up a powerful insurgent force. They train themselves every day in readiness to fight the government troops. And time and again, under Chao Kai's leadership, they defeat the government forces sent to suppress them. They amass large stores of grain, build ships, manufacture weapons and armour, construct ramparts, palisades and houses, and openly defy the government.

After Chao Kai has strengthened his position at Liangshan, he sends a fellow-insurgent Liu Tang with a hundred taels of gold and a letter of thanks to Sung Chiang for informing him of the government's plan to arrest him.

Although Sung Chiang is only a minor police officer in Yuncheng County, he has some landed property, has studied the Confucian classics and is eager to climb up the official ladder. He is a Machiavelian character, an unscrupulous, double-faced schemer who tries to win friends by small favours and acts of charity. He helped Chao Kai to escape in the hope that Chao Kai would later repay his kindness, never thinking that his friend would join the rebels in Liangshan and inflict defeats on government troops; for to him this is high treason, a crime which should be punished by the extirpation of Chao Kai's whole clan. He therefore will not entertain Liu Tang for fear lest the government learn of his connection with the Liangshan rebels; and keeping only the letter and one bar of gold, he hastily sends Liu

Tang away. However, Sung Chiang has a kept woman called Yen Po-hsi who gets hold of this letter. Fearing that she may inform against him, he kills her and runs away to hide in a friend's house.

On the night of the Lantern Festival, Sung Chiang mingles with the crowd looking at the lanterns and is captured by government troops. His friends manage to get him off and persuade him to go and join Chao Kai in Liangshan. But on the way there he receives news of his father's death which induces him to leave his friends and go home. The local police find out about his return and arrest him that same night, then tattoo his cheeks as a criminal and send him off under escort to banishment in Chiangchow (present-day Kiukiang on the Yangtse).

The way to Chiangchow lies past the Liangshan marshes; and suspecting that the outlaws there will ask him to join them he gives the place a wide berth. Even so, the insurgents send men to rescue him and urge him to go to Liangshan. But Sung Chiang refuses. He will not even let them strike off his fetters, to show that he obeys the laws of the state.

In Chiangchow, although a felon, because Chao Kai bribes the local police, Sung Chiang suffers no hardships and is sometimes able to stroll freely through the town. One warm sunny day he goes to drink in a tavern and in his cups thinks back on his failure to achieve officialdom and fame — instead he has become a criminal with his face tattooed. He writes a couple of poems on the wall of the tavern. One of these reads:

Though I am in the land of Wu,
My heart is still east of the mountains;
Like drifting weed I lament in vain
All my way along the coast and the Yangtse valley.
If some day I achieve my ambition to scale the clouds,
I shall laugh at Huang Chao who was no true hero.

Huang Chao (?-884) was the leader of an insurgent force at the end of the Tang Dynasty who led over six hundred thousand men to storm the capital Changan and set up a revolutionary government; but later internal strife made him lose the capital and he fell in battle. Sung Chiang writes these poems to express his frustrated ambition and

affirm his loyalty to the government, in the hope of achieving high position and fame. But an official makes use of this to say that it is a plot to overthrow the government; hence he is imprisoned again and condemned to death.

When the news reaches Liangshan, Chao Kai and others determine to rescue him. Many gallant men raid the execution ground and carry him off. This time, as Sung Chiang has no other way out, he joins the rebels in Liangshan.

Once in Liangshan, he still harbours his secret scheme. In his view, the emperor is sagacious and benevolent, but talented men are not given office because of the machinations of evil ministers. Forced to join the rebels, he still wants to "carry out the true way on behalf of Heaven". In other words, he is willing to submit to the emperor; it is only corrupt officials whom he opposes. He longs for the day when the emperor will realize his loyalty and grant him an amnesty; then he will be able to serve the emperor and be sent to the front to win military renown.

"Carry out the true way on behalf of Heaven" is Sung Chiang's slogan. Heaven symbolizes the feudal dynasty, the supreme head of which is the emperor. "The true way" refers to the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius which bolstered feudal rule. So this slogan implies loyalty to the Sung court. To achieve his secret aim, Sung Chiang does all he can to increase his own power and influence. Ostensibly he acknowledges Chao Kai as the leader, but all major policies and assignments of posts are in fact decided by him. He commands the troops in several important campaigns while Chao Kai stays behind to guard their mountain stronghold. Whenever Chao Kai volunteers to go out with their men, Sung Chiang counters, "Brother, you're the chief of our mountain fortress, you mustn't leave. I'll go in your place." In this way he usurps control over the armed forces, leaving Chao Kai without any real power.

However, in one campaign against Tsengtoushih, Chao Kai insists on taking the field himself and is killed by an enemy arrow. After his death, Sung Chiang openly assumes leadership in Liangshan. His first action is to change the name of the hall where the rebel leaders meet for consultation. Chao Kai called it the Assembly

of the Righteous, meaning that the oppressed should unite to fight against oppression. Now the name is changed to Hall of the Loyal and Righteous, implying that they are loyal to the emperor, and the flag in front of the hall bears the slogan "Carry out the true way on behalf of Heaven". So Chao Kai's revolutionary line to rally all just men to fight to the end and overthrow the government is negated.

As Sung Chiang does not want this insurgent force to represent the interests of the downtrodden masses, he does his best to enlist other types of men and makes many captured government officers his lieutenants. He explains to them that they can take refuge for the time being at Liangshan, going back to their old posts when the government recalls them. As these men have been defeated in battle and know that if they return they will be punished, they are quite willing to stay in this mountain fastness. Sung Chiang appoints these captives to important posts to help further his scheme for capitulation. For example, he recruits Lu Chun-yi, a big landowner who detests the peasant insurgents, making Lu his second in command. As for those peasant leaders who rallied to Chao Kai, they are demoted to minor posts.

By dint of much scheming and manipulation, Sung Chiang prepares the way for capitulation. During the Double Ninth Festival one autumn, he gives a big feast for all the insurgent leaders, inviting them to drink and enjoy the chrysanthemums. During this feast he writes a poem which is sung to them. It contains the lines:

May the Heavently King soon issue an edict for our enlistment;
Only then shall I have the wish of my heart.

At this, Li Kuei, one of the rebel chiefs who is against capitulation flies into a rage and roars: "Enlistment! What fucking enlistment!" He kicks over the table. Other insurgent leaders who oppose capitulation join in the uproar. Sung Chiang angrily orders Li Kuei to be killed. Only after the others plead for him does he pardon him and lock him up instead. Then with tears Sung Chiang tries to win over these true rebels, telling them that the emperor is "most sagacious and omniscient, but he is temporarily deceived by evil ministers. Some day the sun will break through the clouds and

he will realize that we are simply carrying out the true way on behalf of Heaven and would never molest good citizens; then he will pardon us and enlist us in the army, and together we shall serve the state". All such talk is to prepare his followers for eventual capitulation.

When Sung Chiang grows tired of waiting for an amnesty and enlistment in the government army, he goes to the East Capital with a few trusted men on the pretext of enjoying the Lantern Festival. Learning that the emperor often visits the courtesan Li Shih-shih, he calls to see her and tries to persuade her to act as mediator and secure him an amnesty. While they are discussing this, the emperor's approach through a secret passage is reported. Sung Chiang thinks this a splendid chance to meet the emperor and ask his pardon; but Li Kuei who is waiting outside is annoyed to see Sung Chiang drinking with the courtesan, and sets the place on fire. Frustrated once more, Sung Chiang has to fly back to Liangshan.

Still he does not give up. He sends men to negotiate with the government. At the same time, the court puts out feelers, dispatching a special commissioner with an imperial amnesty and a gift of imperial wine to Liangshan. Overjoyed, Sung Chiang makes ready to capitulate as he listens to the decree. However, some insurgent leaders oppose it. Yuan Hsiao-chi steals the imperial wine as an act of defiance, and Li Kuei tears up the amnesty and starts beating up the special commissioner while cursing the emperor. Sung Chiang has to apologize and explain that he is sincere in his request to surrender, but the official who drafted this decree has failed to understand the complex situation—a more gently worded decree would have done the trick. Protected by Sung Chiang, the special commissioner has to slink away.

When the government learns of this fiasco, they decide to resort to arms to crush the insurgents. Commissioner of the Privy Council Tung Kuan and High Marshal Kao Chiu are dispatched with several hundred thousand troops to encircle and wipe out the outlaws of Liangshan. The insurgents beat them back in five campaigns, in the last of which they capture Kao Chiu himself. Yet Sung Chiang tries to use this victory as capital to bargain with the court. Instead

of killing Kao Chiu, he bows humbly to the scoundrel and asks him to go to court to obtain an amnesty.

After Kao Chiu's return to court he ignores this request, and so Sung Chiang sends people to the East Capital to bribe the courtesan and certain officials. Finally the government issues an amnesty. Then Sung Chiang leads his men, carrying banners signifying their loyalty to the throne and wish to protect the state, to the capital to thank the emperor.

During this revolt at Liangshan in the north, another peasant revolt has broken out in the south led by Fang La. It conquers many prefectures and provinces and poses a powerful threat to the dynasty. To prove his loyalty, after his surrender Sung Chiang offers to lead his men against Fang La. The emperor gladly appoints Sung Chiang head of the vanguard with Lu Chun-yi as vice-head, and Fang La's revolt is cruelly suppressed.

After this campaign little more than twenty are left of the hundred and eight leaders of Liangshan. For his suppression of revolt, Sung Chiang is made a knight and garrison commander of Chuchow. But high officials like Kao Chiu will not let him go scot-free. When the emperor honours Sung Chiang with a gift of wine, they put some slow poison in it. After drinking this wine, Sung Chiang realizes that he is going to die, yet still wants to prove his loyalty to the throne. He suspects that Li Kuei may revolt again after his death, spoiling his reputation as a loyal subject; so he summons Li Kuei and makes him drink the poisoned wine too. Thus brave Li Kuei instead of falling in battle dies at the hand of Sung Chiang.

The foregoing summary makes it clear that the central theme of this novel is that Sung Chiang will not rebel against the emperor and is therefore finally willing to surrender. *Water Margin* describes a peasant revolt yet distorts the peasants' revolutionary spirit.

At the beginning of the 12th century, the Northern Sung Dynasty was growing more reactionary and corrupt, and the sharp contradictions between the peasantry and the landlord class were sharpening. The peasant revolt led by Sung Chiang directly threatened the capital and made a strong impression near and far; hence legends about it gained wide circulation. During the following two centuries before

the story took written form, members of the ruling class twisted these legends for their own purpose and added various reactionary features. *Water Margin* presents Sung Chiang as an out-and-out capitulationist and, by glorifying his image, advocates submission to the enemy.

The advocacy of capitulationism starts with the suppression of Chao Kai and his revolutionary line. As seen from our summary, before Sung Chiang joins the Liangshan insurgents, led by Chao Kai they carry out a thoroughgoing revolutionary line opposing both corrupt officials and the emperor. In many passages in the book, however, Chao Kai and his followers are depicted as greedy for personal gain. By having Chao Kai killed by an enemy arrow, the author of *Water Margin* intentionally excludes Chao Kai from the 108 leaders of Liangshan so that Sung Chiang becomes the leader of the insurgents and this capitulationist is placed in the centre of the stage and can preach capitulationism more forcefully.

Sung Chiang from the start wants to serve the emperor; before going to Liangshan he opposes the peasant revolt; after reaching Liangshan he sabotages the revolt from within. This novel extols his capitulationist line while relegating to a secondary position true rebels such as Li Kuei, Wu Yung and the Yuan brothers who are against surrender. Their efforts to oppose a sell-out are time and again foiled by Sung Chiang, who finally makes them follow him to capitulate to the government and put down another peasant revolt. In this way *Water Margin* denigrates their revolutionary character.

By having Sung Chiang and his lieutenants poisoned by Kao Chiu and other wicked officials after they have suppressed Fang La's revolt, the novel presents Sung Chiang as a tragic hero. This serves to project the chief theme that these men are loyal subjects dying for their cause, who oppose corrupt ministers but remain loyal to the emperor. And by deifying Sung Chiang after his death, the book further glorifies this character.

Water Margin came into being to serve the need of the landlord class to sabotage peasant revolts. Its authorship has always been controversial. According to some, the author was Shih Nai-an; according to others, it was Lo Kuan-chung; yet others claim that Shih Nai-an wrote an early version which was edited and revised by Lo Kuan-

chung. Different versions of this novel exist, the best known being the two Ming editions, one consisting of a hundred chapters, the other of one hundred and twenty chapters.

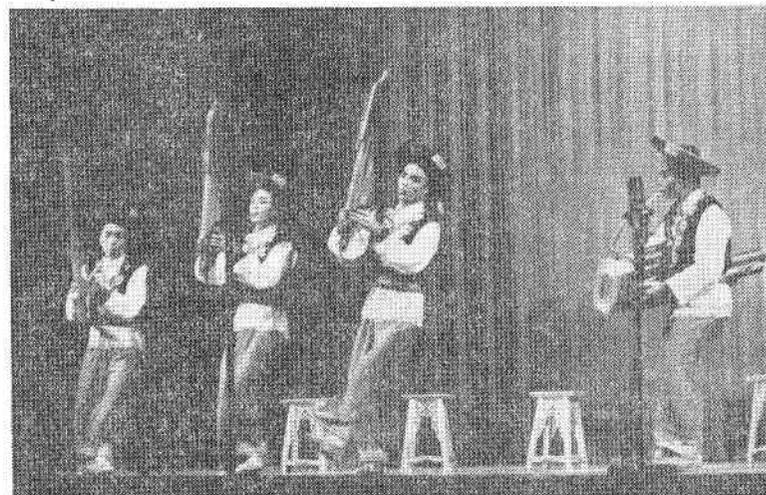
In the 17th century Chin Sheng-tan, a reactionary scholar, excised the last twenty-nine chapters of the hundred-chapter edition, making an edition of seventy-one chapters. This cutting of the end of the book meant that Sung Chiang's real character as a capitulationist was not fully brought out. Our great writer Lu Hsun pointed out that this abridgement by Chin Sheng-tan is not faithful to the original, and he compared this truncated version to "a dragon-fly with its tail lopped off".

CHRONICLE

Theatrical Festivities over National Day

In celebration of the 26th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Ministry of Culture sponsored a rich theatrical programme in Peking over National Day. A repertoire of 33 items rich in content and varied in form was presented.

These items were organized on the basis of the festivals of stage productions from different parts of China held earlier this year. They



were performed by troupes from the provinces and autonomous regions of Chinghai, Shantung, Anhwei, Kiangsu, Fukien, Ningsia, Chekiang, Kiangsi, Kweichow and Tibet. Revolutionary Peking operas were also staged as well as some new items by the troupes under the Ministry of Culture.

The performances were mainly given to factories, people's communes and army units.

"The Long March" Restaged

This October marks the 40th anniversary of the victorious arrival of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army at northern Shensi after a march of 25,000 *li*. To celebrate this great occasion, a ten-act play *The Long March* was restaged in Peking.

The Long March tells the story of "The Taishan Battalion", one battalion of the Central Red Army which followed Chairman Mao closely on the Long March. In 1935, the Central Political Bureau held an enlarged meeting at Tsunyi, Kweichow Province, ended the leadership of the "Left" opportunists and established the new central leadership headed by Chairman Mao. Following this, under the personal command of Chairman Mao the Red Army made its way across the Chihshui River four times, turned the battle situation to its favour, then crossed the Chinsha River by stratagem, and successfully traversed the Yi nationality area. After crossing the strategic Tatu River, the Red Army climbed over snow-clad mountains, slogged through the marshlands, ran the blockade at Latzukou Pass, scaled Liupan Mountain and triumphantly reached northern Shensi. The drama vividly shows how the Central Red Army victoriously joined forces with the Red Army in northern Shensi and with the Second and Fourth Front Armies, singing warm praises for the great victory of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

This drama was staged in Peking in the early sixties, but since last year the original version has been considerably revised and improved. Now both the script and the production are much better than before.



Chen Chi-tung is the playwright and the drama was produced by the Modern Drama Company of the General Political Department of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

Two New Photo Albums Published

Two large photo albums, *Photographs of the Tibet Autonomous Region* and *Sinkiang*, have come off the press in those two regions in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Autonomous Region of Tibet and the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

The first album includes Chairman Mao's inscriptions on four different occasions on the work in Tibet, and photographs showing Chairman Mao and other leading comrades of the Party Central Committee receiving representatives of all circles from Tibet. With colourful diversity, the more than 200 photographs in the album document the Tibetan people's historic progress over the past 25 years

under the wise leadership of Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee — the way they rose to destroy the shackles of feudal serfdom and skipped several centuries into socialism.

Included are rare photographs of such major historical events as construction of the highway into Tibet, the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the suppression of the Dalai's armed rebellion, the democratic reform and repulsing of invaders.

The other album *Sinkiang* includes 150 pictures taken by photographers of various nationalities. On the first page is a portrait of Chairman Mao. There are also photos showing Chairman Mao with cadres and masses of various nationalities in Sinkiang. The main emphasis is on the great achievements made in socialist revolution and construction by the people of Sinkiang who were tempered in the Cultural Revolution, especially in combating and preventing revisionism and defending the motherland. A considerable proportion of the photos present heroic images of workers, peasants and soldiers of minority nationalities and new socialist things on various fronts. There are also many pictures of the beautiful landscapes in Sinkiang.

National Exhibition of New-Year Pictures and Children's Fine Arts in Peking

A national exhibition of New-Year pictures and children's works of art opened in Peking during October.

Altogether 261 New-Year pictures and 427 children's art works were displayed. New-Year pictures are popular among Chinese workers, peasants and soldiers. The exhibition reviewed the new successes and new levels attained by revolutionary Chinese artists in this field. Many of the New-Year pictures testified to the excellent situation in China's socialist revolution and construction. By selecting major themes in class struggle and the struggle between the two lines, these works brought out in bold relief the spirit of our age.

These New-Year pictures, rich in colour and depicting a variety of moods, also revealed the artists' efforts to portray heroic images of workers, peasants and soldiers and to create new forms.

Among the children's works on display were traditional Chinese paintings, woodcuts, gouaches, water-colours, crayon drawings and oil paintings as well as scissor-cuts. The age of the contributors ranged from four to seventeen. This reflects the flourishing growth of art work among our young people. This was the first national exhibition of children's art to be held since the Cultural Revolution.

New Films for National Day

Seven new feature films have been shown in Peking and other parts of China since October 1st. Six of them are in colour. *Spring Shoot*, the story of a girl barefoot doctor, shows how this new socialist phenomenon of barefoot doctors came into being and developed in the midst of struggle. *The Second Spring* presents the building of a torpedo-boat in the early sixties by our naval shipyard workers and technical personnel, to strengthen national defence by our own efforts. *Crimson Rain* tells the story of a young barefoot doctor brought up by the Party. *Battle in the Shipyard* describes how Chinese shipbuilding workers solve the problem of constructing a ship of the 10,000-ton class in a small building berth. *The Red Lantern* is a film version of the Sinkiang Uighur opera adapted from the model revolutionary Peking opera of the same name. *New Song of the Great Wall* describes soldiers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army who serve the people heart and soul. *The Conch*, the story of some Little Red Soldiers' fight against enemy agents on an island in the south China sea, is in black and white.

Before Departure, an animated cartoon produced by the Shanghai Animated Cartoon Film Studio, was released at the same time.

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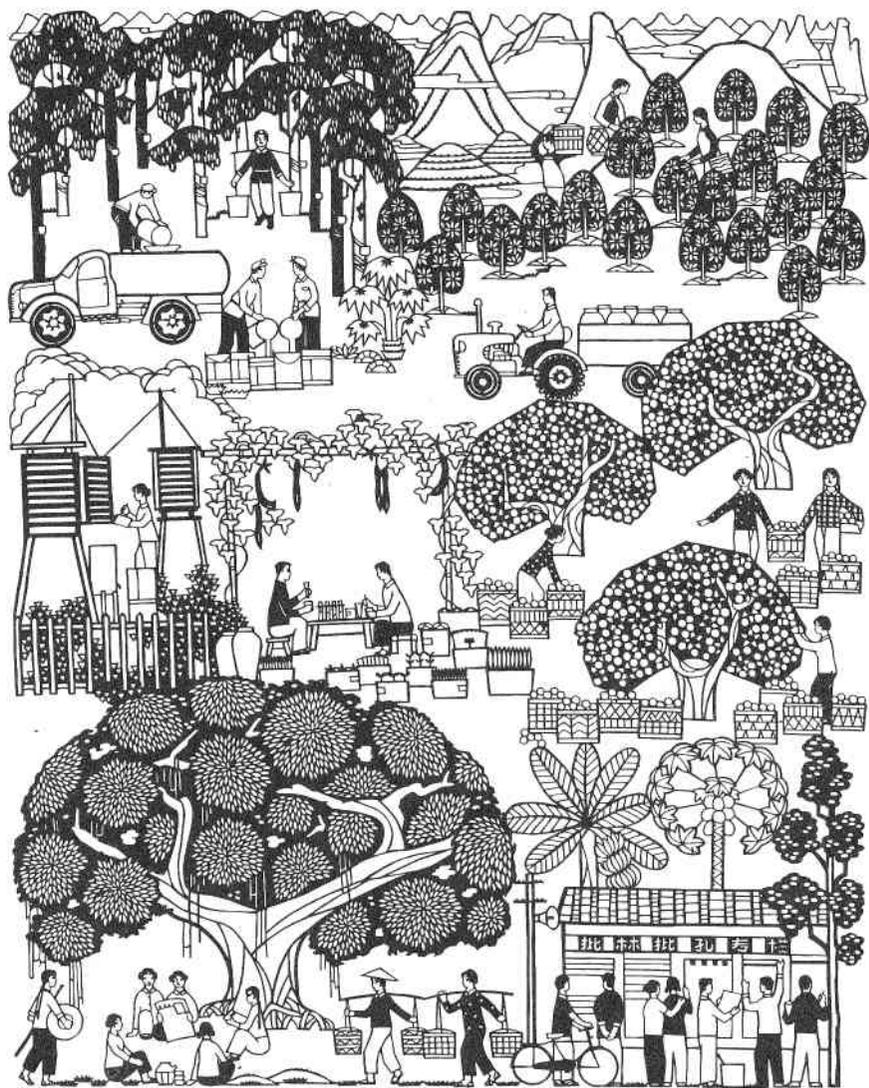
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