

CHINESE LITERATURE



10
1972

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Sun Chien-chung

In the Forest

It was a sultry early autumn evening with a thunderstorm in the offing when Tien the herbalist came with a gourdful of liquor to Needle Peak. His old friend the fire-watcher Hsiang was stationed here, so when Tien collected herbs in this part of the forest he was in the habit of coming to the peak for a chat. He had not been here now for a month or more and was eager to see his old crony. Besides, he had something on his mind. He wanted to discuss with Hsiang a suggestion made by the latter on his last visit. Tien's spirits rose as the look-out built of fir came in sight.

"Hey, old codger!" he called. "Still alive?"

Normally Hsiang would have jumped down from the tower to grab his arm and punch his shoulder, grinning all over his weather-beaten face. "Alive and kicking!" he would chortle. "How could I leave my post at this time of the year?" Then screwing up his eyes he might ask: "But am I seeing ghosts, old mate? Chia the hunter wrote to me yesterday that the leopards had eaten you."

The old herbalist never took anything lying down. If Hsiang needed him like that again, a retort was ready on the tip of his tongue.

Hsiang's failure to appear was unexpected. What had happened to the old fire-watcher? Had he grown hard of hearing? Was he unwell again?

Tien remembered what had happened three months ago. One day after collecting herbs in the mountains he had ascended Needle Peak to see Hsiang. He had hailed him as usual but received no answer. When he mounted the look-out he was startled to find his friend hunched up by the window, his binoculars in one hand, the other hand pressed to his heart. He was clenching his teeth and his brow was beaded with sweat.

"You unwell again?" inquired Tien with concern.

"It's nothing to worry about," was the gruff reply.

"Knock off for a rest."

"No. It's in weather like this," wheezed Hsiang, "that most fires break out in the forest."

"I'll ring up the clinic for a doctor."

"All right. And while you're about it, tell Brigade Leader Wang of Lata Brigade that his cowherds are up to mischief again on Rear Mountain. They've lit fires to burn the hornets."

Hsiang was devoted heart and soul to the forest and had put up with hardships of every kind to safeguard it. This knowledge only increased Tien's anxiety. He quickly mounted the ladder to the look-out. To his surprise, Hsiang was nowhere to be seen. Instead, by the north window stood a young fellow of twenty or thereabouts, completely absorbed in watching the forest through his binoculars. At once Tien recalled the proposal Hsiang had made to him last time. So the old codger had taken action already. He was certainly a fast worker. But how did he hit it off with this lad? Did he find him hard to work with?

"Hey, youngster, where's old man Hsiang?" Receiving no answer Tien asked in a louder voice: "I said, where is Old Hsiang?" He was growing impatient.

The boy turned, blinking, and with a smile told him to take a seat. Then he turned back to the window to scan the vast forest below.

Tien thought with annoyance: "The cheek of these young fellows.... What can you do with them?" He sat down on a block

of wood, his irritation growing as he waited. When he groped in the corner for Hsiang's long bamboo pipe, it was no longer in its accustomed place. Shaking out some tobacco from his pouch he crumbled it with his fingers and rolled a cigarette, taking deep puffs to counter his sense of frustration.

After a few minutes the youngster put down the binoculars and murmured to himself: "No doubt about it. It's smoke from a bonfire, not a forest fire." Then suddenly remembering his visitor, he whirled round and asked apologetically: "Sorry, uncle, were you looking for Old Hsiang? He's not here any more."

"Where has he gone?" Tien demanded in surprise.

"He's gone down to his village."

"When will he be back?"

"He won't be coming back."

Tien gave an exclamation of dismay. The old codger had never breathed a word about leaving the mountain and going back to his village. He had always talked as if he meant to stay on the peak till his dying day. What had happened to change his mind? If he had gone for good, there would be no point in coming here any more.

Sensing Tien's disappointment the youngster asked: "Did you know him well?"

"Sure." Tien held up two fingers. "We were as close as that."

"What's your job, uncle?"

"I gather herbs."

"So you're Uncle Tien!" cried the young fellow. "He was speaking of you just before he left."

"What did he say?" Tien shifted his block of wood forward.

"He said it was too bad having to go off like that without letting you know, because he wouldn't have so many chances to see you in future."

"I'd no idea he was leaving. If he'd told me, I'd have come to say goodbye even if I had to grope my way here in the dark."

"At first Old Hsiang refused to leave," said the lad. "The Party secretary spent two whole days trying to persuade him, but it was no use. When the brigade sent men to help carry his things, he clutched his bedding and wouldn't let go of it. Then the Party branch

held a meeting and they told him this was the Party's decision, for the good of the revolution. After that he couldn't refuse. When the Party secretary asked how he felt about it, he was silent for some time, then said with a sigh: 'Well, I've worked here for eighteen years.' You see, he's over sixty and his health is failing. The doctor says that recently his heart trouble has taken a turn for the worse. That's why the Party wants him to have a proper rest and treatment."

"That's true. The old fellow never looked after his health, and never will unless pressure is put on him." Their conversation dried up. Noticing that the youngster was preoccupied, Tien rolled himself another cigarette and sat there smoking in silence.

The youngster had cause for worry. At noon he had received a telephone call from the county meteorological station predicting a heavy thunderstorm that evening. The sultry weather seemed to confirm this forecast. According to Hsiang, now the trees and grass were so parched that a thunderstorm could easily start fires. One year before Liberation, when trees were struck by lightning, the forest blazed for seven days and seven nights before the fire was put out. Forty-nine slopes of fir had been burnt to cinders. That was why the old fire-watcher had begged the Party secretary: "Let me go after the autumn. Don't make me leave now." This looked like being the first big storm that autumn, and the first big test for the young man new to this post. The sight of the darkening forest in the twilight sent a chill up his spine. However, he had already phoned all the nearby communes and brigades, alerting them to the possibility of forest fires so that they could be on the watch.

Still, he wished his master were beside him now. When he first arrived, the old man's powers of observation had greatly impressed him. Hsiang seemed able to see all the mountain slopes and forests for miles around. As soon as he caught sight of a wisp of smoke he could tell which brigade it came from, and he knew by the colour whether the smoke came from burning trees or kitchen fires....

It was Tien who broke the silence. Stubbing out his cigarette he remarked with a sigh: "Imagine his going off so suddenly without leaving any word for me."

"The night before he left he didn't sleep a wink," the youngster recalled. "He just stood at this window watching the forest."

"It must have been a wrench for him to leave."

"Yes. When dawn broke he was still standing here. I had to hurry him. I told him: 'Uncle, it's time you packed up.'"

"What did he say?"

"After a long pause he said: 'Come here, young fellow. Look....' Pointing down below he told me: 'That's a cedar forest there. See? Just a few years and the trees are a good height.... Over there's a forest of liquidamber, another of paper-mulberry, another of oaks. Further off are aleurites, chestnuts and walnuts. And all the slopes beyond are covered with firs. Ah, it's a fine serviceable timber, fir. They use it everywhere, in town and country, underground and up in the air....' When the time came to go, he lingered at the foot of the look-out. Didn't seem able to tear himself away."

"Yes, these forests meant the world to him."

Before the youngster could reply, a gruff, irate voice floated up from the foot of the look-out:

"That beast's a pest, confound it!"

The youngster sprang to his feet and went to the ladder. Below stood a tall and overbearing old man with an axe in one hand and a bamboo crate on his back. Overjoyed and amazed, the young fellow jumped to the ground.

"We were just this minute talking about you, Uncle Hsiang."

"Who's 'we'? Is that old windbag Tien up there?" The old fire-watcher burst out laughing.

"Hmm. Count yourself lucky we weren't running you down," said Tien, moving over to the ladder.

"How am I to know you weren't?" Hsiang retorted. "That wild boar is a menace. It's knocked down a dozen cedar saplings I'd just planted, damn it!"

The youngster took Hsiang's crate and axe and helped him up the look-out, after which he cheerfully busied himself lighting a charcoal brazier to boil some water. The two old friends, sitting face to face in their accustomed places, had a good heart-to-heart talk.



"I didn't think to see you up here today, old codger," said Tien with emotion.

"Well, if the Party branch hadn't given me permission, the brigade cadres would have stopped me. They did everything short of tying me up with a rope down there in the village. You're lucky, old man. You can still roam through the forest." Hsiang shook his head sadly.

Not knowing how to comfort him, Tien asked: "How do you pass your time these days?"

Hsiang shook his head. "I can't rightly say. Food's lost its taste for me, tea's lost its flavour. When I pick up my axe, I forget what I'm out to do. When I close my eyes, I'm back on the peak again."

In an attempt to cheer him up Tien uncorked his gourd and passed it over. Hsiang pushed it back.

Tien gaped at him. "But this is good maize liquor."

"I'm not allowed to drink. Haven't you noticed how sultry it is today?"

"Is that why you came up?"

The old fire-watcher nodded.

The heat by now was stifling. There was not a breath of wind.

Smoke from the brazier hung about the look-out, its acrid scent of pine-resin making the youngster cough. He picked up the brazier and carried it down the ladder.

Hsiang watched his receding figure with a smile and said in a low voice: "He's still young, you see. And this is the first time he's been up against a situation like this."

Tien moved his seat forward through the smoke and said reflectively: "Last time, brother, you told me that since we were growing old and our health was beginning to fail, we ought to find young people to take over our jobs...."

"So you took my suggestion to heart?"

"Yes, I found myself a young assistant as soon as I went back."

"Who is he?"

"Third son of Peng Pa in Plantain Village."

"That lad who went as a delegate to the county militia conference?"

"That's the one."

"How time flies! A few years ago he was still an urchin turning somersaults."

"Well, but those youngsters...."

"What's wrong with them?"

Tien was silent. After a while he answered: "It was about that young assistant of mine that I came to see you."

"Have you had words?"

"I don't think we can hit it off."

"As bad as all that, is it?"

"Tell me this: In any job of work, should the master have the last word, or the assistant?"

"That depends."

"If what the assistant says is right, what's the point of having a master?"

"You'd better tell me the whole story."

"At first I tried to make allowances. After all, boys will be boys. But he's going from bad to worse. Today in the village we had another row...."

Hsiang made no comment but listened carefully, smiling, to his friend's tale of woe.

Now everyone knew that Tien the herbalist specialized in collecting rare plants such as saxifrage; but his new assistant, Young Peng, had different ideas. Peng said: "There are useful medicinal herbs all over the mountains. We should collect others too, not just saxifrage."

"What value have the others?" retorted Tien.

"That depends on what the people need," replied Peng. "Our job is to serve the people."

"Isn't saxifrage needed? Isn't collecting saxifrage a way to serve the people?"

The two of them failed to see eye to eye on this question, and then something else cropped up. In the old days herb-collecting was governed by no rules. Big plants or small, old plants or young, you just picked what you found. But this method came under fire from Young Peng too. He asked Tien not to pick a certain plant. Tien wanted to know why not.

"It's too young," said Peng.

"Never mind about that. It's good medicine," retorted Tien.

"It would be a pity. Better wait until it's grown."

"But then some other team will pick it first."

"What would that matter? Saxifrage is rare, Uncle Tien. What we find falls far short of what the masses need. So apart from gathering more we should preserve the species too."

At this point in his narrative Tien paused for breath. He continued with a sigh: "Man and boy I've gathered herbs for fifty years. Now it seems I don't even know how to pick saxifrage."

Secretly amused, Hsiang asked: "So are you going to split up?"

"Well, I came to ask your advice."

"Tell me how you made out today."

"Today when we went to Lata Village, I told Young Peng: 'I think we should go further. According to folk from Tiger Cliff there are lots of herbs there this year.' But what do you think? He got another bee in his bonnet. He said: 'Uncle let's stay here today. Some commune members are ill, and I want to brew some herbal medicine for them.' I asked: 'Is that your job?' He said: 'We must serve the people whole-heartedly and work entirely in the

people's interests.' Tell me, old man, isn't there a division of labour? What are doctors for, I'd like to know?"

Suddenly the youngster below called out: "Look! A squirrel!"

Apparently a squirrel, frisking through the branches, had dropped into the tripod full of boiling water. To the youngster still new to the forest this was a novel and exciting event. The old herbalist winked at Hsiang and commented in a low voice: "Yours seems all right."

Hsiang nodded, obviously satisfied with his apprentice. But he answered in an offhand way: "He's still a greenhorn."

"Where's he from?"

"A school in Changsha."

"What's his name?"

"Chen Hsiao-ming."

"Does he do as you tell him?"

"If I'm right, he does."

"And if you're wrong?"

"Then I have to listen to him."



As they were chatting, Young Chen brought up the little squirrel. Trying to imitate the Changsha accent, Tien asked: "Don't tell me you're cooking us the *whole* of that?"

Young Chen chuckled, then picked up the chopper, meaning to stew the squirrel for the two old men.

"What have you been doing the last few days, lad?" asked Hsiang.

"I've made another study of Chairman Mao's *On Contradiction* and *On Practice*."

"Any difficulties?"

"Plenty. I've marked all those places I couldn't understand." Chen glanced at the calendar on the wall. "Last Wednesday when Secretary Wu came from the commune, I kept him up with questions all night."

"So Old Wu was here." Hsiang looked at the young fellow fondly. "Don't you find it rather quiet here all on your own?"

"It's all right."

"Not feeling lonely, eh?"

"Not when I've work to do."

"Don't try to fool me." The old fire-watcher chuckled. "Didn't you ask the hunter to fetch you your mandolin from the village?"

As Chen smiled sheepishly, Hsiang said: "Never mind. You'll soon get used to this life. Then, far from feeling lonely, you'll find the days too short. The mountains and trees are all alive, and different creatures have languages of their own. The pheasants call to their mates, the mynahs chatter, the thrushes like to show off, and the mountain finches flock together...."

The howl of some wild beast cut across this recital.

"Is that a leopard?" Chen asked.

"No, a tiger," said Tien.

"A tiger-cub," specified the old fire-watcher. "It's hungry and calling for its mother."

Young Chen was enchanted by this strange new world.

"Here on this peak," continued Hsiang, "a visitor from outside makes me feel as if I were celebrating New Year; because all the interesting news he brings makes me realize we belong to a collective and are still surrounded by comrades."

"What good news have you brought me this time, Uncle Hsiang?" asked the youngster.

"More than enough for one night." As if this news was in his bamboo crate, the old fire-watcher reached into it and took out some books, a thick stack of newspapers, a packet of dried vegetables, a bottle of cooking oil, another of salt, and finally a mandolin.

Chen hugged the mandolin to his chest. Then leaning back against the window he started to play it. The melody floated out liquid and clear as any mountain stream.

After a while Hsiang interrupted to ask him: "What news today from the meteorological station?"

"They forecast a big thunderstorm. I've phoned all the brigades."

"Get through to them all?"

"All except Lata Village Brigade. I tried them three times and finally a small boy came to the phone. I told him to give the message to Brigade Leader Wang."

"That's not good enough."

"I can ring them up again."

"No need. I've just been there."

"Did you make a special trip, uncle?"

"I heard they'd all gone up the hill to harvest their maize, so I reckoned there'd be no one at home to answer the phone."

"Did you see our Young Peng?" put in Tien.

"No, I didn't," answered Hsiang. "But I heard some interesting news."

"What's that?" inquired Tien quickly.

"A highway's to be built very soon through our mountains."

"How splendid!" exclaimed Chen.

"The surveyors have already arrived, with a whole lot of coloured poles."

"That's grand," said the youngster. "Shipping all this timber out will be much simpler."

"Some factories may be built too."

"Our timber can be put to all sorts of uses."

"So we must take even better care of these forests."

They talked on, carried away by enthusiasm that intoxicating, exhilarating evening. After supper, sipping strong mountain tea and smoking pungent tobacco, they touched at random on all manner of subjects: the new wood-cutting machine made in Shanghai, the big rafts for floating timber on Lake Tungting, the great bridge across the Yangtse at Nanking, the war in Indo-China, and the fight against the flood in Romania.... They took a keen interest in all these developments.

Then, abruptly, Tien changed the subject. "Look here, old man, how's your health these days?"

"Much better. I have injections every day."

"You'd better take more care of yourself, you know."

"What do I have to worry about at my age?"

"That's no way to talk. Didn't you always say that you intended to live to see communism?"

Hsiang laughed heartily. "Sure. I do."

"I've brought a new herbal prescription for you to try." Tien took from his pocket a packet of herbs. "All these herbs will do you good."

Hsiang accepted gratefully but quipped: "I didn't expect anything from you but saxifrage."

"Well, apart from picking saxifrage, I have to collect other herbs which people need."

"Ha, ha! So Young Peng was right, eh?"

"Well...." At a loss for an answer, Tien quickly changed the subject. "Don't eat any paprika while you're taking this medicine."

They had forgotten about the thunderstorm. But now a high wind sprang up, lashing the trees, and big drops of rain began to patter on the leaves. Then a blinding flash of lightning was followed by a deafening crash of thunder. Hsiang picked up his binoculars and trained them intently on the forests below, while Tien and Chen watched beside him at the window.

Another peal of thunder. Hsiang passed the binoculars to Young Chen and told him: "Keep a careful look-out." A minute later he asked: "See anything?"

"Yes, one plantation has caught fire," Chen answered tensely.

"Direction?"

"To the southwest."

"That's not exact enough."

"Twenty-five degrees," Chen amended hastily.

"Distance?"

"About eighteen kilometres."

"Locality?"

Chen named the commune and the brigade.

Hsiang sawed the air with his right hand to denote satisfaction then ordered: "Send out the alarm."

Young Chen cranked up the telephone and gave the alarm.

Another flash of lightning, another crash of thunder, and a second forest caught fire. Again the alarm was sent out.

It was a real battle. The old fire-watcher like an experienced general with Chen as his young aide stood on the look-out, deploying his forces to attack the "enemy strongholds". The roar of heaven's "artillery" and "flames of battle" added to the tension. But with confidence and good judgement Hsiang kept the situation well in hand.

Echoing mountains, tempest-tossed trees and all the mighty unleashed forces of Nature intermingled in one stupendous symphony.

Presently Young Chen reported: "All the fires have been put out."

Hsiang nodded. His tightly knit brows began to smooth out. But then, his nostrils flaring, he caught the reek of burning rubber. He looked up. Sparks were spluttering on the telephone wire outside. With a premonition of danger he sprang for his axe, but Young Chen beat him to it. Putting down his binoculars to seize the axe, with one clean sweep he cut the wire and threw himself over the receiver. That same instant a deafening roar rocked the little look-out.

Young Chen's quick resolute action delighted Hsiang. "A close thing, that!" he commented.

Now that the danger was averted, Chen repaired the broken line while Hsiang picked up the binoculars and kept watch. Suddenly

a thick column of smoke rose to the south. Another fire had broken out. He gave an exclamation of annoyance.

"It's quite close. About three kilometres," estimated Chen. "In Lata Brigade's fir forest."

"Give the alarm."

As Young Chen was ringing up the brigade Hsiang added: "Tell them the fire is a big one. They must take immediate action."

Very worried, Hsiang glued his eyes on the forest. He could see that this was no ordinary fire. The thickly wooded slope was exposed to the full fury of the wind, so the conflagration was liable to spread fast. He watched, hoping for the best, but the fire raged unabated. Tongues of flame licked the firs, acrid smoke filled the air, and now the rain had stopped.

Hsiang urged Young Chen: "Ring up the village again. Find out what steps they're taking to put out the fire, and how many people they've sent."

The youngster phoned to the village and reported: "They've sent everyone who can be spared, but the fire is too big, they can't put it out."

Hsiang laid down his binoculars to pace up and down the small lookout with tightly clenched fists. He felt on fire himself. Turning back to the window, he thumped his right fist on the palm of his left hand. "Report to the Fire Prevention Headquarters," he said firmly. "Ask them to send reinforcements from nearby brigades."

Half an hour went by. Instead of abating the fire raged still more fiercely. Leaping flames and eddying smoke reddened and darkened the horizon. They could hear the sound of crackling as fresh trees caught fire. The pungent smell of wood-resin and acrid smoke was wafted to the peak.

Young Chen looked at the old fire-watcher's worried face, remembering that forest fire which had raged for seven days and seven nights before Liberation. His heart contracted.

"Hell!" swore Hsiang. "Every minute this goes on means so many more trees destroyed."

"It seems that more hands are needed," suggested Chen.

"Right," said Hsiang. "Report to headquarters, asking them to send more people."

After Chen had contacted headquarters, Hsiang announced abruptly: "I must go there too."

Chen volunteered to go in his place, but Hsiang replied: "No, I know the forest better. You have your job here." He picked up his axe and started towards the ladder.

"Let me go instead, old codger," offered Tien.

"No, you stay here to keep him company." Hsiang went quickly down the ladder and disappeared into the night.

As Chen returned to the window to keep watch, his hand holding the binoculars trembled. Tien spoke up then to reassure himself as well as the youngster beside him. "That's the way he is. There's no stopping him. . . . But he'll be all right. . . . Now what can I do to help you? I'll look after the telephone."

At last the fire in the fir forest was brought under control. Young Chen had a mental picture of the magnificent scene as the heroic Lata villagers beat the flames with branches of fir, and with their machetes hacked a broad clearing around the burning trees. He seemed to see Uncle Hsiang at the head of all the other fire-fighters, shouting out lustily as he swung his big axe. Gradually the fire died down, and Chen's heart grew lighter.

By the time the last flames flickered and died out, the storm had also stopped. Everywhere was dark. In the distance a few sparks appeared only to vanish again. Then all was still. Tien heaved a sigh of relief.

"I wonder how Uncle Hsiang's made out," said Chen.

"Don't worry. He's tough. He'll be back by dawn," said Tien, although he was more than a little worried himself.

In silence they waited by the window. At last dawn broke. The early autumn morning air had a special freshness after the heavy rain. All around was so green and tranquil, you could hardly believe forest fires had raged during the night. White mist rose over the forests, then slowly scattered. The mountain ranges washed by the storm looked more luxuriant and verdant. The birds which had taken shelter came out again to twitter and swing merrily on the boughs. In the distance someone was singing.



At this moment they caught sight of the old fire-watcher. He approached them in high spirits. Tien gripped his right hand and slapped him on the shoulder. "So it's you at last, old codger!"

Hsiang chortled. "Can't you wipe that grin off your face?"

Moved by the mud with which his friend was spattered and the smell of burnt wood and smoke which hung about him, Tien countered:

"Well, you had quite a time of it."

"All in the day's work." With a great show of secrecy, Hsiang stepped closer and whispered: "I met him last night."

"Met whom?"

"Your Young Peng."

"Well, what sort of showing did he make?"

"Splendid!" The old fire-watcher stuck up one thumb. "He dashed around with his medicine kit giving first aid."

"So?"

"Later he took up a club and charged into the flames."

"What! Into the flames?"

"Twice the fire beat him back, but then he rushed through. Just before we brought it under control, his hair caught fire..."

"How come?"

"He gashed his foot."

"*Aiya!*"

"Then he toppled into the flames..."

Tien was consternated.

"I must go back at once and see him."

Noticing his friend's concern with inward amusement Hsiang asked: "Why should you go? Haven't you split up?"

"Is this a time for joking?" fumed Tien.

"Don't worry. People rescued him straight away. He's all right. You can go and see him after we've had breakfast."

As Tien heaved a sigh of relief, the old fire-watcher continued: "You know, we old fogeys have no call to look down on the young folk today. They're a fine lot. With splendid youngsters like this to take over from us, we've nothing to worry about."

Tien nodded. "I agree. We should learn from them too."

The sun had risen, bathing the forests in golden light. They stood by the window to gaze at the distant view, while eagles circled over the vast sea of trees. Young Chen picked up his mandolin to play a stirring tune. And the trees beneath, like green waves, billowed and surged towards the far-off horizon.

Illustrated by Lin Yung

Wall of Iron (oil-painting) by Chin Wen-mei ►



Coastguards

As soon as I set foot on Misty Island I lost my bearings completely. The whole island was only one kilometre long, yet I wandered round in circles for a while without finding the sentry post for which I was bound. I could see nothing but a thick haze of white. Heavy mist lay all around.

The job of our PLA coastguards is to spot enemy activity in good time, size it up correctly and send in a prompt report. How could this be done on such a mist-shrouded island? But, strange to say, this sentry post had a magnificent record and on many occasions had been cited for merit. Its squad leader, Fang Kai, was known for his eagle eyes and acute sense of hearing. I was in luck, coming down from regimental headquarters to do my spell of soldiering in such a unit.

Borne up by these reflections, I drifted through the sea of mist. My uniform was sopping wet. Moisture was dripping from my cap and trickling down my nose. Tired and thirsty, I had just made up my mind to sit down to rest on a rock when a resonant voice behind me boomed: "Who goes there?"

I answered the challenge automatically, conditioned by my long service in the army. But when I turned there was no one to be seen. The dense mist was like a bandage of cotton-wool over my eyes. In that case, how had the sentry spotted me? I heard the rustle of steps on withered grass, and faintly through the mist loomed a powerful figure with a carbine over one shoulder.

The sentry came right up to me.

"You must be Staff Officer Lin from regimental headquarters." With a confident smile he reached out for my kit-bag.

"No," I protested. "I'm Lin Chou, a new fighter assigned to Misty Island sentry post. Just call me Old Lin." When I tried to hang on to my kit-bag he went into action, lunging forward to grab it from me. I was no match for him. Though I put up a brief resistance my kit-bag ended up on his back.

"We heard from headquarters last night that you'd be coming," he told me cordially. "The whole squad is no end bucked. I'm sorry I didn't come out earlier to meet you, to save you from trapesing round."

"Never mind, you've found me now," I interposed. "But in all this mist how did you know I'd arrived?"

"I heard you." He chuckled.

"Heard me?" I exclaimed.

"Sure. See, like this." Quick as lightning he slung his gun over one shoulder and flopped down on a wet rock, pressing one ear against it. "That's how I knew you'd arrived — I heard you."

In amazement I stretched out on the rock just as he had done and clamped my ear against it. But all I could hear was the splash of the tide and pounding of the surf.

"I couldn't distinguish between different sounds when I first came to this post, but I trained my ear little by little. Here, let me try you out." He kicked a big stone down the slope. I heard it hurtle down the cliff and crash — like a clap of thunder — into the sea.

"I heard that all right." I got up rather pleased with myself.

"We have to train our ears through constant practice in reconnaissance," he told me. "This is the first thing each fighter has to learn when he comes to our sentry post on Misty Island."

"I'm quite out of my depth. You must take me on as your apprentice."

"We'll learn from each other," he replied. With that he turned and set off uphill so fast that I was hardly able to keep up.

Presently I called after him: "Your squad leader's said to have eyes like a hawk and an incredibly keen sense of hearing."

"People like to exaggerate," he answered curtly, not even looking back.

Evidently he wasn't the type to sing his own unit's praises.

"We're nearly there. Let's put on a spurt," he urged me.

"Nearly where?" I strained my eyes into the whiteness.

"Listen. Hear that singing? That's the comrades welcoming us."

Sure enough, I caught stirring strains which breathed life and vigour into the sea of mist. The tune warmed my heart. It made me feel that I was returning to the fighting collective, to a unit to which I belonged but had left for some time. The singing gained in volume as we approached. I could even hear the words:

We sentries guard the far-flung coast
Above the tossing spray,
Where blows a breeze from distant seas
A thousand *li* away,
At home upon the mountain peak,
On guard both night and day....

The sentry post, like an alert sentinel, stood proudly on the summit of the hill.

As we approached, drawn by the singing, I found myself surrounded by some young soldiers who materialized suddenly from the white mist. In a twinkling they seized hold of all my things except the clothes I stood in, and carried me shoulder-high into the post. The fighter who had met me handed me a cup of water.

"Here," he said. "Taste our Misty Island speciality — White Mist soda water."

As I took the cup I asked: "Where's our squad leader?"

A young fighter quipped: "Where do you think? There in front of you!"

So that was Fang Kai. I stood up to shake his hand, remarking as I did so: "You tried to throw dust in my eyes, eh, comrade squad leader? But I had my suspicions from the start."

"If you spotted your target why didn't you capture it?" he retorted, smiling. After some more talk and laughter, Fang Kai called for order and announced: "We're going to have a concert this evening to welcome our new comrade. Each of you must put on one item, and then we'll ask Old Lin to tell us about combat preparations in other units. Our own combat readiness is not so hot — we still have certain problems. What's the best way for us to carry out the tasks given us by headquarters swiftly, accurately and on time?"

Brrrr! An alarm clock on the table went off. The squad leader raised his hand. "Reconnoitre! Get cracking!"

As the fighters jumped to their feet, Fang Kai laid one hand on my shoulder, the other on the shoulder of a young fighter beside me. "Your task, Young Liu, is to see that Old Lin has a good rest." The next moment he was off at the head of his men.

After watching them vanish into the mist Young Liu turned to me and said warmly: "Come on, I'll make up your bed." He unpacked my kit, spread out my bedding and hung up my satchel, all so rapidly that I had no chance to do a thing.

"You're certainly a fast worker," I remarked.

"I learned that from our squad leader. Our squad leader is terrific. By pressing his ear to a rock, no matter how loudly waves crash or currents swirl, he can spot any type of vessel, its direction and the approximate sector of the sea it's in."

Since he had all my things unpacked by then, I suggested: "Let's go and watch the squad carrying out reconnaissance."

"No can do." My proposal was unequivocally vetoed. "We must obey orders. Your task right now is — rest!" To soften the blow, he added: "Tomorrow you can join in our eye exercises."

"Eye exercises?"

"Sure. As you can see, it's very misty here, but only at certain times. Spring is the worst, with bad visibility eight days out of ten and hardly more than three clear days altogether. Because of the freakish, changeable weather here, we have to train our eyesight and sense of

hearing. In other words, we practise aerial reconnaissance. Our squad leader says that to be good coastguards for our great motherland, we must train our eyes to see a thousand *li*."

"How do you train? Do planes pass over here?"

"They most certainly do," he answered with a twinkle. "Our squad leader is our flight commander."

"Flight commander?" Before I could probe any further, Young Liu picked up two kettles and bounded off to take water to his comrades.

Dawn the next day.

Roused by the whistle for reveille, I jumped up. I was hastily dressing when in came the squad leader. The chill morning wind wafting through the open door filled the room with eddying mist. We all dashed out. I kept as close as I could to Fang Kai, afraid of falling behind. At No. 2 observation trench, he ordered us each to take cover in a dugout.

The sun was rising above the sea. Scattering the thick white mist, it grew brighter every minute. In a flash the distant mountains and coastal waters were bathed in a dazzling radiance.

"Let them go, Young Liu!" ordered Fang Kai.

"Very good!" Young Liu removed the board over the mouth of a cave. Cooing and flapping, a flock of pigeons took flight. They circled above the sentry post, then winged up towards the dazzling sunshine. In another minute they were lost to sight.

"Report!" yelled a gruff voice. "No. 1 has located the target to the left, above, one 'enemy plane', height 150, distance 302."

"Report!" announced a deep powerful bass. "No. 2 has pinpointed a target ahead to the right. Two 'enemy planes' are diving down."

"Report! No. 4 has spotted the target, three 'enemy planes' circling over the sentry post." I recognized Young Liu's clear, rather high-pitched voice.

Reports followed thick and fast, like the rattle of a machine-gun. I noticed that the squad leader was straining his eyes towards the sun

to check up on each man's report. But when I tried to take a better look myself, the dazzling light forced me to close my eyes.

"Report . . . I can't see a thing," I said sheepishly.

Fang Kai mounted a boulder and, putting his right hand to his mouth, blew two piercing whistles. At that all the 'planes' returned to base, their mission accomplished, alighting on the boulder at the squad leader's feet where they started preening their plumage. He picked up a small white pigeon and jumped down to join us.

"Take it easy now," he said. "Let's sum up that exercise."

Young Liu ran up to me demanding: "Well? Didn't I tell you that our squad leader's our flight commander too?"

"All right. Now let's see how we stand. Who made the best showing?" asked Fang Kai as we sat down in a circle round him.

"Young Liu did pretty well, I think, spotting three 'enemy planes'."

"I agree."

"That took some doing. I didn't see a thing myself. Yet he spotted three circling around." I made a thumbs-up sign. But Young Liu paid no attention at all to me. He had eyes for nobody but the squad leader, as if only this strict teacher's judgement counted with him.

And then Fang Kai spoke up. "I disagree. Young Liu's improved but he still makes mistakes. Look here." He held up the small white pigeon. "There were four 'planes' circling just now, but Young Liu didn't spot this one because white hardly shows up against a dazzling sun. So he only reported three planes. And Young Wang, in reporting the distance, didn't take into account the refraction of the light." He paused for a second to let this sink in, then continued: "The crafty enemy often utilizes the reflection of the sunlight or the clouds to elude detection. We mustn't be misled by appearances but eliminate the false and retain the true. With a high sense of responsibility to the people, we must spare no pains to perfect our reconnoitring ability. On no account must we allow a single enemy pilot to elude us in the mist."

"Let us have another go, squad leader!" cried the soldiers clenching their fists.

"All right." Fang Kai blew another piercing whistle. The pigeons

spread their wings and took flight again. Stretched out beside me he patiently explained the rules for spotting aerial targets. I memorized them one by one and, taking Fang Kai as my model, trained my eyes in the strong sunlight.

That night was black as ink. The sound of a vessel cutting through the waves sounded clearly from the ocean. Several men of our squad, their ears pressed to rocks, were listening intently. Presently Young Liu stood up and exclaimed: "One of our own submarines. Good show!"

"Why didn't you spot it until it came so close in?" asked the squad leader joining us.

"It's only just surfaced," was the confident answer. "And we've no sonar equipment. Besides, the command hasn't given us the job of under-water reconnaissance."

Fang Kai raised his eyebrows and gazed out across the tossing sea. His lips, tightly set at first, parted. But he said nothing.



Late that night I was awakened by a high wind buffeting the window-panes. I looked at my watch. Three thirty. When I felt the squad leader's place in the dark it was empty. At once I dressed and went out. Visibility was nil due to dense fog. I groped my way to some observation trenches, but found them all deserted. Suddenly I heard steps. I wheeled round, exclaiming: "Squad leader!"

"It's not the squad leader. I'm looking for him myself." It was Young Liu. Rolling his black eyes he told me: "The squad leader must be out catching cuttlefish. Remember that bamboo pole he brought in, Old Lin?"

This explanation made sense. Spring is the season for catching cuttlefish. Together, Young Liu and I hurried down to the shore.

The wind had whipped up great waves which were thundering on the reefs. My heart misgave me. In a storm like this. . . I stole a glance at Young Liu. Quite unperturbed, he had perched on a rock and was swinging his legs as he chanted:

He'll bring us a big catch
of cuttlefish;
Deep-fried they'll make us
a delicious dish. . . .

The anxious look on my face made him burst out laughing.

"Don't worry, Old Lin," he said reassuringly. "Our squad leader's an old hand at fishing. He can weather any storm. He knows the whole coast hereabouts like the palm of his hand and can tell you the position of any reef large or small." Then abruptly springing to his feet he yelled: "Here he comes! Here he comes!"

Sure enough, the outline of a sampan took shape in the mist.

Cupping our hands we hailed Fang Kai, who steered his small craft our way, riding ashore on the crest of a huge breaker. Young Liu craned his neck to have a look at the catch, but the little boat was empty.

"Didn't you go to catch cuttlefish, squad leader?" he asked.

"To catch cuttlefish of a particularly vicious sort, yes," was the prompt reply. "Old Lin, we've a new dodge to detect submerged submarines."

"What is it?" demanded Young Liu eagerly.

"Well, have a look, both of you, at the special new sonar device made on Misty Island." Fang Kai handed us a large, strong bamboo pole. Taking it, we saw that the intersections of the joints had been removed.

"If you stick that into the water, you can hear sounds under the sea. When I was a boy and went herring-fishing with my dad, he used to lean over the gunwale to listen out for shoals of herring below. I've been trying out his method. So long as you know the normal sounds made by the tides, you can tell if there's a submarine down below." With a glance at Young Liu, the squad leader went on: "It's true the high command hasn't given us the job of under-water observation, but keeping watch on the sea and the air from Misty Island just isn't good enough. We might let the enemy get away under water. What sort of coastguards can we call ourselves if we allow the enemy to slip away under our noses?"

Fang Kai's argument had all the force of the surf beating on the reefs. Young Liu, holding the bamboo pole, stared with eyes full of admiration at his squad leader soaked to the skin. "Why didn't you call us, squad leader?" he asked reproachfully. "Why must you take all the risks alone every time?"

"I've just tried to figure out the rules of this," replied Fang Kai with a smile. "That'll facilitate our collective training."

The next day we collected a number of bamboo poles and started a new type of training.

As the first glimmer of light appeared in the east, Young Liu and I armed with bamboos boarded a small boat. Fang Kai rolled up his sleeves to shove us off and the boat, rising on the crest of a wave, was carried four or five feet from the shore. I didn't see how the squad leader could make it. But with a spring he vaulted nimbly aboard, took the oars and started rowing.

Great waves lashed by the wind pounded our boat, which bobbed up and down like a cork. But the roaring tempest, like a clarion call, only put us on our mettle. The squad leader strained his eyes through the thick mist. After rowing a little way he slowed down and told us: "This is Sea Sector 12. It's deep here with no reefs, a deep channel. Plunge your poles into the sea and practise listening."

Young Liu and I pressed our ears to the top of our poles. The roaring tumult of the waves and current pounded against our eardrums.

"I hear it all right, squad leader!" yelled Young Liu.

Fang Kai nodded, pulling slowly on the oars. "It's high tide now," he observed. "That means the under-water sounds are fairly stable without much interference. Listen carefully, so as to fix them in your minds."

After listening for a while Young Liu exclaimed in surprise: "The drumming's much louder all of a sudden. Why?"

Fang Kai instantly shipped his oars and took over the young soldier's hearing-tube to listen. Crash! A wave broke over the boat, drenching him from head to foot, but the squad leader didn't budge an inch

from his post. Soon, however, he looked up to ask urgently: "What's the shipping schedule for today, Young Liu?"

"No shipping."

Fang Kai knit his brows, his eyes flashed. In a low but forceful voice he said: "My estimate is, there's an enemy submarine down there. We must report this right away to headquarters." Seizing the oars from Young Liu he pulled on them hard, heading our small craft back towards Misty Island. Young Liu and I, one on each side, paddled with our hands. When we were still two metres from the beach, the squad leader had already jumped ashore and vanished into the mist.

By the time Young Liu and I got back to our post, the radio operator was tapping out a message to headquarters. All of us were afire with impatience.



Headquarters radioed back that our report was correct. No. 2 radar station had spotted this enemy submarine some time earlier. Our unit was commended for its high revolutionary vigilance and bold initiative in carrying out under-water reconnaissance.

The squad leader was the first to race outside. We followed him to the shore where each of us clamped himself like a leech to a rock. I could feel the blood fairly racing through my veins. All around was a murky white, so that Fang Kai was invisible to me, yet I seemed to see his keen eyes piercing cloud and mist, his rough, powerful hands seizing hold of the enemy submarine and dragging it up from the bottom of the sea. . . .

“Comrades, our destroyers have put out to sea!” cried Fang Kai in ringing tones. The enemy was surrounded. Jumping for joy we gathered round our squad leader.

Illustrated by Tung Chen-sbeng

Yangshuo Landscape (painting in the traditional style)
by Li Ko-jan ▶



陽朔山水畫

When the Persimmons Ripened

Ko Niu



Like a torch, the autumn wind turned the trees in the valley and over the hilltops a bright crimson until the whole mountain seemed aflame. Under a deep azure sky, the undulating ranges were a lovely sight.

A persimmon tree at the bottom of the gully looked like a huge red sunshade from a distance. Now and again, bright leaves fluttered down from the branches, rustling as they reached the ground. Suddenly a ripe persimmon fell with a plop on the tent below the tree, rolled slowly to one edge and dropped by its door-flap.

Young Chin poked his head out at the sound. What a pity, he thought, at sight of the bruised persimmon. Modelling his actions on his squad leader's, he picked up the ripe fruit and wiped it with his towel. A delicious aroma tickled the young fighter's nostrils. Chin seemed to see Li Min, the squad leader, his full lips pursed in concentration as he stooped to pick up fallen fruit. Those big hands, calloused from handling rough stones, could swing a heavy hammer as if it were a stem of flax but lifted each persimmon as though it weighed a ton. At such times Li always hummed under his breath the song about the Red Army's discipline.

The whole squad was out at work. Young Chin whose turn it was to do the cooking was the only one in the camp. As the old Red Army song rang in his ears, he recalled their arrival in the gully a couple of months ago.

The squad had come here early in July on an assignment connected with preparedness for war. No sooner had they put down their kit than they discovered that there was no space in the gully for them to set up a tent. The whole valley was planted with young maize. Craggy cliffs rose precipitously on both sides and further down was a swift-running stream. There was simply no room to pitch camp.

One or two comrades proposed putting up their tent in the maize field — they need only take up twenty square metres at the most. In his eagerness to get cracking, Young Chin shook Li's broad shoulders, urging him to report back at once to the company. Li, however, remained impassive, his eyes sweeping the valley. Suddenly his eyebrows twitched. Pointing a finger he exclaimed, "Isn't that a good place to camp?" The men saw a ridge in the middle of the maize field surmounted by a big persimmon tree. With the squad at his heels, Li strode to the tree and began pacing out the ground underneath.

At last he pronounced, "It's just big enough, we'll set up our tent against the tree. There are paths on both sides, so that's fine."

"Of course it's better not to encroach on farm land, but the ground here is so uneven, we'll need at least three days to level it." Chin was anxious to waste no time in pitching camp.

Li gathered the men round him under the persimmon tree. Together they studied Chairman Mao's directive, "**The army must become one with the people so that they see it as their own army. Such an army will be invincible.**" This teaching warmed the men's hearts. Then Li told them an anecdote.

Twenty-three years before this, when our army was fighting to liberate a city, a detachment of the PLA had infiltrated the place late one winter night. In order not to disturb the inhabitants, the men unpacked their kit and spent the night out in the streets. The people's

army's first concern is the people. Hearts ablaze with love, they disregarded the cold. When an old woman opened her door early the next morning, what she saw took her breath away. There was a layer of frost on the men's light covering. The old woman's eyes grew misty. What fine soldiers these were! They would shed their own blood in the fighting to protect the people's lives and property. Now that the city was liberated, they were content to sleep in the streets. . . . She hurriedly woke her husband who roused the neighbourhood.

With such devotion to the cause, our revolutionary predecessors won city after city, village after village, till the whole of China was liberated. . . .

This story had first been told by the old battalion commander. Although the men had heard it a dozen times they were especially moved by it today. Li himself was deeply stirred.

"Comrades, have you ever reflected how pregnant in meaning it is, the name PLA? The people's own army! How much those few words signify!" His eyes swept the men around him before he asked: "Well, how shall we pitch camp?"

The squad leader's words fell on Chin's ears like timely rain on a thirsty field. They helped his understanding to grow apace. After rolling up his sleeves he shook Li's shoulders again. "Let's get started!" he cried. "If we can't set up our tent by nightfall, we'll sleep out under the tree."

The whole squad set to at once with spade and pick.

All this the local poor and lower-middle peasants observed with approval. Old Uncle Hsing-fu, his heart turbulent with emotion, stroked his silvery beard and voiced his appreciation. Then at a signal from him, several peasants with hoes and rakes joined the men at work. Soldiers and peasants together levelled the ground under the tree in no time at all. Without pausing even to mop his perspiring forehead, Li inspected the surrounding maize field with Chin, bending low to make sure that not even a small clod of earth was pressing down upon the growing plants.

When pink sunset clouds melted into darkness in the western sky, the rousing strains of *The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the*

Eight Points for Attention rang out from the tent under the tree. The squad leader started the song, singing lustily:

Revolutionary soldiers must always remember,
The three rules and eight points....

"Is our meal ready, Young Chin?"

Li's voice broke into Chin's train of memories. The men were back from work, marching behind Li whose sturdy frame had already appeared on the ridge. His uniform was almost white with much washing but the tabs on his collar were still a vivid red.

"Look at this persimmon, squad leader," Chin accosted him.

"What a pity!" Li's face clouded as he took the fruit. "Another one so badly bruised." Wiping the persimmon on the hem of his tunic, he stepped into the tent and placed it in a basin. "This is the nineteenth," he muttered half to Chin and half to himself.

The small square levelled by the men in front of the tent was well shaded by the tree. Peasants passing by often stopped to pass the time of day with the men off duty here. After their meal, the whole squad gathered under the tree. There were countless persimmon and date trees in these mountain gullies but there was something unusual about this one. The thick trunk was heavily scored by a conspicuous six-inch scar made by a knife. The bark had grown over the cut after many years, but the traces of the gash would always be visible. Half hidden by the thick foliage hung luscious persimmons in clusters of twos and threes. The fruit was exceptionally large and plump. But although it was quite late in the autumn, the owner of the tree had not yet turned up to pick it. Why was that? This was a question which puzzled all the men.

"Perhaps the peasants are too busy harvesting their crops. They can't spare the time to pick fruit." This was Young Chin's guess.

"But what a pity to let so many persimmons fall and get bruised like that."

"We must put a stop to this somehow."

All agreed on this point and turned to the squad leader.

Li had heard Uncle Hsing-fu say something about leaving these persimmons for the PLA comrades to enjoy. That would never do.

The persimmons should be picked of course, no matter by whom. They couldn't just be left on the tree like that.

"I know what," he said with a decisive gesture. "We'll pick all the persimmons now and, when we've found out who the owners are, we can deliver the fruit to them with gonging and drumming. How's that?"

"That's an idea." Chin blinked. "But what if we can't discover who the owners are?"

"Don't worry, I'll find a way," said Li. But in his heart he was also a little worried.

Now that the squad leader had given the order, some of the men climbed the tree while others worked under it. Before long, six large crates were filled with persimmons. The crates were well lined with old newspapers and Li himself placed the nineteen windfalls with the other fruit, handling them as gingerly as though they were eggs.

When this job was finished Chin beamed. Indeed all the men felt easier in their minds now, for every time a persimmon fell it had distressed them.

From his experience of several years in the army, Li realized that it would be no easy task to discover the owners of the persimmons. Even if they succeeded in finding out, it would still be difficult to deliver the fruit. A week went by and they were no nearer the solution of their problem. Soon it was Sunday again. Li sent men out in two directions to join the villagers at work so that while farming together they might find some clue to the owner of the tree. Chin called these two groups of men a "special task-force".

By noon both task-forces had returned. Instead of finding out the required information, they themselves had nearly been "caught" by the peasants who insisted on thrusting dried dates and ripe persimmons into their hands. When they declined these the old people looked offended. "Who asked you to fetch water and do other jobs for us?" they demanded. "So you refuse to eat our fruit, eh? Well, if that's the way you feel you'd better stop coming."

When the PLA men mentioned the persimmon tree on the ridge all the villagers, old and young alike, knew about it and spoke of it with pride and affection. But when asked whom the fruit belonged

to, the peasants stalled. "Why, who bothers to lay claim to a few persimmons?"

The more generous the peasants were, the more eager the PLA men were to find the fruit's owners. Li urged the squad to search for more "clues". Suddenly Chin clapped his forehead. "Why didn't it occur to us before? Trees go with the land they're on, and this land belongs to Team Two. That surely means the persimmons belong to that team." The others were convinced by this reasoning. And Li had heard Uncle Hsing-fu say that the ridge was the watershed dividing the land of Teams Two and Three. That being the case, the persimmon tree must belong to one or the other of the two teams. It was decided that after their meal they'd take the persimmons to their owners.

A golden sun in a deep blue sky shed a mellow glow over the mountain path as marching down from the persimmon tree came men carrying six large crates, sounding gongs and beating a drum. At their head was squad leader Li Min.

When the company's political instructor had visited their tent the previous evening, Li Min had told him about the case of the persimmons. The instructor had looked appreciatively from the surrounding mountain peaks to the eager young fighters by his side. He had commended them for what they had done. The men now swung along vigorously and soon arrived at Team Two. The team leader was taken by surprise but a second glance told him why the soldiers were there. When Li started to explain their mission, he cut in:

"You've made a mistake, comrade squad leader. These persimmons aren't ours. You've come to the wrong place."

Li Min was prepared for that. "No mistake, comrade." The men also chimed in, citing as their reason the custom for the ownership of trees to go with that of the land.

The team leader was taken aback for a moment. "The tree really belongs to Team Three," he said presently. "But if I were you I'd keep the persimmons because it's no use your trying to send them back."

The men had no alternative but to turn round, gongs, drum and all, and head for Team Three.

To their surprise the leader of Team Three, a woman, also refused the fruit. She fobbed them off with exactly the same reply as had the leader of Team Two, concluding, "You must eat the persimmons yourselves. Lugging them around is only a waste of time."

Only then did it dawn on the men that the two teams were in cahoots. Li Min frowned thoughtfully. He would not admit defeat, but they had gone from one team to another with gongs and drum, talking till they were hoarse, and the six crates of persimmons were still on their hands. The problem seemed even more complicated now. He decided to enlist the support of Uncle Hsing-fu who, as an ex-guerrilla, would surely help them out. Unfortunately the old man was away at a meeting in the commune. All Li could do was direct his men to carry the persimmons back to camp.

Uncle Hsing-fu arrived at noon the next day with his little grandson. The men went out of the tent to welcome him, then clustered round him under the tree. Li sensed that the two production teams had sent him.

"I suppose you know what happened yesterday, uncle." He broached the subject without further preliminaries.

The old man laughed jovially. "Yes, I've heard." He lit his pipe. After a few puffs he said, "Well, I'll be quite frank. This tree stands on the boundary line between two teams and it has never been quite clear which team should pick the fruit. Your coming this year was a stroke of good luck for us. The poor and lower-middle peasants of both teams are of one mind. Neither team will pick the persimmons this year, but let the PLA comrades enjoy the ripe fruit. Since the villagers want to make you a gift, you must accept the fruit."

So that explained everything! Young Chin said with feeling, "Uncle, we fully appreciate the poor and lower-middle peasants' generosity, but naturally we can't accept the gift. Chairman Mao teaches us not to take a single needle or thread from the masses. . . ."

Before the old man could say anything, his little grandson piped up: "But, uncle, these are persimmons, not needle or thread."

This remark set the men laughing. Li hugged the child. "At any rate, we can't take the persimmons."

Uncle Hsing-fu stuck to his point. "You've got to keep the fruit. You PLA comrades work whole-heartedly for the people, what's



wrong with your eating a few persimmons?" He stood up and gave the tree a loving glance before continuing, "Did you know that Eighth Route Army men shed their blood under this tree?" The men stared as he stroked the scar on the trunk. Lighting his pipe again, the old man launched into his tale:

Many years ago just at this season when the persimmons were ripe, the dogs outside the village started barking early one morning.

The White brigands were coming. Thirty Kuomintang troops had surrounded the village. Smoke rose as fires broke out and the whole village was thrown into confusion. The villagers, caught off guard, had no time to hide and were rounded up together under this persimmon tree. The brutal beating they received left its mark on the tree as well. Broken branches hung dangling from shreds of bark. Half-eaten fruit littered the ground. The bandits levelling their guns at the peasants ordered them to lead the way to the Eighth Route Army's hide-outs. Gritting their teeth, the villagers refused. They would not lift a finger to help the reactionaries against their own army. When no one would stir a step, the officer in charge unsheathed his sword. With a wild slash at the persimmon tree he shouted, "Take us to the Eighth Route!" Not a single person moved. In a rage, the officer ordered the soldiers to load their guns. They were all set to mow the villagers down. Dozens of lives were at stake.

"Do you want to live or die?" howled the officer.

The peasants' eyes blazed, their blood boiled. Signalling to each other with their eyes, they decided to have it out with the bandits. They mustn't wait to be slaughtered. They would fight.

Suddenly, a dozen or so Eighth Route Army men led by platoon leader Big Chiang rushed down from the mountain. Sharp bayonets mounted on their rifles, they charged the bandits. Before the officer could pull out his gun, Big Chiang put a bullet through him. All this happened so fast that the bandits didn't know which way to turn. They milled round in panic. The villagers, emboldened by the coming of their own troops, pounced on the enemy. A bitter clash ensued.

People and regular soldiers fighting together soon routed the bandits. But Big Chiang gave his life in the struggle. His blood spattered the persimmon tree.

After that the village's younger men joined the Eighth Route Army while those left behind organized a guerrilla detachment. Uncle Hsing-fu was the guerrilla leader. Shoulder to shoulder, peasants and soldiers patrolled the village. Together they practised target shooting and together they took aim at the enemy. Fighting for freedom and heading for the same goal, army and people were bound by strong feelings of kinship.

Uncle Hsing-fu eyed the big tree which had weathered so many storms. "It's very strange," he continued. "This tree has grown more luxuriantly ever since and its fruit seems larger and redder than before. The villagers say it's drawn strength from the martyr's blood."

After a pause the old man continued, "Every year when the fruit turns red, the poor and lower-middle peasants think of Big Chiang and of our armymen. Now that at last you are here, how can you refuse to accept the persimmons?"

This tale touched the men's heart-strings. The glowing persimmons symbolized the fervent love of the people. How could they still say no?

Li Min sprang to his feet when Uncle Hsing-fu had finished. "We'll accept the persimmons and never forget what the poor and lower-middle peasants expect of us. We shall learn from the revolutionary spirit of Big Chiang and safeguard our fruits of victory."

Young Chin had opened his mouth to protest when he heard the squad leader's first sentence, but with a wave of his hand Li silenced him.

Uncle Hsing-fu, his mission fulfilled, started home with his grandson, farewelled by drumming and gonging. Then Li called his squad together to discuss how to repay the peasants' loving concern. They finally decided to work even harder to support the government and cherish the people. The squad would also buy some farm tools as a gift for the local poor and lower-middle peasants. As for the persimmons, Young Chin's proposal to present them to the Third Company of the militia which was working on the construction site with them won the approval of all. Early the next morning, Li and his comrades started out with the crates of persimmons for the Third Company. They marched down the mountain path trodden years before them by the Eighth Route Army.

Rounding a turn in the road, the squad disappeared from sight but the song embodying the love between the PLA and the Chinese people reverberated through the valley:

Revolutionary discipline in mind,
The people's fighters always love the people.
Guarding our land, we march for ever forward,
Supported by the people wherever we go.

Illustrated by Kang Tung

Chao Jih-sheng

Making Straw Hats

In June
When the wheat has been harvested
And the sickles hung up,
No one wants to rest.
Girls seated in a circle
Set busily to work
Making straw hats.
The long straws
Quiver on their laps
Like silver strands
Plaited by flying fingers;
While never pausing
Or raising their eyes from their work
They chatter on and on.

Lovely Cloud boasts:
"These hats of mine
Will never change shape,
They're strong enough to sit on!
They'll serve as sunshades
Or keep off the rain;
Wear one of my hats to the fields,
And even the Thunder God
Will have to smile."

Green Orchid looks further.
"My straw hats," she says,
"Are closely woven
With fine solid borders,
Each round as any millstone;
Wear one of my hats
Prospecting in the hills,
And with a smile
They'll yield up all their treasures."

The work goes steadily on
And they chatter like magpies
Till Crimson Blossom comes out
With the sweetest fancy:
"In black cloth shoes and white shirt,
With a straw hat hung from his shoulders,
Chairman Mao has travelled
The length and breadth of China,
Inspecting our crops and fields.
If only one of my straw hats
Could go everywhere with the Chairman!

I want my hats
To strengthen the revolution."

So, plaiting, they chat,
Interweaving fine craftsmanship
With fervent wishes,
Seated on the threshing-ground
But keeping in their hearts
The whole wide world.



Chang Yung-chuan

The Work-Shed

A thatched shed
Rigged up by the workers,
With golden sunflowers before,
Green hills behind,
Greets the red sun at dawn
And is mantled at dusk by the sunset.

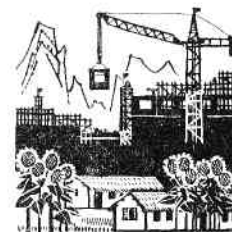
This little work-shed
Is their happy home;
Here their talk at night by lamplight
Ranges from the construction job
To embattled Asia, Africa
And Latin America.

Dismantling one shed
They put up another

And settle down in their new home;
The small work-shed marks their advance,
Leaving behind it great buildings.

Ask these construction workers
Where their home is,
And they will point to the couplet
Flanking their door:

We camp beside
Ten thousand hills and streams,
The Five Continents and Four Seas
Are our home.



*Chang Pao-sheng
and Ku Li-li*

*The Wild Swan**

Deer-daunting Cliff,
Tiger's-dread Gully. . . .
No obstacle can halt her flashing wheels
As riding the rolling thunder,
Pursuing the lightning,
Like a cygnet battling the storm
Comes our mountain postgirl.

Wind cuts through her clothes,
Cold rain washes her flushed face,
But she only pedals faster,
Her raincoat wrapped securely
Round the mail.

*In old China the wild swan symbolized a letter-carrier.

Two miles to Apricot Village,
Three to Jujube Hamlet,
Her light tap on the door
Is welcomed by every household;
Children flock round to lead her in,
While grannies pour hot tea.
She brings glad tidings from Peking,
Experience from Tachai,
Greetings from dear ones far away,
Good wishes from guards at the frontier. . . .
Each small parcel sent with love
Spreads happiness in mountain villages.

The old team-leader's laughter
Rattles the window-panes
As raising one thumb he exclaims:
"She brings us word from Chairman Mao,
Takes away the heartfelt wishes
Of us mountain folk,
Like a wild swan
Linking our village
With all China."

The wind and the rain have stopped,
A bright rainbow spans the blue sky;
Ten miles to the nearest village,
Twelve miles to the plain. . . .
Her bell rings clearly through the clouds,

Her singing floats above green hills:

“I am giving my youth
To the service of the people,
To be a wild swan all my life
For the revolution.”



Embroidering the Spring

Ninety-nine slopes turn green —
The Ahsi people
Change barren hills into orchards;
Ninety-nine gullies turn blue —
The Ahsi people
Build reservoirs in the valleys;
Ninety-nine crags turn red —
The Ahsi people
Embroider a spring scene.

We leave one slope bare
To remind us
Of our misery
In the old society;

This is a folk song of the Yi minority people.

Leave one gully dry
To remind us
How hard it is
To build something new;
Leave one crag untilled
To remind us
Of the spirit of Tachai.



Reportage

Yao Ling-yi

TIGER-CUB SQUAD

The moon gliding up the sky above the forest cast a soft golden light over the newly-built railway. It gilded the threshing-ground too, where the work-site propaganda team was giving a performance. The din of gongs and drums and the sound of singing made the place as lively as a village fair with people coming from miles around. At this moment they were putting on a skit entitled "Tiger-Cub Squad".

The head of the work-site headquarters was sitting in the front row among some youngsters. "See there, young rascal!" he said to the boy beside him. "They're showing what a fine job your squad did."

These boys and girls in their early teens normally found it impossible to sit still. If they weren't jumping up and down they'd be hooting, laughing or clapping with might and main. Now, however, they were sitting there looking rather sheepish at the sight of their own doings acted on the stage. But this seeming seriousness was only skin-deep. On the sly they were stealthily nudging and kicking each other.

One of the actors was declaiming loudly:

By this girl the squad is led;
Though she's young, her heart is red....

At once a boy called Steel whispered to a girl with plaits: "Look, Sunflower, that's you!"

As Sunflower hid her face to hide her blushes, another lad slipped a pebble down her back. But Sunflower simply bent her head and ignored these obstreperous boys.

It had all started six weeks ago when their school broke up. The mist on the mountains seemed like a white padded coat as Sunflower, with her satchel over one shoulder, raced home along the winding path in high spirits. The subject uppermost in her mind, something so exciting that it had driven all other thoughts out of her head, was the new railway to be built through the mountains. As she ran she repeated under her breath: "Let me go to build the railway, Dad. I'm quite big enough. *Please* let me go!" Then since this argument seemed to lack weight she added: "I know what I'll say. 'Our teacher tells us this new railway is very important for speeding up the building of socialism. You mustn't hold me back, Dad. My mind's made up.'" She gave a satisfied smile, confident that this would surely convince her father.

In this happy frame of mind Sunflower reached home. But the moment she stepped through the doorway her little brother toddled over, arms outstretched, wanting her to play with him. At once she thought: "Mum's bound to ask: 'Who's to look after baby if you go?' Then what could I answer?" So she pulled a long face and said sternly: "A big boy like you, how can you expect grown-ups to play with you and carry you around? Don't grown-ups have work to do?"

Her mother overheard this in the kitchen and couldn't keep from laughing. "You're too wee a girlie yourself," she called out, "to frighten baby that way."

"I'm not a wee girlie. I'm thirteen," Sunflower protested.

This only made her mother laugh even more.

Just then Sunflower's father came home. But by this time all her arguments so carefully rehearsed had been driven clean out of her mind.

Sunflower's father told them that the names of the people chosen

to help build the new railway would be announced that evening. When his wife inquired who would be going he replied: "All those who are up to the job."

"Am I up to the job?" asked Sunflower anxiously.

Tweaking her plaits her father said: "In another five years — maybe."

Sunflower pouted. "Well, I'm going anyway."

During supper father and daughter contested the point. What exasperated Sunflower most was that this was a matter of the utmost importance yet the grown-ups refused to take her seriously. They just laughed off her arguments.

The next morning Sunflower went to see Old Tieh, head of the commune's revolutionary committee, and found his office thronged with applicants. She had heard that when Tieh was young and wanted to join the army he had been turned down because he was under age, but he kept on pleading until the battalion commander agreed to have him. That being the case, he would surely take her side. So she listed all her reasons one by one and insisted on going to the work site.

Tieh appreciated the girl's enthusiasm but would not commit himself. He patted her head. "That's the spirit. But you're too young. Would your parents let you go?"

Sunflower had her answer pat. "My dad is secretary of the brigade Party branch, you're secretary of the commune. That means he's under you. If you okay my going, he'll have to agree."

"I can't issue orders like that," chuckled Tieh. "We can only take you if your dad agrees."

Returning home Sunflower chose the most difficult path, determined to train herself for the building job.

That evening she and her father embarked on their second round of talks. He still would not take her request at all seriously.

"Building a railway is not like gathering firewood in the mountains," he said. "You have to trek for miles and live for months at the work site."

This, of course, was what Sunflower wanted — to live at the work site a long way from home and take part in an arduous struggle.

"How old were you, Dad," she asked gravely, "when that dog of a landlord killed granny?" Not giving him time to answer she continued: "You went to work as a cowherd and hired hand when you were only eleven. I'm two years older than that. So why won't you let me go? When the landlords were in the saddle you weren't afraid to leave home and work for them. Now we have Chairman Mao, we are our own masters. Why should you worry about me and not let me go out to work?"

It dawned on her father that Sunflower had grown up. She knew her own mind. This reminded him of his own young days. And Sunflower, noticing that he was beginning to take her seriously, ran through all her arguments again. The upshot of these talks was that her father agreed to her working for a month in the winter holidays, on condition that she returned in good time for the start of the new school term.

Let us turn for a moment now to the boy called Steel, a youngster in the same squad. Like Sunflower he had determined to help build the new railway and had many arguments on this score with his father, who also considered him too young for such work. Steel reasoned that he helped out with all sorts of jobs — a grown man's jobs — at home, and therefore if he wasn't fit to go then neither was his father. The latter, unable to refute him, said: "Children must listen to grown-ups and do as they're told."

"I'll listen to Chairman Mao and do as he tells me!" cried Steel, his head thrown back defiantly.

Father and son grew more heated the longer they argued, but Steel's old man refused to give his consent.

A few days after Sunflower left for the work site, Steel gathered his friends by the field where they usually played to announce that he had found a way to join the construction work force. They were all agog to hear it. Having sworn them to secrecy he let them into his plan.

The next day Steel told his mother that his father had sent a message asking for more bedding and offered to take him a quilt. He concealed his own straw sandals and socks in the bedding-roll, and

carried it to the work site. There without a word to his father he set to work.

All the village youngsters were thrilled by the construction of the new railway. Taking Sunflower and Steel as their examples, Tung-tung, Pillar, Red Cloud and other boys and girls devised different ways and means to go to the building site. At first they worked with the militiamen and women. When their number increased Old Tieh, as a battalion instructor of the militia, called a meeting to discuss this problem. Chairman Mao teaches us that bringing up young people for the revolution means steeling them in real struggles so that they become fearless, with the courage to think for themselves, speak out, show initiative and make revolution. The meeting therefore decided to organize the teen-agers into a separate squad under the direct command of battalion headquarters.

The first job assigned to the new youngsters' squad was loosening the soil east of the railway bed. Sunflower as squad leader led her eleven squad members in regular formation, carrying picks and shovels, to the work site. A boy holding a red banner led the way and as they marched they sang, stepping forward as vigorously as the grown-ups. Instructor Tieh worked with them. The boys and girls worked with such a will that soon their cheeks were as rosy as ripe apples. During a break for rest they watched the carts shuttling past and the groups tamping the soil. Enormously impressed by this seething activity, they were very eager to help. Steel felt an urge to pull a cart and took a few boys off to try this. Tung-tung had decided that tamping the earth was more fun. When Instructor Tieh and Sunflower had gone off on some business, he whispered to the boy next to him: "Loosening the soil here is pretty dull. Let's have a go at tamping." When Red Cloud and another girl saw all these boys leaving they too wanted to switch to more interesting work.

As Tung-tung, Red Cloud and the others were slipping away they were stopped by their squad leader, newly returned, who demanded sternly: "Where are you all going? We're not children any more but members of the militia assigned to build a railway. Do people have to tether us to our post? Look at the grown-ups, how



disciplined they are. But here we are running away.” When these boys and girls had a taste of their young squad leader’s sharp tongue, they abandoned their plans.

Instructor Tieh on his return found the squad working well. Only Steel and a few other boys had disappeared. While Sunflower was still reporting this, someone shouted that some boys from the youngsters’ squad had started a fight. Sunflower threw down her shovel and ran through the crowd to where Steel and Pillar were squabbling over a cart. Steel was the stronger lad, but Pillar refused to let go of the shafts of the cart or allow anyone else to take his place. The other boys did not know which side to take. They were standing round watching helplessly. When Pillar saw the squad leader he burst out sobbing. Steel let him go then, but throwing back his head he stood with arms akimbo, the picture of defiance.

“What are you quarrelling about?” fumed Sunflower. “Stop blubbering!”

“It’s all Steel’s fault,” complained Pillar. “We agreed that he’d pull the first five loads while I pushed, and then I’d pull the next five. He’s already pulled seven loads but he still won’t let me have my turn.”

“I’m much stronger than he is,” put in Steel self-righteously. “It’s only right that I should pull the cart.”

Sunflower stepped over to push them both aside. “Neither of you should be pulling this cart,” she declared sternly. “Go back and loosen the soil.”

At this both boys protested: “We don’t like that job. Why should we take orders from you?” The more Sunflower lectured them the more firmly they ganged up against her, until in a fury she left them.

As she was making off, Pillar followed to plead: “Sister Sunflower. . . .”

“Stop calling me sister. I’m a militia worker.” Without even turning her head Sunflower marched on.

“I’ll call you comrade squad leader, will that do? You must keep Steel under control. He won’t let me pull the cart.”

“I don’t care. You can do as you please.”

Sunflower had strained every nerve to come to the work site because she was set on helping build the new railway, she had never

expected to be made the leader of a work squad. When Tieh told her of her new duties she was a bit worried. At home she had her parents to look after her, at school she had the teachers. Now coming on her own to the work site, she would count herself lucky if she didn't make trouble for others — how could she lead a squad? Such a job was beyond her. She looked so blank that Tieh reminded her: "Sunflower, Chairman Mao tells us: **'Hard work is like a load placed before us, challenging us to shoulder it.'** As the daughter of a poor peasant, you should do as Chairman Mao says and shoulder this load."

Sunflower raised her head, her eyes shining. She reflected: "We've pledged ourselves to follow Chairman Mao. How can I shrink back, afraid of difficulties? If I don't know how to do a job, I can learn." So she answered earnestly: "Right, Instructor Tieh, I'll shoulder this load. I'll do my best to lead this squad." Little had she imagined that on the very first day she would run into such trouble. If only she could resign! She went to report this incident to the instructor, but as soon as she saw him she burst into tears.

That evening Tieh called the twelve youngsters together to learn the old Red Army song *The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention*. As Sunflower sang she was thinking: "We're all singing happily now, but some of us will soon be in for a lecture, that's for sure."

However, after a while Tieh said with a smile: "You've had a hard day, comrades, you'd better turn in now. But think seriously about the meaning of this song. We'll continue our study of it tomorrow." He then stood up and left as if nothing whatever had happened during the day. Sunflower chased after him and when he saw her he said: "You've been working very well the last couple of days. Just coming to a new place, you find everything interesting. Of course some of you aren't very disciplined, but don't worry. They'll improve, you must believe that."

Sunflower was puzzled. How could the instructor, usually so strict, take this problem of theirs so lightly?



Early next morning battalion headquarters told the squad not to go to work but to hold a meeting instead. The instructor and the boys and girls sat down together. First they sang the song about discipline; then Tieh explained its meaning line by line. In conclusion he told them a story about a young messenger in the army.

During the War of Liberation this young messenger, a boy no older than Steel, had worked at regimental headquarters. One day he was given the task of taking an important order to the front. On his way he came upon a squad of ours escorting some Kuomintang captives. He was so excited and curious that he fired off questions to the squad leader in charge until he discovered that the sun was setting. Then suddenly remembering his mission he ran frantically to the front, arriving only just in time to deliver the crucial order. Any further delay might have spelt defeat in battle. After this bad lapse of his the regiment commander taught him this Red Army song, explaining its significance word by word. Then he realized that discipline is the major guarantee for winning victory over the enemy.

The teen-agers had listened with rapt attention. They now launched into an animated discussion of the incident the previous day, pointing out the need to enforce discipline and to obey orders in all their actions. All felt strongly on the subject and were eager to speak. Steel, Pillar and the other boys who had gone off to pull the cart made a clean breast of their mistakes and offered each other some mutual criticism.

When Sunflower saw how successfully Old Tieh had solved this problem without losing his temper or lashing out at them, she was so impressed and happy that tears started to her eyes. She criticized herself for her hot temper, arrogance and self-righteousness and vowed in future to learn from the instructor.

After that she did her job even better. When one of the squad was unwell she would look after him, fetching him medicine and food. If anyone had an ideological problem, she would discuss it with him and help him. Before long all the youngsters swore by their squad leader.

Soon a socialist emulation campaign started. The different platoons and squads competed with each other. They went all out, working with tremendous zest.

The young people were dissatisfied at first because headquarters assigned them no special task. They put in for one time and again. Instructor Tieh backed them up and eventually they were given a not too difficult job — shifting earth to fill up a hollow with the women's squad. The time allotted was three days, and headquarters gave them two carts with wooden wheels.

The day before they started the little squad leader mapped out in detail who should pull the carts, shovel earth, do the dumping and so forth. But that evening her squad members urged her to revise this plan. They crowded round Sunflower to discuss the problem.

"The women's squad has good carts and good tools," said Red Cloud. "They've four carts with rubber tyres, to say nothing of other advantages over us."

"We mustn't let the women's squad outdo us," urged Tung-tung. "We must think of a way to speed up."

Sunflower agreed. How could they rank as a youth shock force if they failed to beat the women's squad?

They discussed this matter very seriously, until Steel had a brain-wave. Pillar immediately went out to stand guard and Red Cloud closed the door. Conversing in whispers they all agreed to the new plan, after which Sunflower told them to go to bed.

Taps had sounded and the moon was high in the sky when a chirping like the twittering of sparrows sounded from the threshing-ground. At once the door of their dormitory creaked open. The first to slip out was Steel, followed by Tung-tung and all the other youngsters. They went straight to the tall palm tree from which the chirping was coming. When Sunflower saw that the whole squad was present, she stopped her sparrow impersonation.

"All present?" she asked softly.

"All present. Let's start," replied Steel.

"We mustn't make any noise," she warned. "If anyone hears us, we're finished."

They pussyfooted off in different directions.

Presently they returned with four rubber-tyred carts which they wheeled over to the work site. This was their secret plan: to borrow the good carts from the women's squad and work all through the night. Tieh had just gone to bed when he heard what seemed to be a sparrow chirping outside. What could sparrows be doing at night on the threshing-ground? To solve this mystery, he put on his clothes and peered out through the window. By the light of the moon he saw Sunflower below the tall palm putting her fingers to her mouth to imitate sparrows chirping. Then he saw Steel and the others running to join her. He realized that the youngsters were out on some secret mission, but just what they were up to passed his comprehension. He slipped out to investigate.

He went first to the dormitory and shone his torch on the beds. All seemed as usual, the bedding bulging as if covering sleeping forms. But when he approached one bed and lifted the quilt, he found under it stools, bundles, basins. . . .

"A good job of camouflage," chuckled Tieh. "Little devils!" Next he looked at the tool shed — all the tools were gone. Realizing what was afoot, he went straight away to the work site.

Winter nights are bitterly cold. Breath seemed a misty white vapour under the moonlight. But neither cold nor frost could daunt these youngsters because their hearts were afire. The four rubber-tyred carts were an immense help to them. Each carried a large load of earth and was easy to handle. This added to the drive with which they worked. Tieh, watching from a distance, was touched by this stirring sight.

Just as work was in full swing, the exuberant boys and girls suddenly found the instructor standing before them. They halted in their tracks with cries of dismay.

"Why are you here, instructor?" faltered one.

"The sparrows were making so much noise that I couldn't sleep."

"Oh . . . did you see the sparrows?"

"Not only the sparrows but those dummies in your beds. Quite a turn they gave me."

The youngsters wailed: "So you know everything!"

"Well, how about it, sparrows? It's about time to fly back to your nest and sleep."

The young people refused to go back. Since they had borrowed those good carts they insisted on making full use of them. After a prolonged argument both sides made some concessions. The youngsters could work for another hour, no longer, then they must go back to rest. And Tieh agreed not to divulge their secret.

The instructor joined them at work for a while, then decided to go back and fix them something to eat. He called Sunflower to him and sternly enjoined on her: "In twenty minutes' time you must bring them all back for a roll-call. You're responsible for the whole squad. Don't let anyone stay out a minute longer." With that he left them and made for the kitchen.

However, instead of carrying out his order the squad simply went on working at top speed. When more than an hour had passed Tieh returned to fetch them. This time he set no time limit but drove them straight back to the dormitory. At the sight which met their eyes they jumped for joy. Red charcoal glowing in the brazier made the whole place snug and warm. All their basins were full of hot water, and a tub of piping hot rice gruel flavoured with jujube was standing beside the brazier, filling the air with an appetizing fragrance.

The next day the boys and girls worked even harder. Loading their two carts swiftly and running fast, they finished more than two days' work in one. People commented: "These kids are like young tigers." That was how they acquired the name Tiger-Cub Squad.

When they knocked off work that evening the youngsters marched back in high spirits and excellent order, heads high and swaggering like conquering heroes. As soon as supper was over, Steel, Red Cloud and several of the others crowded round the loud-speaker to listen to the broadcast. Sunflower, surprised by this sudden display of interest, asked what they were waiting for.

"By going all out like that we've beaten the women's squad. We're bound to be specially commended tonight."

"If that's the way you think, you don't deserve any commendation," said Sunflower. She reported this to Tieh.

After they had successfully completed their task, the battalion Party committee decided that the instructor should take the youngsters to where a tunnel was being made through the mountain and a bridge built across two precipices.

A veteran worker took them to see the long tunnel and the bridge under construction. The young people were staggered by the huge machines boring through the rocks with an ear-splitting din, the cables high overhead and the long arms of the cranes swinging up and down. What impressed them most, however, was the workers bridging the two precipices. With rocks jutting out over their heads and their feet in swirling water, they battled against the cliffs with pneumatic drills. Some were practically submerged in icy water as they cleared away the rocks for the foundation. Others dangled high in mid-air dozens of metres above the ground, oblivious of danger as they worked away.

When they went back to the tent on this site they heard the story of these workers. Some had helped to build huge bridges over the Yangtse, others had constructed highways through the mountains, trekked across deserts and highlands deep in snow. They had ranged over the whole length and breadth of China, watering their vast country with their sweat as they worked.

The boys and girls listened spellbound to these exploits.

"What gives you all the courage to put up with such hardships, uncle?" Sunflower asked.

"We're building workers," was the modest answer. "Our job takes us all over the country to serve the people. As long as we live we should work hard for our people."

Back again at their own work site, Tieh told the young people to study Chairman Mao's great speech *Serve the People*, then write an essay about their experiences. The boys and girls wrote from different angles but they all expressed a determination to learn from the workers' splendid selflessness, to serve the people whole-heartedly and to fight like young tigers for the revolution.

The lunar New Year was fast approaching now. After they knocked off one day the instructor told them: "You won't be working

tomorrow. Your school term will be starting very soon. Tomorrow you must pack up and I'll take you home."

"Is the new term starting so soon?" exclaimed Red Cloud. "We've only been here, surely, for a few days."

Pillar reckoned on his fingers. No mistake. They had been a whole month at the work site.

The boys and girls gazed at each other in consternation. They had had such a wonderful time here and learned so much that they were reluctant to leave these veteran workers and the new railway which they had been helping to build. They looked at their squad leader, but Sunflower was powerless. Impossible to recapture those days which had flashed past.

That evening their dormitory was unusually quiet. Afraid that they were depressed by his announcement, Tieh went to look through the window. He was pleased to see Sunflower examining all the work set by the school for the holidays. Without disturbing them he slipped away.

The next morning as soon as the grown-ups had gone to work, the girls collected all the dirty clothes from their dormitories to wash, while the boys took brushes and paints and went off through the palm trees.

That afternoon Instructor Tieh brought the commander to visit the Tiger-Cub Squad. They found the threshing-ground in front of the dormitory festooned with washing. When they went inside, no one was there.

"Our tiger-cubs must be up to something again," remarked Tieh with a smile.

"Good for them. We should encourage their revolutionary spirit," said the commander.

As they left the dormitory they heard childish laughter and saw the youngsters under the tall palm.

"The commander from our headquarters has come to see you!" shouted Tieh.

The young people ran towards them calling: "Come and have a look at our blackboard news!"

They walked over to the blackboard bright with many colours propped up under the palm. On it the young people had expressed their determination to learn from the fine example set by the workers, their praise of the mess squad, and their resolve to study hard at school. Under a short poem of farewell was a painting of some boys and girls with satchels on their backs waving goodbye. This was their parting present to the workers.

As they were laughing and commenting on this blackboard news, the loud-speaker attached to the tree announced:

“Attention, comrades! To give Tiger-Cub Squad a send-off, the work-site propaganda team will put on a programme this evening at the threshing-ground. . . .”

Hearing this the youngsters whooped with joy, then carried the blackboard back to the dormitory.

On the threshing-ground item after item was performed. At last, amid thunderous applause the programme ended. Sunflower looked up to whisper to the instructor beside her:

“I hear next winter we’re building a reservoir. Will you let us join in again?”

Smiling, Tieh nodded.

Illustrated by Shan Hsi

By the Iron Chain Bridge (painting in the traditional style) by Chao Chih-hua, Shan Ying-kuei and Wang Chin-yuan ▶



ON WORK SITE NO. 6

It was a night in autumn. The wind was howling, the rain came down in sheets.

An army jeep led by the beams of its headlights was swishing along the level highway.

Beside the driver sat Chao Ming, deputy secretary of the county Party committee of Hsiaoshan County in the province of Chekiang, on his way to direct the battle against an impending flood. Nearly fifty, greying at the temples, he wore a blue cotton tunic with a white belt. He had a pair of animated eyes under heavy eyebrows. Gazing at the glimmering raindrops he was thinking:

“The Hsiaoshan reclamation project calls for a dyke almost a hundred *li* long. Up to the present several sections of the embankment haven't been faced with stones. Yet the Eighth Month Bore, the highest tidal-wave of the year for the Chientang River, is due very soon. That will put the dyke to a severe test. And as if that's not bad enough, Typhoon No. 11 is reported to be heading this way. The whole of the dyke is in grave danger.”

To meet this emergency the Provincial Revolutionary Committee had alerted all the people's communes of Hsiaoshan County. The

county Party committee had decided to leave only two of its standing members on duty in the office, despatching all the rest to organize and inspect precautionary measures against the combined danger of the typhoon and the bore. Taking immediate action, Chao Ming had put on a raincoat, picked up a torch and prepared to set off.

Just then, however, there came a telephone call from the reclamation project headquarters: "The Chientang is in full spate. The most dangerous part is that ten-*li* section of the dyke at the east end of Work Site No. 6, where a stretch of a few hundred metres of sand may soon be washed away. . . . We estimate that some time before dawn the whole dyke will be hard hit by both the typhoon and the tide. . . . The situation there is desperate."

As he put down the receiver, Chao Ming was told that the local army headquarters would send a jeep to take him to the work site.

Chao Ming glanced at the driver, then leaned back to recall what he knew about Work Site No. 6.

Hardships often precede victory. When the project first started there had been hardships in plenty. Tens of thousands of civilian workers had converged within a few days on the site. Over their heads the blue sky, beneath their feet the seashore, with no sheds to shelter under, no beds to rest on, no stoves to cook with, they had to trudge tens of *li* to fetch water to drink. Some people were shaking their heads, dismayed by these difficulties, when the work site's Party secretary Kao Ta-chiang stepped forward.

"The thousand-*li* Grand Canal was dug by man, the ten thousand-*li* Great Wall was built by man," he said. "Are we poor and lower-middle peasants who have been through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution going to let ourselves be licked by the Chientang River?"

Difficulties can turn into strength, obstacles increase the will to fight. A little over a year afterwards, a thrilling new scene had appeared on the southern bank of the rampaging Chientang. The masses with their wisdom and skilful hands are the true makers of history. With the Party, with Chairman Mao and with the masses, no typhoon, storm or tidal-wave — alone or combined — could ever destroy the dyke.

After rounding a bend the jeep glided over an arched bridge. Some way ahead glittered a series of lights like pearls dotting the veil of night.

"Deputy secretary! Is that the work site?" asked the young driver, hands tight on the steering-wheel.

"Forget the title, just call me Old Chao. That's the quarry." After a pause Chao Ming asked, "What's your name?"

"Li Ping."

"Have you ever seen the tidal-waves of the Chientang River?"

"No. I'm from the mountains. I only joined up a little over a year ago. Haven't been to many places."

"This time you'll have a chance to see the famous Chientang tides — the Eighth Month Bore is really sensational."

As the jeep wound round the mountain, from time to time the lights were lost to sight, reappearing clearer and brighter as they drew nearer. When they approached the quarry they saw big characters inscribed on the cliff in front: "Transform China in the spirit of the Foolish Old Man*".

As soon as the jeep reached the quarry, Chao Ming told the driver to stop.

Li Ping leaned out and saw people and hand-barrows shuttling busily to and fro. In spite of the pouring rain the workers were digging up, loading and carrying off rocks as well as pebbles from the river bed. Li Ping raised his eyes, only to find half of the towering peak already hewn off. The piles of stones and pebbles at its foot were obstructing the already jammed thoroughfare.

A young man dripping with rain was bending low to push a heavily loaded barrow up a slope. Chao Ming darted over to help and remarked, "You've got powerful muscles, lad! Where are you from?"

"Tsingchiang Commune." The young man halted and straightened up.

"Look how wet you are. Why not cover yourself with some matting? That would be better than nothing," said Chao Ming, unbuttoning his raincoat to drape it over the youngster.

*A character in an old Chinese fable retold by Chairman Mao in one of his articles to show that persistent effort overcomes difficulties.

"A raincoat or matting would only get in my way. I'd rather be wet but freer to move about." The young man warded off the raincoat.

Chao Ming was reassured by the busy yet orderly activity in the quarry. He looked at his watch and found it was nearly nine thirty. Waving to the barrow man, he jumped back into the jeep.

It was still raining cats and dogs. They drove through the quarry along the river bank. With the help of the headlights Chao Ming observed that the thirty-metre wide channel was so jammed with vessels that one could see no water for the boats. The boatmen were yelling, "Make way! We're pressed for time."

"Where are you taking those stones?" shouted Chao Ming.



"Work . . . Site . . . Number . . . Six!" The response reverberated in the night air.

Chao Ming immediately realized that this transportation by boat needed to be much better organized.

As they drove on they overtook a caravan of waggons, drays and pedal-carts, which slowed down to make way for their jeep.

"Quick, quick, quick! We're racing against time. We must make one more trip to Work Site No. 6 before high tide tonight."

All along the way was a scene of hustle and bustle.

"Work Site No. 6! Work Site No. 6!" This name had been ringing in Chao Ming's ears ever since he left the county office. He couldn't help wondering why, since the situation there was so critical, Kao Ta-chiang hadn't rung up to report to the county Party committee.

On the massive dyke at Work Site No. 6 a few lights were swinging in the hurricane. But the whole place was deserted. Even on the construction site of the huge sluice-gate not a living soul could be seen.

Beyond the dyke was a span of darkness; within it all was quiet. The sharp contrast with the busy noisy quarry made it seem unbelievable that this was the danger zone, the object of a rescue operation.

The unexpected hush, however, alerted Chao Ming. He sensed that it was like the lull in fighting that usually precedes a fierce battle.

In the hut where Headquarters was, Chao Ming found a girl with two plaits. She was Little Wang, broadcaster and telephone girl in one. When she saw Chao Ming and Li Ping, she at once got up to fetch them seats.

"Our men — where are they?" Chao Ming asked, taking a seat.

"In their sheds sleeping."

"How about Kao Ta-chiang?"

"Sleeping too, I suppose. The tide's been rising higher and higher every day. He never turns in before midnight. Today he and his men worked round the clock to raise the dyke a foot higher. They were drenched to the skin and didn't have a minute of rest." Little Wang poured a cup of water for Chao Ming.

"Have all arrangements been made?"

"Yes, even down to assignments for cooks, electricians and carpenters. As soon as the tide rises again they'll all man the dyke. But for the moment, until eleven o'clock, Old Kao has ordered everybody to sleep."

"How large is the rescue force here?" Chao Ming queried, sipping some water.

"A little over five hundred including our office.... Oh, plus another forty-odd from the Iron Shoulders Squad headed by Tiger Sheng. Old Kao telephoned this evening to the western section asking them to come here to help."

"How's morale?"

"Excellent. Nobody would be willing to sleep if not for the order from Old Kao, who says even a fifteen-minute nap will help." Little Wang added, "Let me go and fetch him."

"Don't disturb him. Let him have a rest," said Chao Ming.

The Chientang tides have their own time-table. They reach their highest on the 3rd and 4th and the 17th and 18th of each lunar month. It was now the seventeenth day of the Eighth Month. The Midnight-noon Tide would rise first at midnight and again at noon the next day when it would reach its full height.

Chao Ming, thinking of this, couldn't but commend Old Kao. "A good commander is one who knows how to utilize every chance to let his men recover their strength."

The nights in the Eighth Month are usually chilly. A gale may turn the riverside cold enough for people to put on winter clothes. By now the rain had stopped but a northeasterly wind was still blowing hard. Emerging from the hut, Chao Ming shivered as he walked east along the sloping sea wall.

Presently some dark piles attracted Chao Ming's attention. He turned on his torch and found these were heaps of stones neatly laid out in squares about twenty paces apart for emergency use. Making a turn, he strode along the river bank. There he saw similar heaps of straw bags stuffed with pebbles. Counting them he found there were fifty bags to each pile. When he flashed his torch at the opposite bank, he saw a huge heap of bags piled together at random. Chao Ming was puzzled. Whereas the stones and pebbles had obviously

been prepared to resist head-on attacks from the tide, what was the purpose of these bags along the flanking dam? Was there any danger of a break-through there? Why, of course! Should the dam be breached, both sides of the dyke would come under pounding by the water....

Pondering this, Chao Ming reached the main dyke. It felt soft underfoot, the mud having evidently been newly added. Narrow-gauge rails had been laid from the dyke to a stone groyne serving both as a breakwater and as a place for dumping stones. On the rails stood flat-cars fully loaded with stones, all set to be tipped into the water. Bamboo poles for electric lights had been rigged up along the dyke and the groyne. But now only a few lamps — widely apart — were burning. Were the rest in working order? To make sure, Chao Ming followed the wires until he found the switch. The switch box was unlocked and there seemed to be no one on duty. He was reaching out to pull the switch when he heard a voice: "Who's that? Stay put!"

Then out from the dark stepped a tall powerful man, a metal rod in his hand.

"It's me — Chao Ming," was the calm reply. The next second Chao Ming pulled the switch. At once the whole work site became as bright as by day. Switching off, Chao Ming turned towards the man and asked, "Are you the guard on duty?"

"Yes. And you're Party Secretary Chao from the county!"

"Exactly."

"*Aiya!*" The man gave a broad smile, scanning Chao Ming from head to foot.

"You people here seem well prepared for any emergency," said Chao Ming approvingly.

"That's Ta-chiang's doing, Secretary Chao. It's he who posted me here."

Satisfied by the guard's vigilance, Chao Ming went on to the kitchen of the work site. This roomy thatched shed was pervaded with smoke and steam and the appetizing smell of food. The moment Chao Ming entered the cooks cried out cheerily, "Oh, here comes Old Chao!"

"Old Chao, sit by the fire. It's warmer there," urged a heavily-bearded cook.

"You must be tired after your long drive. Come on, have something to eat," said a young cook lifting the lid of the steamer, which added to the misty effect in the room.

"Red rear-servicemen, that's what you are. I admire your spirit, working so hard while all the others are sleeping. What a lot of bread you've steamed."

"No more than's needed. In a while we'll send it over to the work site. Those are Ta-chiang's instructions." The bearded man smiled.

"We're up against high wind, torrential rain and the bore combined. D'you think Work Site No. 6 can take it?" asked Chao Ming, poking the fire.

"It'll be all right as I see it. Ta-chiang and his men have worked hard and taken precautionary measures for about a week already. It's hardly possible for the tide to break in," the young cook answered with confidence.

Leaving the kitchen, Chao Ming walked towards the breakwater. As he picked his way over the uneven causeway he heard a stone ahead of him rolling, bumping and finally crashing into the water. With his torch he spotted someone over there busy prizing up a stone. Before he could see who it was, a man's voice asked:

"Who's there?"

"Chao Ming. Is that Old Kao?"

Crowbar in hand, burly Kao Ta-chiang drew himself up to stand there like a tower.

"Aren't you taking a rest?" Chao Ming went over and firmly gripped Kao's hand.

"How can I sleep? Have a look at the swirling water, how rapid the current is!"

"What's to be done?"

"We're ready for the worst."

"Still, we should try to save the dyke."

"That, of course."

Kao Ta-chiang knew that at a crucial time like this the county committee would not fail to send someone here to inspect. Most

probably Chao Ming himself would come. As he did not like to ask for men and material, knowing that the county committee had its hands full running the affairs of a county as big as Hsiaoshan which has a population of about a million, he had not even troubled to telephone. If a responsible man from the county came, he would of course report to him the measures he had taken and ask for his advice. So Chao Ming's arrival made him very happy.

"Old Chao, let me tell you what arrangements we've made," he said.

"I've made a round already and seen for myself," Chao Ming replied with satisfaction.

Under the lamplight Chao Ming had a good look at the man in charge of the work site. He found Old Kao a bit haggard, in need of a haircut and shave; but his square face with its prominent cheekbones was radiant.

"Look at those bristles on your chin. You need a shave and haircut," Chao Ming said with a smile.

"I know, but I just haven't had the time. I'll spruce up after the flood is over," Old Kao responded ingenuously.

As the two men, deep in conversation, slowly picked their way back from the groyne the loud-speaker announced: "Comrades, time to get up. Get ready for the battle. Get ready to fight!"

At once all the lights on the work site and over the dyke flashed on. Workers converged from all sides. Very soon the sound of shouts and whistles mingled with the thud of running feet, the rumble of waggons and the clatter of stones to make a stirring militant symphony.

Work Site No. 6 was in a ferment.

Not long after Chao Ming and Kao Ta-chiang returned to Headquarters the arrival was reported of the main reinforcements for the battle against the flood.

Far off they saw what looked like a fiery dragon — the torches of thousands of peasants from neighbouring communes who were rushing to the rescue — advancing along the dyke. All the peasants were carrying a load of stones or pebbles.

As soon as they arrived, Chao Ming called a meeting of the leaders of all the participating communes. Headquarters was soon crowded with people. Chao Ming began the meeting by stressing the importance of this battle and then asked what problems had to be solved. Problems were raised and discussed until they reached general agreement as to how to solve them. When Chao Ming pointed out the necessity for a better organization of boat transportation, some boatmen said, "We're being slowed down by all the low bamboo bridges on the way." They decided to dismantle the bridges so as to facilitate the transport of stones.

Barely had the meeting ended when the Midnight Tide was upon them, roaring like thunder. In a split second the broad Chientang River unveiled its ferocity. Like thousands of stampeding horses, huge waves lashed and pounded the dyke. All other sounds were smothered by the deafening howls of the billows. The stone-faced groyne projected into the river like a sword piercing the heart of the white chargers; but the booming surging tide, throwing up great columns of spray, assaulted it mercilessly without respite.

The torches shed a red light over the dyke. Tussling with the raging waters, people cast big stones and mat bags into the teeth of the tide. But the moment a stone or a bag weighing several hundred pounds was thrown in, it was sucked away by the waves. The stones previously dropped to the foot of the dyke were rolling and shifting too below the water with the noise of muffled thunder-peals. The whole sea wall was trembling.

"Seize every minute, heigh-ho! Speed up, heigh-ho! Fight the waves, heigh-ho! Protect the dyke, heigh-ho!" The Iron Shoulders Squad led by Tiger Sheng were going all out carrying stones to the dyke. The men working in pairs swung along with quick firm steps.

The wind was getting fiercer, and now the rain began to pour again. The surging tide kept striking at the breakwater and the dyke. But the spirits of the rescue force were high as, disregarding wind and rain, they battled against the waves. Kao Ta-chiang, exuberant as ever, was moving quietly from place to place confidently directing the whole operation.

"Ta-chiang, think the dyke can stand?" asked Chao Ming.

"We can prop up the sky if it falls, why shouldn't we beat back a tidal-wave?" was Ta-chiang's resolute answer.

Suddenly hurried shrills of the whistle were heard.

"What's happened?" asked Li Ping, alarmed.

"Let's go and see," said Kao.

The three of them, Chao, Kao and Li, ran towards the east. Before they had gone two hundred metres a shout went up: "The dam on the other side has been breached. Quick, comrades!"

Chao Ming halted and flashed his torch across the river. A stream several metres wide of glassy water was gushing out of the dam.

The men dumping stones on the dyke turned in dismay. On the opposite bank was a stretch of land newly reclaimed. The downpour that day had flooded it, causing this breach in the dam. This meant that the main dyke was threatened from two sides.

Seeing the precarious situation, Chao Ming turned to Kao Ta-chiang. "We must take steps at once to stop that gap. There's that big pile of straw bags...."

"Yes, they're there for that purpose," Kao answered confidently. He gathered several men and went across the river, with Li Ping following.

Chao Ming began to appreciate better the foresight of Kao Ta-chiang.

Preparedness pays off. The breach was very soon stopped.

In less time than it takes to smoke a couple of pipes Kao Ta-chiang and Li Ping came back covered with mud.

"Just like two newly uprooted turnips!" Chao Ming laughed. "Quick, go back to Headquarters to change."

But before one crisis had passed, another came up. As Kao Ta-chiang was changing his clothes a deafening boom was heard.

"What's that?" Chao Ming asked.

"The breakwater's gone!" Kao's face was grave. He seized a crowbar and ran off like the wind.

Just as Kao had said, the foundation of the breakwater had been shaken by long battering of the tides. Scores of cubic metres of

stonework along the top were being swallowed up by the angry waves.

The minute Kao Ta-chiang reached the breakwater, people gathered round him.

"Ta-chiang, if the breakwater goes, it'll be touch and go with the dyke," said one.

"How can we save it, Ta-chiang?" demanded the others. Every pair of anxious eyes turned to their leader, awaiting his decision.

The shorter the breakwater, the more vulnerable the dyke. Stripped of its protection, the dyke would not be able to stand firm. To save it they must first save the breakwater. This was clearer to Kao Ta-chiang than to anyone else.

Kao stared at the river while listening to the proposals of his men. Then he turned and waved his clenched fist. "Comrades, the waves are washing away our groyne but not our determination to protect it. Go back quick for bamboo poles, ropes and torches. Good swimmers assemble at the west end of the sluice-gate," he cried. "Tiger!"

"Here!" Tiger Sheng stepped out from the crowd.

"Take a boat to the west side of the sluice-gate," ordered Kao. "Your job is to see that it isn't washed away."

"Right. Comrades, let's go!" Tiger Sheng sped off with the Iron Shoulders Squad.

By this time Chao Ming had come back to the breakwater, having made an inspection of the dyke. Kao Ta-chiang immediately told him the steps they were taking. Chao Ming described the present position of the dyke and urged Kao: "Go ahead. But take care." He then went back to the dyke.

Now what was Kao's plan? Some time ago he had made two concrete caissons, each taking up two tons of steel. During previous crises when people had suggested making use of these, he had answered either "We can manage without," or "The cost is so high, let's keep them for a real emergency." By making skilful use of stones and pebbles to fight the waves he had succeeded in safeguarding the dyke without resorting to the caissons. Now that a part of the breakwater had collapsed and the big tidal-wave was due the next day, the situation



was obviously at its worst. The time had come to use one of the caissons.

But a caisson weighs more than ten tons — how to move the giant structure? It was night, dark and windy, and there were no large barges available. Could a caisson be safely shipped across the raging water?

One minute after another passed.

Presently a tall figure appeared beside the caisson to the west of the sluice. Scores of torches cast a red light over him. It was Kao Ta-chiang directing his men to tie bamboo poles to the caisson. He then had water let in from the nearby ditches to float it, and gave the word to Tiger Sheng to pilot it with the boat he had brought over. Finally Kao jumped onto the caisson and waved the red flag in his hand. "Put on the lights!"

The next moment the searchlight on the scaffoldings of the sluice lit up the course the caisson was to take, spanning the surface of the water with a beam like a glistening snake.

"Everything ready?" asked Kao.

"All ready!" cried the hundred or so volunteers lined up, sturdy and strong, on the bank.

"Get cracking!" Kao waved his arm and plunged into the river. The youngsters followed suit, leaping one after another into the waves.

The river was in spate but the storm seemed to be abating slightly. However, the yellowish water was still rolling turbidly. With a rope across one shoulder, his head high, Kao Ta-chiang waded forward at the head of his men, who kept a tight grip on the bamboo poles at both ends of the caisson. Their bulky freight began to move slowly across the water.

As the floating caisson drew closer to the groyne, on the dyke burst out shouts of "Long live Chairman Mao!" Then the men on shore too plunged into the fray, dumping stones and pouring concrete into the caisson while Kao and his men, forgetting their fatigue, worked up to their waists in the water. By dawn the giant caisson was anchored in place.

The next day dawned clear and fine over the Hangchow Bay. The bright sun turned the surface of the Chientang into a glittering mirror.

At noon Chao Ming and Kao Ta-chiang mounted the dyke together in high spirits. All of a sudden came a blast of piercing wind.

"It's the Noon Bore," said Kao.

Straining his eyes, Chao Ming saw a dim white line at the mouth of the wide Chientang. The sound of the racing tide was like thou-

sands of drums beating far away at the horizon. Then the line, expanding under the golden sunshine, grew into a crystal white wall. It rolled forward with a deafening rumbling. Crash! A column of water, striking the groyne, hurtled high into the air then came down in a cascade. For a moment the sky seemed to rock, the earth to shake. Nothing could be seen but monstrous shimmering waves. When the two men steadied themselves and looked around, the crest of the bore had passed. The top layer of stones on the groyne had been swept away, but the dyke still stood immovable and intact.

In exultation Kao Ta-chiang threw back his head. He unbuttoned his jacket, letting it flap in the wind. Looking down at the side of the dyke facing the sea, he saw the turbulent Chientang break into foam under his feet. Turning to the side of the dyke facing the land, he saw the ears of late rice dancing in the faraway paddy fields reclaimed from the sea — a picture of entrancing verdancy. At sight of this grand scene, his bronzed face lit up. His brows, but now so tensely knit, smoothed out. His eyes sparkled with joy and over the corners of his bearded mouth appeared a triumphant smile.

Illustrated by Chang Sung-nan

The Threshing-Machine

Our thresher is so gay
It sings the livelong day.
Whirr, whirr!
It seems to laugh,
Pouring out grain
And swallowing the chaff.
How hard it works
And never shirks,
It loves the commune so.
Who made this thresher
Whirr so merrily?
The workers made it
In their factory.

These rhymes are written by Little Red Soldiers of different ages.

My Sewing-Kit

I have a little sewing-kit
And everywhere I carry it,
My tried and trusty friend,
To patch, to darn, to mend,
Or if a button's gone
To sew another on.
The needle flying fast
Helps all my clothes to last.
Hard work and thrift day after day,
That is the revolutionary way!



Growing Castor-Oil Plants

Children, leave your play and come,
Come and till the soil,
Far and wide we're going to sow
Seeds of castor-oil.
We shall hoe our plants and weed them
And with rich manure we'll feed them,
Till they're high above the ground
And the seeds are plump and round;
Then our harvest, crate by crate,
We shall offer to the state
War or famine to withstand —
A gift to our dear motherland.



Picking Cotton

Hey, ho,
Rumtiddytum!
Little red soldiers,
Here we come.
Chairman Mao's words
Never forgotten,
Out in the fields
We pick the cotton,
Cotton as soft
And white as snow;
Here we go picking
Row by row.
Sack after sack
We fill to the top,
Laughing to see
The bumper crop.



The Shepherd-Boy

My shepherd's whip is four feet long
With tassels red and gay;
On green and grassy hillsides
My lambkins frisk and play.

To serve the revolution
I gladly crack my whip;
Like fleecy clouds in azure sky
My sturdy lambkins skip.

My shepherd's whip, just four feet long,
Calls up the sun so red;
A fine life, mine; but still more fine
The years that lie ahead.



The Ping-Pong Match

For table, planks on benches laid;
Two bricks, a pole, and the net is made;
A friendly match is lots of fun,
The small ball dazzles like the sun
Or like a meteor in the sky,
It spins and smashes — see it fly!

It takes no time to fix the table,
Just right for height, both flat and stable;
A hearty handshake ends the match
And towels to mop flushed faces — “Catch!”
The players walk off hand-in-hand;
Our motto “Friendship first” is grand.

Illustrated by Hao Chan



Yang Hsueh-peng

Uncle Busybody

A big brawny man in his fifties with a square determined jaw — that was Liu Cheng-mao. Respected by everyone in Liu Family Village, he was called Uncle Cheng-mao by old and young. But last fall when the villagers were digging irrigation ditches, they all began to call him Uncle Busybody.

It was a tough battle with stiff competition, all of them starting work as soon as the morning star made its appearance and not knocking off until sundown. Being a squad leader in the Liu Family Village detachment of workers, Uncle Cheng-mao worked especially hard, digging, carrying or carting earth. And he was always the first to jump into the cold muddy water when necessary.

Even after work he never seemed to be at home. Where was he? Once, Liu Hsing found him lying under a rubber-tyred cart belonging to a neighbouring team, helping to repair it.

“Go home and get some sleep, Uncle Cheng-mao,” urged Liu Hsing.

“We’ll fix it in a minute. Besides I’m not tired. You people turn in first and don’t wait for me,” he answered from under the cart.

Another time, Erh-chu saw him on a pole twenty feet above the ground helping another team to connect a wire.

“Didn’t you sprain an arm muscle not so long ago, Uncle Cheng-mao?” Erh-chu called out with concern. “What are you doing up there?”

Uncle Cheng-mao finished the job before he slipped down the pole. Then he explained with a smile, “The wire of their threshing-machine snapped and their electrician wasn’t around. So I lent a hand.”

That night, lying on the same platform bed as Uncle Cheng-mao, Erh-chu said to him with concern, “You lend a hand here and lend a hand there although you’re busy enough as it is with your own work. If you go on like this you’ll become a regular busybody.”

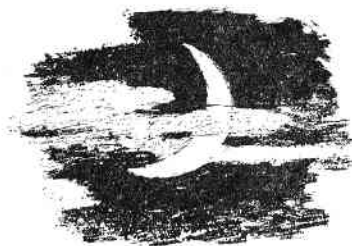
Uncle Cheng-mao simply answered: “If we’re trying for a bumper harvest in answer to Chairman Mao’s call: **In agriculture, learn from Tachai**,* we’ll have to work really hard. We’ll reap no bumper harvest if we all take it easy. We should do what we can for the other teams too since we’re all working for socialism.”

Finally, at the end of the project, when the amateur artists in their team gave a performance, they included an item, *In Praise of a Busybody*, to honour Uncle Cheng-mao. So the nickname Uncle Busybody stuck to him.

Right away he busied himself even more from morning till late at night, helping to look after the cattle and repairing carts when the stockman and the carpenter had too much on their hands. He worked in shallow water for a whole month under both scorching sun and silver moonlight to ensure the growth of sturdy rice seedlings. Besides this, he repaired all the irrigation ditches in the paddy fields. His convictions were strengthened and his enthusiasm soared when a new political study course was started. He applied to join the Communist Party then, working for the revolution with all his might.

At first Aunt Cheng-mao was very pleased when her husband was given the nickname “Busybody”. But later she thought differently. Her idea was that in making revolution a division of labour was necessary. Yet her husband took a hand in everything now, whether it was his business or not. He was so fully occupied that he never

*A mountain district in Shansi Province famed for its spirit of self-reliance.



came home before midnight. On top of that, their daughter Hsia-hsia, under her father's influence, was becoming a little busybody too. Hsia-hsia, who was studying in senior middle school in the county town, came home only on Sundays. That was the only opportunity

mother and daughter had for an intimate chat. But now Aunt Cheng-mao didn't see much of her daughter even on Sundays. The girl would either cut grass for the cattle east of the village or transport fertilizer to the fields in the west. If she kept this up her mother feared her health might suffer. This was a big problem for Aunt Cheng-mao.

But Uncle Cheng-mao laughed at her. "It's no problem. All we need is to arm ourselves with Mao Tsetung Thought and work selflessly together, learning from Tachai. Then the problem's as good as solved." When his wife said nothing he continued, "Didn't the commune chairman tell us once how the Eighth Route Army grew grain in Nanniwan, carrying water and pulling the plough themselves and opening up wasteland with pickaxes? Now we have tractors, irrigation ditches and threshing-machines, but it doesn't mean we can stop making revolution. Instead of forgetting the tradition of hard struggle we must work even harder."

This sounded quite convincing, but Aunt Cheng-mao stuck to her guns. "I've never held you back from working for the collective or for the revolution. But you must watch out for your health."

Her husband burst out laughing. "Don't worry. I promise to look after myself so that both of us can help to build communism. If I fall some day it will surely be for the cause of the revolution."

It was autumn again. Uncle Busybody had his hands so full that his wife often had to look for him at meal time. Yet she was proud of him and his prestige among the villagers. A suggestion he made about how to speed up the harvesting was accepted by the team leader and supported by everybody. Something happened that day which gave Aunt Cheng-mao special satisfaction. While she was cutting

grass along the highway, the commune chairman jumped down from his bicycle to tell her that the commune was sending her old man to the county town to attend a meeting to swap experience and that he was to make a report. The news startled her. "Oh, you mustn't put him on the spot like that, Chairman Liu. My old man can do almost anything but he can't make a report."

Half jokingly, Chairman Liu said, "Uncle Cheng-mao's well known as a 'busybody'. Now others want him to tell how he follows in the footsteps of the Tachai people. You'd better get his things ready and tell him to come to the commune office at eight tomorrow morning. I'll go with him."



Aunt Cheng-mao was beside herself with joy. She wanted to break the news to her old man right away but he had not yet returned from the county town where he was delivering grain to the state. Besides, it was a Sunday and her daughter was coming home. This news would please her tremendously too.

As Aunt Cheng-mao went home at sunset she saw the cart returning from the county town after delivering the grain. But her old man was not in it. The driver said he had disappeared the minute they left town and he hadn't seen Hsia-hsia either. "Now, what could those two be doing?" she wondered. She went home, filled the water jar, carried in firewood, washed the cauldron, kneaded the dough, made it into fine noodles and prepared a few eggs. Then she waited for her husband and daughter to come home.

The evening clouds dispersed to make way for a myriad stars. Still they had not returned. She began to feel anxious and a little annoyed.

It was a long time before she heard her old man shouting outside, "Hi, Hsia-hsia's mother! Come out quickly."

She was pleased to hear his voice, but exasperated too. "You're not a bridegroom who needs to be welcomed," she grumbled.

"Stop nattering. Come out quickly and help me." He sounded anxious.

She lifted the curtain and by the moonlight saw her old man struggling to unstrap the big bundle of willow branches on his shoulders. She went out quickly to help him and carried the long supple branches into the courtyard.

Uncle Cheng-mao walked in, scooped some water from the jar and drank it in one gulp. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, grinning broadly. "I've done something great, Hsia-hsia's mother."

"Ha, so you can still remember to come home when it's dark!" His wife nagged as she started the fire.

"Of course. I never forget you. When I've done something great, you're the first one I report to."

Tickled beyond words, his wife gave him a playful poke. "Well, it's good to hear you say so. Come over and help me with the fire. Or are you waiting to be served?"

As he sat before the stove to feed the fire Uncle Cheng-mao's face glowed. "Do you know what those willow branches are for?"

"To make crates, as I asked you the other day," his wife answered, very pleased.

"Oh dear me, no! I'd quite forgotten that. But I'll tell you what I'm going to do with these branches. In our spare time we'll make some baskets for the kids to collect manure in on their way to school and back. If they start right now, there'll be quite a pile by spring sowing time."

"What a busybody you are," scolded his wife, waving her chopsticks in the air. "You're planning next year's sowing before this year's paddy is even reaped?"

"We must make long-term plans these days, mustn't we?"

"If we give each kid a basket, we'll need plenty. Why not buy some hampers instead?"

"We must economize and not waste a cent of the team's money buying things that can be made. Why don't we put our own skilful hands to good use?"

"Who'll weave them?"

"Why, I will! And you too. You're the best in our team at it."

"Sorry, I've no time to spare."

"You don't say so! You'll have plenty of time. Just get up earlier and do with a little less sleep at noon and at night."

Just then their daughter called urgently from outside, "Dad! Ma! Come out and help!" Aunt Cheng-mao quickly pushed open the door. Hsia-hsia's bicycle had fallen over so that the two hampers tied to the carrier had littered the courtyard with manure.

"Like father like daughter. You never turn up until midnight. Have you been collecting fertilizer again?" Aunt Cheng-mao was deeply concerned for her daughter as she helped to lift up the bicycle.

This was the happiest time of the week for Aunt Cheng-mao now that her husband and daughter were both home. Handing them two tasty bowls of noodles she muttered, "When people call you busybodies, you do even more. You look after what's no concern of yours on top of your own work."

Uncle Cheng-mao, his bowl of noodles just lifted to his mouth, put it down again and said sternly, "Well, what is one's own business and what's not? Everything concerning the collective and the revolution is the business of the poor and lower-middle peasants. Though people call me a busybody, I don't feel I've done enough for the revolution. My greatest hope is that all three of us will work whole-heartedly for the collective and socialism."

Hsia-hsia was backing her father up when he rushed Liu Hsing, Tsui-ling and other members of the Youth Shock Brigade. "Oh, uncle really knows how to make use of his time, giving aunty a political lesson during a meal, eh?" Tsui-ling teased.

"Why not?" Aunt Cheng-mao retorted, as she stole a glance at her old man. "Since he's to tell about his experience in the county town tomorrow, he might as well practise on me now."

The young people's congratulations embarrassed Uncle Cheng-mao. "The old Party secretary mentioned this when I met him on my way back," he said. "But I've really nothing to tell. With the help of the other villagers I've only done what Chairman Mao teaches us."

"Well, don't forget to mention Aunt Cheng-mao too in your talk, uncle," cried Liu Hsing.

"Oh, I'm too backward. I only hold him back," Aunt Cheng-mao protested.

"No, that's not true," Tsui-ling laughed as she put one arm around the older woman. "Aunty just doesn't want Uncle Cheng-mao to wear himself out too soon. She wants the two of them to live together happily to a ripe old age."

Aunt Cheng-mao gave her a friendly shove as the room rocked with laughter.

Since so many young people were there, Uncle Cheng-mao told them about his idea of weaving baskets for school children to collect manure in. They all supported him and Tsui-ling volunteered to be the children's leader.

Their enthusiasm gladdened Uncle Cheng-mao's heart. When Liu Hsing told him that the Youth Shock Brigade was getting up early the following morning to cart rice to the threshing-ground Uncle

Cheng-mao slapped his thigh. "Good. That's the spirit," he exclaimed. "I'll drive the cart tomorrow. You can load and unload."

"No, no. There's no need for you to get up so early. It's our work. Besides, you'll be leaving for the county town."

"Nonsense. Think I'm too old, eh? I'm not leaving that early for the meeting anyway."

Hsia-hsia wanted to join in too. Their enthusiasm flooded the little room adding warmth to the calm autumn night.

The air was mellow when the young people left and the moon sailed slowly through wisps of cloud. Beside a lamp Aunt Cheng-mao mended the sleeve of her husband's jacket while he slept, snoring loudly. The confident laughter of the young people seemed to linger in the house filling her heart with happiness. A tremendous change had come over her family since the cultural revolution and especially since the campaign to study the Party's political line. She couldn't exactly put this change into words, but she felt that the three of them were all plunging headlong into work for the collective and for the revolution, her husband giving the lead, her daughter following, while she herself trailed after and did her best to catch up with them.

Aunt Cheng-mao was up very early the next day. The morning star was still aglow in the sky. Quietly she went into the kitchen to prepare her old man a good breakfast.

When she had everything ready, she remembered the willow branches he had brought home the night before. The next thing she knew she was in the courtyard peeling the long slender branches.

After a while, she was amazed to hear an alarm clock ringing inside the house. How come there was an alarm clock there? She pushed open the door only to find her old man grinning broadly at a little clock in his hands which she recognized as Liu Hsing's. She was both annoyed and amused as Uncle Cheng-mao, patting the clock, explained slowly, "I wanted to have a good sleep. But this thing woke me up, ha!"

Aunt Cheng-mao sighed helplessly. "You're really the limit. Why do such a thing behind my back?" she grumbled.

"Don't be mad. I've something important to tell you," her husband confided as he pulled on his jacket. "The Party secretary told

me yesterday that my application to join the Party has been granted. I'm a member of the glorious Chinese Communist Party now."

She turned around in pleased surprise. Her husband continued earnestly, his eyes shining, "From now on, we three must follow Chairman Mao even more closely and go on towards communism."

As Uncle Cheng-mao opened the door he saw the big pile of peeled willow branches. "Oh, now I must learn from you, Hsia-hsia's mother," he exclaimed, extremely pleased.

Aunt Cheng-mao raised her head proudly. "Well, since there's an Uncle Busybody in the team, there might as well be an Aunt Busybody too." She laughed as she spoke and with even greater pleasure her old man joined in.

The cocks in the village were announcing the dawn. Another busy day started as Uncle Cheng-mao hurried to the field where the members of the Youth Shock Brigade were gathering.

Illustrated by Sun Tzu-hsi

Transporting Lumber (coloured woodcut)
by Chen Tsu-huang ▶



A Reserve Fighter

It was my first sentry duty at dawn on the island. Tightly gripping my rifle I looked around intently. Suddenly, a man emerged from the dense pine forest opposite. Sturdy and tall, he was wearing a patched blue cotton jacket, brown trousers and straw sandals. He had a gleaming black gun over his right shoulder and the big conch dangling at his belt swayed with each firm step he took. Sunrise cast a ruddy glow over his white hair and wrinkled face. He seemed an old man who had weathered many storms but had plenty of life in him yet.

Who was he? Why was he approaching our camp? I recalled my company commander's warning: The class struggle on this island was complicated. We must be vigilant. Stepping forward I demanded: "Where are you going?"

Calmly ignoring my question, the old man scrutinized me from head to foot. Then a smile spread slowly over his face and he said: "You're new to the company, aren't you?"

I repeated my question: "What are you doing here?"

"I'm a fighter here too. I've come to see the company commander."

A fighter too? Stumped, I could only say, "Wait a minute, then."

He patted his gun and stood to attention. Just then the door behind me creaked and out came the company commander.

"What brings you here so early, Uncle Chang?" exclaimed the company commander at sight of the old man. The two of them shook hands.

"I've some information to report," said Uncle Chang as they walked into headquarters.

I kept a careful lookout. After a while the company commander and Uncle Chang came out again. The latter said to me, "Comrade Sun, your revolutionary vigilance is fine."

The company commander told me, "Uncle Chang is one of our veterans. A reserve fighter." He laid great emphasis on the words "reserve fighter".

In what sense was Old Chang a reserve fighter? Off duty after breakfast I asked the company commander for an explanation. To satisfy my curiosity, he made me sit down beside him and told me the story.

Uncle Chang was an old militiaman of East Wind Production Brigade near where we were stationed. His task was to watch the densely forested hills facing our camp. A thatched hut on the hillside among the pines was his home. Although over sixty, he was young at heart. He never allowed a single branch or sapling to be harmed. All the year round he worked hard, selecting and planting saplings, pruning and weeding. . . . Or he would cut grass and firewood for the brigade. The commune members had nothing but praise for him. Within a month of our company's being posted to the island he was on the best of terms with all our men. Besides boiling water for us and bringing us vegetables, he told us about his life and the history of the village and the island.

Every time he came to our company he brought his conch, smooth and glossy from long use, and his brightly polished gun. In any emergency, he would blow his conch to summon the militiamen of the entire village. His conch had become the militiamen's call to battle.

The very night our company arrived at this island, a hurricane broke out at midnight. Our tents were blown away. Uncle Chang rushed over with great concern, ready to look for the tents with us at once.

We said, "Uncle Chang, you're not so young. It's pitch dark and the storm's so fierce, you should go home and rest. . . ."

"You are our own troops sent here by Chairman Mao," he retorted. "You're new to this place and don't know your way around. How can I leave you out in the wind and rain?" His words warmed our hearts. And he insisted on helping us to find our tents and put them up again. He even covered them with mats of his own. He didn't leave until he had made sure that the tents were properly fixed.

If anybody in our company fell ill, Uncle Chang would come over several times a day. He gathered herbs and brewed medicine for the patient. As time went by, our fighters came to look upon him as one of the company and called him our "reserve fighter".

The company commander's account filled me with admiration for Uncle Chang.

A few days later, our company was assigned a construction job vital to national defence — laying underground cables to link our post with other islands and ultimately with Peking. We had to accomplish the task within half a month.

In the morning the work site resounded with songs and work-chants and the ding-dong of hammering. All these sounds mingled with the roar of the surf to make a stirring march.

"Hey there, Comrade Sun!" called Uncle Chang behind me as I took up a hammer. "Let's team up together." He rolled up his sleeves, ready to go into action. The 12-pound hammer was heavy even for me. How could the old man wield it, I wondered.

"Well, don't you think I'm up to it?" he asked. Before I could answer, he snatched the hammer from me and started swinging it. He struck so hard that my hands holding the spike were numbed by the vibration. After a while, the company commander came up. He started to give Uncle Chang a dressing-down, "You ought to set an example in carrying out orders, Uncle Chang. Didn't we agree yesterday that you wouldn't use a big hammer? . . ."

"But I can't sit idling," protested Uncle Chang, not allowing the company commander to finish.

The work site was seething with activity. Though a blazing sun high in the skies soon made the sweat pour off us, no one slackened. On the contrary, everybody worked with redoubled enthusiasm. Uncle Chang hammered, dug and moved stones as if he were a young fellow in his twenties. Sweat coursed down his face, but he would not stop for a moment. He stooped to pick up a strangely shaped stone, carried it to a cliff and shoved it over. As it hurtled downward he remarked, "You look just like Chiang Kai-shek, you ugly brute. Now we'll bury you in the sea of people's war." The next second the stone crashed into the waves, sending the white foam flying. We laughed heartily, forgetting our fatigue.

Presently the company commander said, "We'll knock off to rest now, comrades. Shall we ask Uncle Chang to tell us a story?"

Shouting approval, we gathered around the old man.

"I'm no story-teller," he protested, chuckling. "I haven't got the gift of the gab."

"Didn't you give us lessons on class struggle before?" I put in. "That's what our company commander told me."

"Those are old tales," said Uncle Chang, knocking his pipe against a stone. "But if you like, I'll tell you one again."

Fingering his conch, the old man began: "Before Liberation, this island was a lair of tigers and wolves. Like poisonous snakes the Japanese invaders, Chinese traitors and local despots made life utterly miserable for the poor fishing folk. One year in early spring, I was casting my net at dusk when along came Lobster Yuan, a big despot who had a junk with an outboard motor. He ordered me to hand over my whole catch. I told him, 'There are plenty of fish in the sea. Catch them yourself if you can.' The despot turned purple with anger. 'How dare you refuse?' he yelled. 'The sea belongs to the Yuans, and so do the fish. And you haven't yet paid me my rent!' With that, Lobster Yuan and one of his thugs jumped on to my boat, meaning to take my catch. I saw red and, raising my conch, hit him over the head. As he fell I dived into the water."

"And later?" I asked eagerly.

"I went to a nearby island and earned my living by rowing boats and hauling nets for others. Not long afterwards, this island was

liberated. The people's government put Lobster Yuan to death for his crimes against the poor. But he had a son who still lives here."

"That son, Yuan the Third, is under surveillance by the masses," the company commander added.

"Right," said Uncle Chang. "But don't be taken in by his show of politeness. Although he bows whenever he meets one of us, his smiles hide daggers. We must keep an eye on him."

The company commander stood up and said, "Comrades, Uncle Chang has just given us a lesson on class struggle. We must always bear it in mind. Our enemies, few as they are, won't take their defeat lying down. We must be on our guard against sabotage from class enemies both inside and outside our country. Let us follow Chairman Mao to make revolution for ever."

He then issued the order to resume work. Everybody went all out. We swung our hammers as energetically as if we were beating Lobster Yuan. The work site had become a battlefield.

The trenches were finished ahead of schedule. Our next job was to lay the cables. Our company commander was worried, though, because the cables were several miles in length and we had not enough hands to cope with the job. It was Uncle Chang who solved the problem. He climbed to the top of a boulder and blew his conch. In no time the village militia, men and women, came running up the hill. Deeply stirred, our company commander grasped Uncle Chang's hand and exclaimed, "Uncle Chang, you..."

The old man waved his big hand, shouting, "Let's start!"

Our company bugle and the old man's conch sounded the call to battle. The villagers and the fighters on the island plunged into the fray together, each carrying a length of cable through the pine forest, over the hills — the long, long file of workers reached far into the distance.

That night a storm sprang up. Thunder and lightning were followed by a downpour. The company commander took me to patrol the trenches where the cable had been laid but not yet covered. Suddenly, a voice pierced the pitch darkness: "Password!"

"Safeguard," I responded quickly.

"Ah, it's Uncle Chang." The company commander darted forward. The tall figure of the old man in a straw cape, carrying his gun and conch, took on a new dignity in the flashing lightning.

"Uncle Chang, why are you. . . ."

"It's my duty to safeguard the cable, company commander," came the reply.

The company commander gazed at the old man in silence. Their hands interlocked tightly.

We parted. The company commander and I patrolled the coast, then crouched behind a big rock to watch the trenches. The rising tide hurled foam at us, the cold wind lashed rain at us. Water trickled down my back. Half an hour passed. The storm raged unabated, but nothing happened to arouse our suspicion.

Abruptly, the blast of a conch could be heard from Wind Top Hill. It was an urgent clarion call. Instantly I loaded my gun and dashed towards the sound with the company commander.

Who had blown the conch? Why, Uncle Chang of course. After leaving us he had climbed Wind Top Hill. Suddenly he caught sight of a shadowy figure stealthily approaching a trench with a cable in it. Uncle Chang immediately hid behind a big pine tree. By a flash of lightning he saw it was Yuan the Third. The swine was raising a gleaming axe, preparing to cut the cable.

That cable linked our island with Peking. It would carry Chairman Mao's instructions to us. The class enemy's vicious scheme must be frustrated. Uncle Chang leapt forward.

"Halt!" he thundered. Yuan the Third trembled, dropped his axe and fell on all fours in the mud. At that moment a flash of lightning enabled him to see that Uncle Chang was alone. He put on a show of meekness. "Uncle Chang, even though we aren't relatives, we belong to the same village. Have a heart! Let me go, and I swear I'll. . . ."

"Shut your dirty mouth!" cried the old man contemptuously. "That trick won't work."

At that, Yuan the Third showed his true colours. "If you won't accept my offer, you old fool, don't blame me for being rough!" he snarled. He snatched up the axe and struck out with all his might.

Uncle Chang warded off the blow with his gun. The axe again fell from Yuan's hand. Then Yuan, drawing a dagger, charged madly at the old man and succeeded in gashing his thigh. The agonizing pain made Uncle Chang dizzy. But gritting his teeth he struggled to his feet. Then he blew hard on his conch. The urgent summons pierced the raging storm.

As the company commander and I rushed up Wind Top Hill, we saw a shadowy figure darting towards us. The company commander blocked his way.

"Halt!" he shouted.

The man tried to turn and run away. But I gave him a kick that sent him keeling over. By this time the fighters in our company and the village militiamen had gathered around us.

The wind subsided. The rain stopped. The bright moon glided out from behind the clouds. And in the brilliant moonlight Uncle Chang, with his conch and gun, stood firm and strong as a bronze statue.

Sung Wen-chieh

Overheard in a Mountain Village

Why, sister,
What's the matter?
Supper's on the table
But there's no one eating.
Isn't the team leader home?
Or hasn't your young scholar
Come back from school?

Hush, not so loud,
Buffalo's Mother!
My man's studying by the window;
As you can guess,
He's storming the heights of theory!

Last spring when the peach trees
Were in tiny leaf,

Our team started a school
To teach reading and Marxism.
You can't imagine
What he had to say then:
"Mountains need trees
And men need education;
We've got to make our thinking scientific;
Unless we learn to read and write,
How can we mechanize?"

Well, I don't mind telling you
What my old man said
Set me laughing and I told him:
"Old trees grow gnarled,
And full of knots,
You're past the age for learning."
But you know how stubborn he is,
Once he takes a notion
Not even twelve oxen can move him.
"However high a mountain,
Men can climb it;
And paths are levelled
By the feet of men."
Tossing these words at me,
He left for school.

Since then
He hasn't missed an evening's schooling.
Look at him now
Sitting over there by the window,
Just back from the experimental plot

And he's already studying *On Practice*.
See all those notes he's making?

Yes, Buffalo's Mother,
Now he's my teacher too;
He's helping me study
The Communist Manifesto.
The world today
Is so full of new things, new people,
Even a tree of iron may blossom again.

Oh, you mustn't leave just yet,
Buffalo's Mother.
Stay and hear my old man explain
Materialism and dialectics to me,
To sharpen my wits
So that I can tell false from true.
Or you can come every day
And be his new pupil.
What do you say to that? . . .



Wu Hsiao

Our Repair Shop

Pneumatic hammers crash,
Sparks from welding fly;
Below high arc lamps
Machines roar,
Spray-guns whirl,
And the scent of oil
Fills the air
In our repair shop.

See that youngster
Going all out:
The early spring is chill,
But he has taken off his padded jacket;
His hands are coated with grease,

His head steams with sweat,
His eyebrows are spattered with oil,
Yet his heart is singing.

See that veteran worker,
White-haired
But young at heart,
Who files a spare part
With a few swift, sure movements.
The lines on his forehead
Mark his achievements in battle;
The determination in his eyes
Shows his readiness for new fights.

What a cheerful din of work
Fills our repair shop!
Swarf swirls from lathes
Wreathed with blue smoke;
Castings cover the ground
Ready for processing;
Screw-caps, cog-wheels,
Whatever we turn out
Or wherever we fit it
Will hold fast, stand firm.
That brand-new rubber tyre
Of gleaming black
Has flown already in fancy
To whirl through the fields,
Bringing waves of verdant green
To the good earth in spring.

See over there the rows
Of refitted tractors,
All types and models,
Like soldiers from the front
Who have won merits;
Dust-stained, weather-beaten, muddy
But tempered in battle
When first they entered our shop,
They are leaving triumphant and splendid
In fresh coats of red.

See the girl
Come to test the machines;
She siphons in petrol and water,
Revs up the motor
And is off on a trial run;
Back again she jumps down,
Her plaits swinging.
"Up to standard,
In good working order.
Fill out the voucher, quick,
So that it can report at once
For active service."

What a cheerful din of work
Fills our repair shop:
Crash of pneumatic hammers,
Sparks from welding. . . .
Have our old hands heard
The crack of whips

And the lowing
Of oxen drawing the plough?
Have our youngsters seen
The willows turning green
And the water rising now
In the canals?
Our repair shop too
Is a battleground, I say,
Where we hurl ourselves like tigers
Into the fight,
In the great surging tide
Of spring.

Illustrated by Ho Chen-chiang



Pei Kuo

Song of the Dragon River

The new revolutionary opera *Song of the Dragon River** has recently been made into a colour film. Stage and screen versions alike are immensely popular.

Socialist construction in the countryside after the emergence of the people's communes is the subject of this opera, which shows how a certain brigade dams Dragon River to divert its water to a drought area. The time is 1963, when a district on China's southeast coast is badly hit by drought. Dragon River Brigade in a commune in this district is situated on low ground near the river which irrigates its fields. With three hundred *mu* of high-yield wheat and three thousand *mu* of paddy, the brigade is looking forward to a good harvest. In a neighbouring commune on Rear Mountain, however, because the land is high, ninety thousand *mu* are seriously affected by the drought.

The brigade's Party secretary Chiang Shui-ying attends a meeting in the county town to devise measures to combat the drought. On her return she tells the brigade members and cadres the Party committee's decision: to dam the river and raise its level sufficiently

*The script of the opera was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 7 this year.

to send water past their village up to Rear Mountain. This will mean flooding the brigade's three hundred *mu* of wheat. Thus the cadres and peasants of Dragon River Brigade are on the horns of a dilemma. Should they sacrifice their three hundred *mu* of wheat to save their neighbours' ninety thousand *mu*? Or should they concentrate on raising their own production, regardless of the interests of the neighbouring commune?

This contradiction results in two different reactions. The brigade leader Li Chih-tien, taken in by the counter-revolutionary Huang Kuo-chung and influenced by the bourgeois ideas of the well-to-do middle peasant Chang Fu, sees only the interests of his own small collective and opposes damming the river. But the Party secretary and most of the poor peasants, putting the interests of the whole country first, are willing to make a sacrifice to help others. They determine to carry out the county committee's decision.

This gives rise to a sharp conflict between the brigade leader and the Party secretary. Shui-ying patiently helps Li to see reason. By relying on the masses she exposes Huang's sabotage. And her selfless actions make the middle peasant Chang Fu ashamed of his own selfishness. The villagers succeed in damming the river and saving ninety thousand *mu* of paddy, achieving a bumper harvest in spite of the drought.

The central theme of this opera is the selfless communist spirit. To give full expression to this, the heroine Shui-ying is the focal point of three sets of contradictions: that between the proletarian forces which she represents and the parochialism exemplified by Li; that between the revolutionary forces and the hidden class enemy; and that between the socialist forces and the tendency towards capitalism typified by the well-to-do middle peasant Chang Fu. The main thread running through the whole opera, however, is the contradiction between the two Party members Shui-ying and Li.

The clash between these two is essentially one between public and private interests, between socialism and parochialism. The latter may pose as concern for the public welfare, unlike blatant self-centredness; but it is in fact an extension of this, since its sole concern is with the small collective, not with the big collective. So it is still a product

of private ownership, totally incompatible with socialist thinking which gives priority to the interests of the whole people and whole country.

All those working for socialism must learn to correlate the interests of the state, of the collective and of the individual. They must handle the contradictions between public and private interests in accordance with proletarian principles. To consolidate socialist China's collective economy, we must persistently educate our people with socialist ideas to counter and overcome the corrupting influence of bourgeois thinking. Herein lies the profound significance of this opera for us today. And this is why the ideological struggle between Shui-ying and Li is presented as the main issue.

As the drama unfolds, we see first the ideological conflict between Shui-ying and Li. Shui-ying realizes that people must change their thinking before they can change the objective world. She therefore pays great attention to the ideological struggle. When Li is reluctant to sacrifice the three hundred *mu* of wheat, she reminds him of past hardships and points out that by giving up these three hundred *mu* they can ensure a good harvest on ninety thousand *mu* on Rear Mountain. By helping him see that the interests of the whole outweigh their own local interests and by proposing to make good their loss through side-lines, she gets Li to agree to her plan. However, Shui-ying is well aware that this has not solved the whole problem. She reminds Li: "Our class enemies are going to be scared and enraged. They'll do everything they can to sabotage. We must act in accordance with what Chairman Mao has taught us: **"Never forget class struggle."** She alerts Li to beware of hidden enemies.

Then we see the conflict between Shui-ying and the hidden enemy Huang Kuo-chung. A section of the dam being built to block the river suddenly collapses and brushwood is needed to repair it. When Huang hears this, he persuades the villagers to fire the brick kiln ahead of time so that there will be no brushwood to repair the dam and no water will reach Rear Mountain. Should they go ahead with firing the kiln, or use the brushwood to save the dam? This involves another conflict between public and private interests.

Shui-ying decides to take the brushwood to save the dam, and foils Huang's vicious scheme. Moreover, by exposing it she heightens the vigilance of the brigade members.

While the river is being dammed, selfish Chang Fu does nothing but worry that his house may be flooded. At Huang's instigation he goes to complain to Shui-ying and starts quarrelling with Uncle Ah-chien, a poor peasant who supports her. Then the Party secretary's utter selflessness discloses the enemy's slander. She completely ignores the danger to her own house and works hard all night studying the flow of the river, although in very poor health. This makes Chang Fu thoroughly ashamed of himself.

In handling the three sets of contradictions the playwrights quite rightly emphasize the main one, linking it at the same time with the other two. And particular stress is laid on the main aspect of the main contradiction, highlighting the communist spirit of Shui-ying and thus creating a splendid image of the heroine.

Shui-ying is at the forefront of the battle to dam the river and divert water to Rear Mountain. While leading the peasants to combat natural calamities, she displays her revolutionary spirit, her utter disregard of hardships and danger. When a storm breaks just as the dam is being completed, she is the first to leap into the water to block the rushing torrent. The people's welfare is her constant concern. Her proletarian comradeship love is felt by all the brigade members who are drawn closer to the Party because of this. What is more important is that she keeps the class struggle in mind at all times, is skilled in making a Marxist class analysis of the situation, and relies on the masses' strength to detect hidden enemies.

After the dam is repaired the level of the river rises. But Dragon River Brigade is so low-lying that the diverted water flows very slowly. Seventy thousand *mu* on Rear Mountain still lack water, while Dragon River Brigade's three thousand *mu* of paddy and some brigade members' homes are threatened by flood. Here the conflict reaches a climax and the three contradictions are thrown into sharp relief. In order to save the drought-stricken area, Shui-ying decides to make a still greater sacrifice by diverting the water to flow over her own brigade's three thousand *mu* of paddy. Taking advantage of

Li's concern over his own brigade's interest, Huang urges him to close the sluice-gate and cut off the flow of water. Muddle-headed Chang Fu also supports this course. And the brigade leader lets himself be persuaded by them. A sharp clash ensues between those who want to close the sluice-gate and those who want to let more water through. And this epitomizes the struggle between two lines, between the capitalist and socialist way, between concern for the whole country and self-interest. It is a struggle between two different world outlooks.

When it is necessary to sacrifice local interests for those of the whole country, not for a moment does Shui-ying hesitate. Her conviction and resolution are unshaken by the enemy's attempted sabotage, the demands of the well-to-do middle peasant and the obstruction of a fellow Party member. Patiently and earnestly she recalls how three years ago Chairman Mao sent PLA men to this village to fight a flood and how neighbouring villages helped them rebuild their homes, until Li sees reason and agrees to open the sluice-gate to its full extent. She also foils the enemy's attempt at sabotage, unmasking Huang Kuo-chung as a counter-revolutionary who has changed his name to lie low for many years. This revelation teaches Li and Chang Fu a good lesson. Shui-ying points out that the class enemy's attempts to utilize our wrong thinking for nefarious ends is characteristic of the class struggle during the period of socialism. After Li recognizes his mistake she encourages him to look at things from a higher plane and not to be blinded by temporary local interests. In the world today, she sings:

How many slaves await liberation.

How many poor endure starvation.

This spirited aria is not only an inspiration to her comrade but vividly reveals her noble ideals and the source of her devotion to the revolution. This combination of revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary realism makes Shui-ying a truly lofty and splendid figure.

In the handling of characters prominence is given to the positive characters, especially the heroic characters among these, and above

all to the heroine Shui-ying. The other positive characters serve to show her to greater advantage, just as stars heighten the loveliness of the moon. Thus before Shui-ying appears on the scene, the Youth Leaguer Ah-lien describes how she urged them to help the drought-stricken area by repairing their treadle water-raisers, so that the brigade's pumps could be sent to help their class brothers on Rear Mountain. Thus by the time Shui-ying appears, the audience already has an idea of her chief characteristics.

The same method is used to present Shui-ying's contradiction with the old middle peasant Chang Fu. Before she arrives, Uncle Ah-chien lets the audience know the situation. Having noticed that the Party secretary has been working round the clock though her health is poor, this old peasant brings her some chicken soup. When he comes to her home, he thinks she is resting and waits outside the door. This episode shows the love and concern of the commune members for good Party cadres, and sheds light on Shui-ying's admirable character.

When Chang Fu, incited by Huang, finds fault with Shui-ying, Uncle Ah-chien refutes him most indignantly and with deep feeling describes how hard and selflessly she works. At this point Shui-ying's voice sounds offstage, and she walks in carrying a spade after spending the whole night working. Chang Fu, feeling a fool, learns a good lesson while Shui-ying's noble qualities are graphically conveyed to the audience.

Chairman Mao instructs us to **"Weed through the old to bring forth the new"** and **"Make the past serve the present and foreign things serve China"**. This new opera has critically inherited what is useful in traditional Peking opera. It has also created a whole series of new tunes and dancing movements better able to express modern life and portray proletarian heroes, while appropriate use has been made of western instruments in the accompaniment. All these innovations have proved most successful. Good use has also been made of stage lighting, scenery and other devices to show the heroism of the peasants as they battle with the raging flood to dam the river. Thus the opera has achieved the unity of revolutionary political content and pleasing artistic form.

Our great leader Chairman Mao teaches us: **"Socialist society covers a considerably long historical period. In the historical period of socialism, there are still classes, class contradictions and class struggle, there is the struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road, and there is the danger of capitalist restoration."**

After our people overthrew imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism and set up a new socialist China under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolution was still uncompleted. Inside the country enemies with guns have been wiped out, but enemies without guns still remain. They are bound to attack us in all manner of ways. And this struggle is bound to be reflected within the Chinese Communist Party as a sharp and complex conflict between two different lines or two different world outlooks.

Some of these struggles take the form of struggles between ourselves and the enemy on the political front; while others are contradictions within the ranks of the people in the ideological sphere. In view of these complex contradictions and struggles, Chairman Mao teaches us that **"We must correctly understand and handle class contradictions and class struggle, distinguish the contradictions between ourselves and the enemy from those among the people and handle them correctly."** This important directive lays down the basic Marxist-Leninist line for the Party to continue the revolution under the conditions of the proletarian dictatorship. And the implementation of this Party line is the basic guarantee to ensure the continuous victory of the revolution.

One of the main tasks of socialist literature and art is to create images of proletarian heroes who carry out this basic Marxist-Leninist line, so that the revolution is carried continuously forward. If literature and art abandon this basic Party line and lack the courage to face up to real contradictions and struggles, they will inevitably attempt to cover up the class struggle and struggle between two lines, failing to provide the necessary conditions for the portrayal of heroes and heroic deeds. Then the characters created are bound to be insipid and ineffective. Hence revolutionary literary and art workers must be guided by this basic line of the Party, use the Marxist-Leninist world outlook

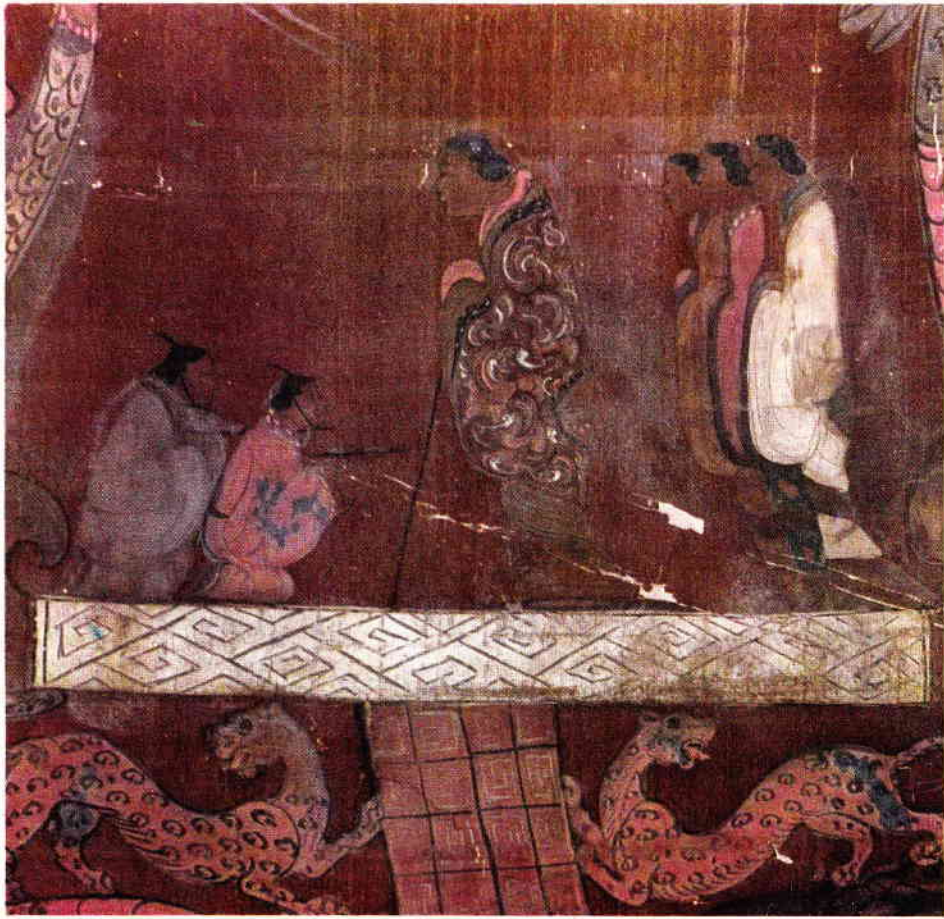
to observe and interpret life and, by concentrating everyday phenomena and typifying the contradictions and struggles within them, create images of proletarian heroes grappling with the contradictions most typical of our time.

This opera uses the Marxist-Leninist world outlook and outlook on art to observe life, make generalizations and handle contradictions. Taking a heroine of the working people as the central figure, it unfolds the clashes and conflicts between two different classes and different lines. These contradictions, dissimilar yet interlinked, are one by one revealed in such a way as to build up a fine inspiring image of the heroine Chiang Shui-ying. Here, then, we have another excellent model for the creation of our socialist art.

Cultural Relics from Ancient Han Tomb

Painting on silk





Middle section



Upper section

Lower section



PAINTING ON SILK (DETAILS)

THE COFFIN



The three layers of the coffin



The silk cover on the innermost layer with coloured-feather designs (lower) and a "satin-stitch" embroidered border (upper)



Painting on the outermost layer



Painting on the lid of the middle layer

SILK OBJECTS



Embroidery on orange silk



Three-colour embroidery on silk



Gauze embroidered with convoluting designs



Brocade with coloured cloud design

LACQUERWARE

Lacquer pot



Lacquer tripod



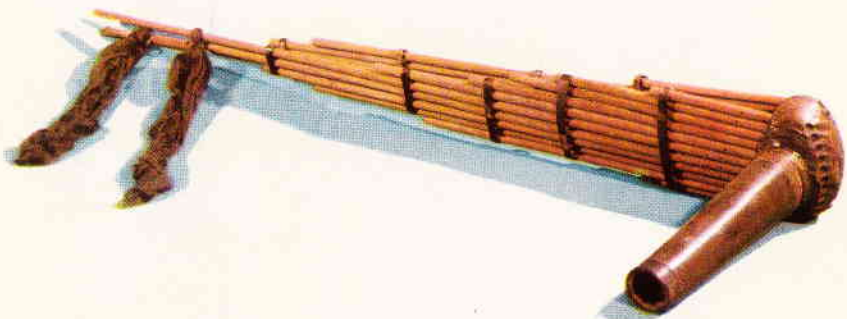
Lacquer box containing bowls

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Pitch-pipes



Pipe-organ



Cithern



Musicians

Figurine dressed in coloured garment



WOODEN FIGURINES



Painted figurines

Discovery of a 2,000-Year-Old Tomb

In April 1972 an early Han-dynasty tomb dating from the second century B.C. was discovered at Mawangtui in the eastern suburb of Changsha in Hunan Province. Mawangtui is a mound more than fifty metres across and more than twenty metres in height. In the tomb beneath the mound was discovered a woman's body in a good state of preservation. The body, swathed with twenty layers of silk and gauze, was half immersed in a reddish fluid.

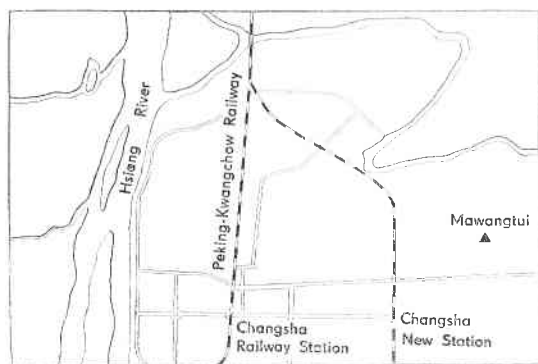
The tomb is fairly elaborate, its burial chamber lying twenty metres below the top of the mound. The coffin itself consists of three layers of wood, with three outer layers for additional protection. Outside this was a covering of charcoal more than 30 cm. thick, weighing more than 10,000 *jin*. This in turn was sealed with white clay 60 to 130 cm. thick. The charcoal and clay protecting the coffin from damp and the means of embalmment used no doubt account for the good state of preservation of the corpse and burial accessories.

The coffin itself is a work of art with painting and decorations on all three layers. On the outermost layer, lacquered black, are painted white, red and yellow clouds or mist, together with strange

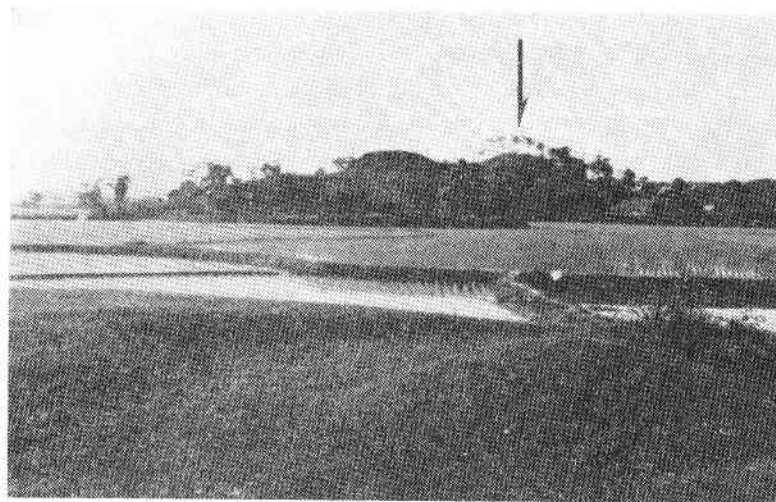
birds and beasts wrestling, chasing each other, and playing the cithern or dancing. On the middle layer, lacquered red, are vigorous paintings of two dragons and two tigers fighting together. The innermost layer is covered with silk having a "satin-stitch" embroidered border and ornamented with lozenge-shaped designs made of golden, black and emerald feathers. This is the first discovery of a silk coffin-covering of this kind.

The funerary utensils and other objects, numbering more than one thousand in all, were mostly placed between the outermost and innermost layers. They include silk fabrics, lacquerware, bamboo and wooden utensils, pottery, grain and other foodstuff.

Among the silk objects are more than forty garments, slippers and socks, all in good condition, as well as more than twenty embroidered pillows, aromatic pouches and wrappers. There are also lengths of fabric 38.5 cm. to 50 cm. wide which represent most of the varieties of Han-dynasty silk known to us: satin, silk, gauze, embroideries, brocade and damask. The designs, woven, painted or embroidered, depict animals, clouds, plants, flowers and rhomboid and other geometric designs. The gauze is so light that one white inner garment 128 cm. in length with sleeves measuring 190 cm. from cuff to cuff weighs only 49 grammes. No thicker than the wings of a cicada, its texture is as fine as modern nylon. A brocade with a thick short pile on one side is another example of the high quality of Han-dynasty weaving.



Map showing position of Mawangtui



A View of Mawangtui

The colours of these fabrics, derived for the most part from vegetable dyes, include brown, crimson, grey, red, fawn, buff, yellow, green, blue and white. Discovered for the first time are some lengths of silk dyed with cinnabar or painted in gold and silver with printed designs. There are also linen fabrics of different textures, the finest having 36 cross-threads to each square centimetre. This has a smooth glossy surface and is as strong as our new linen today.

The most precious find, however, is the painting on silk draping the innermost coffin. Before the invention of paper it was usual for artists to paint on silk. This silk painting is T-shaped, 205 cm. long, 92 cm. wide at the top and 47.7 cm. wide at the bottom, with silk ribbons attached to the corners. The objects depicted cover a wide range including human figures, the sun and moon, birds, beasts, reptiles and legendary monsters, as well as sacrificial vessels and musical instruments. The whole painting is divided into three sections.

The upper section depicts a scene in heaven. In the upper right-hand corner is a round sun, inside it a golden crow and under it eight smaller suns with spreading foliage between them. According to an ancient Chinese myth there were once ten suns and ten crows on a huge tree known as Fusang in a place called Tangku. These ten suns cir-

pled the sky in turn. When one sun came out, carried on the back of its crow, the other nine would rest under the boughs of the tree. A sun being carried by a crow may have symbolized the cycle of day and night. Once all ten suns came out at the same time, so that all plants and crops began to shrivel. Then the sage king Yao ordered a famous archer, Yi, to shoot them down, and Yi shot down nine suns and nine crows. This painting shows eight small suns only. Perhaps the artist deliberately concealed the ninth behind the leaves.

In the upper left-hand corner is a crescent moon with a toad and a white hare in it, while a woman on a winged dragon is ascending towards it. This is a scene from another ancient myth. This woman, Chang Ngo, the wife of the archer Yi, stole an elixir which her husband had obtained from the Queen Mother of the West and went up to the moon. Between the sun and the moon hovers Chulung, a deity with a man's head and a serpent's body in charge of heaven and earth. Five wild swans are flying towards this deity. Further down in the middle hangs a bell used to make music. The two capped and robed figures with folded hands below it are either the musicians who sound the bell or guardians of the gate of heaven. Flanking them are two horizontal beams each supporting a vertical board, and on these boards are two red-spotted leopards. The wooden structures probably represent the gate of heaven which the leopards are guarding. On either side of the bell are monsters with human heads riding on horses towards the sun and the moon, beneath which winged dragons with claws and fangs are breathing out red flames.

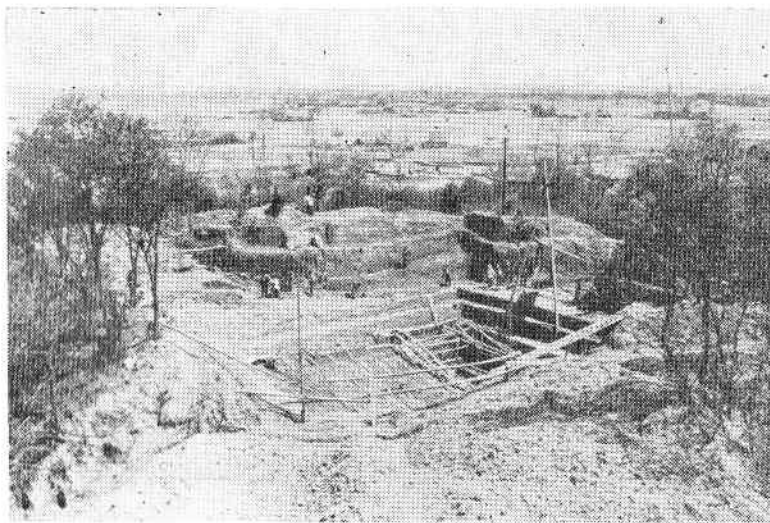
In the middle section, the main part of the painting, is a dignified and elegant old lady with elaborately dressed hair who is walking slowly with the help of a stick. Two kneeling figures in front are welcoming her with trays of food in their hands, while behind are three maidservants. This old lady, the central figure in the painting, is a noblewoman on an outing. The curtain above her may represent some hangings in the sacrificial hall, while the horizontal line with coloured lozenge designs below the figures presumably stands for the ground.

The lower section of the painting appears to represent the earth and the ocean. Under the horizontal earth-line is a jade pendant,

a symbol of nobility. Two dragons issuing from this and rearing upwards no doubt have some auspicious significance. Strings of beads suspended from the pendant fan out on either side above a jade chime, and on them perch winged birds with human heads. Below these are two short tables by which, facing each other, sit two rows of seven neatly dressed figures with folded hands. The tripods, boxes, pots, bowls and other utensils on the tables may be the sacrifice for the dead lady. Underneath, supporting the tables with both hands, a mighty monster, half man and half bear, stands astride two fish-like monsters. Beside it are two tortoises with two owls on their backs. Since owls come out only at night, shunning the light of day, they are usually depicted as creatures of the nether regions. At the very bottom are the two sea monsters with protruding mouths, fish tails and spotted intertwined bodies. These may be the creature called Ao which, according to early Chinese mythology, could support the heaviest weights. That would explain why they form the base of the whole composition.

Thus the striking scenes painted on this silk were inspired by myths and legends or represented the life of that period. Whether imaginary

Excavation going on

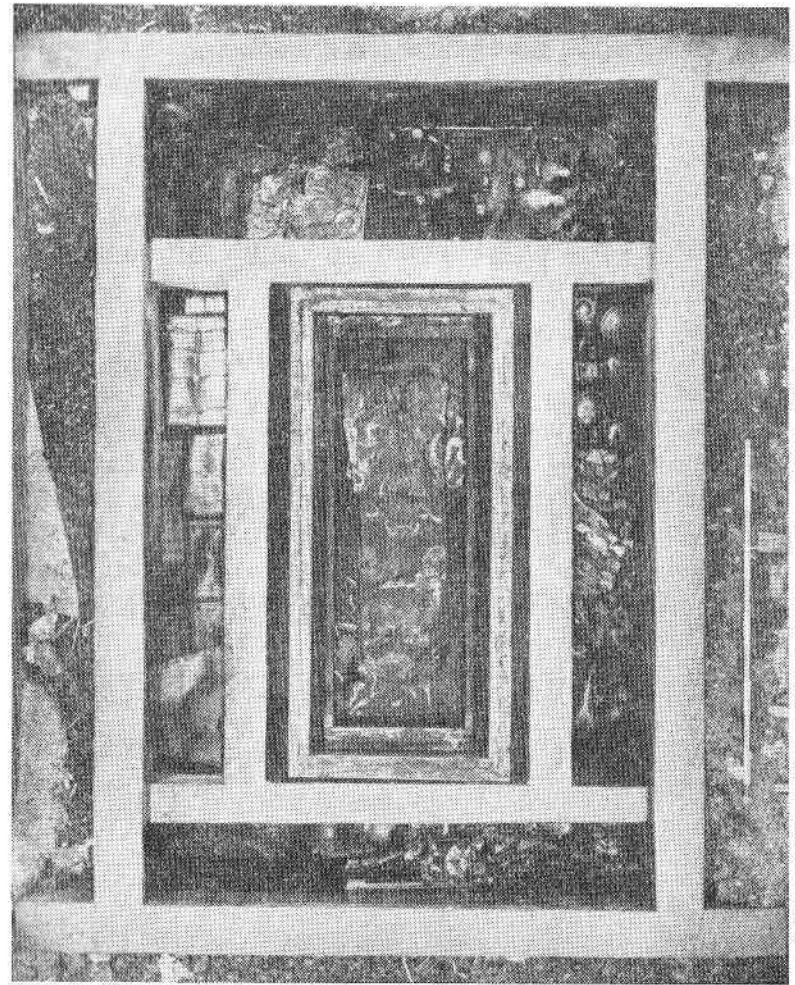


or based on life, they have been arranged by this unknown artist into one perfect whole, a gem of ancient pictorial art reflecting the high level reached by the Chinese painters of old. The composition, though so rich in content, is no mere jumble of objects but pleasingly organized. The chief subject, the dead lady, has the central position to give prominence to the main theme, while the sun and moon and other accessories form an integral part of the whole. The lines are fluid and vigorous and the objects depicted are remarkably lifelike. The garments of the dead lady, for example, are painted with exquisite delicacy of touch which conveys the texture of silk, while we can see that the monster supporting the earth is flexing its powerful muscles. The sun and moon, the dragons, leopards, tortoises, birds and sea monsters appear thoroughly vivid and lifelike. The use of such mineral dyes as cinnabar, azurite and malachite has produced glowing and resplendent colours, while the perfect symmetry of the composition induces a sense of order and harmony.

This tomb has also yielded more than 180 pieces of lacquerware retaining their original lustre. Some of the lines on the surface designs are as fine as silken threads. Most of these wares are inscribed inside or outside with the name of the owner or with the purpose and capacity of the utensils. When first unearthed some of them contained lotus-root, or food made of rice and flour. On some lacquer plates were ox-bones, chicken-bones and fish.

The objects made of bamboo and wood include 162 wooden figurines, 312 bamboo slips and 48 bamboo vessels. The wooden figurines are dressed in coloured garments or have clothing painted on them. Twenty-three of them are giving a performance of music and dancing; opposite them are lacquer stands, screens, a walking-stick, scented pouch, powder-box and lacquer trays heaped with food. This evidently represents a feast during the dead lady's lifetime.

Slips of bamboo were used for writing before the invention of paper. Those found in this tomb were inscribed in fairly elegant calligraphy with the number, size and name of different objects in the tomb. These ink inscriptions are still clear and unblurred. The woven bamboo vessels with covers contained silk, pendants, meat, vegetables, eggs, fruit and medicinal herbs.



Exposed coffin and outer layers showing space between layers filled with burial accessories

Among the musical instruments are a 25-stringed cithern 1.16 metres long with four pegs; a pipe-organ 90 cm. long with 22 pipes in two rows; and twelve bamboo pitch-pipes. These well-preserved musical instruments provide valuable material for the study of ancient Chinese music.

There were 50 pottery objects in the tomb including tripods, food containers with lids and winepots, some with a yellow glaze or painted surface. These contained cereals, pickles and fruit.

Inscriptions in ink or clay seals on the funerary ware indicate that these objects belonged to the family of the Marquis of Tai. According to Han-dynasty histories, the first Marquis of Tai was enfeoffed in 193 B.C. and the title remained in the family for four generations. The woman in the tomb was probably the wife of the first marquis. This nobleman who was chancellor of the Prince of Changsha ranked relatively low in the Han aristocracy. The fact that he used so much human labour and wealth to build such an elaborate tomb for his wife testifies to the wanton luxury of the feudal ruling class and its ruthless exploitation of the people.

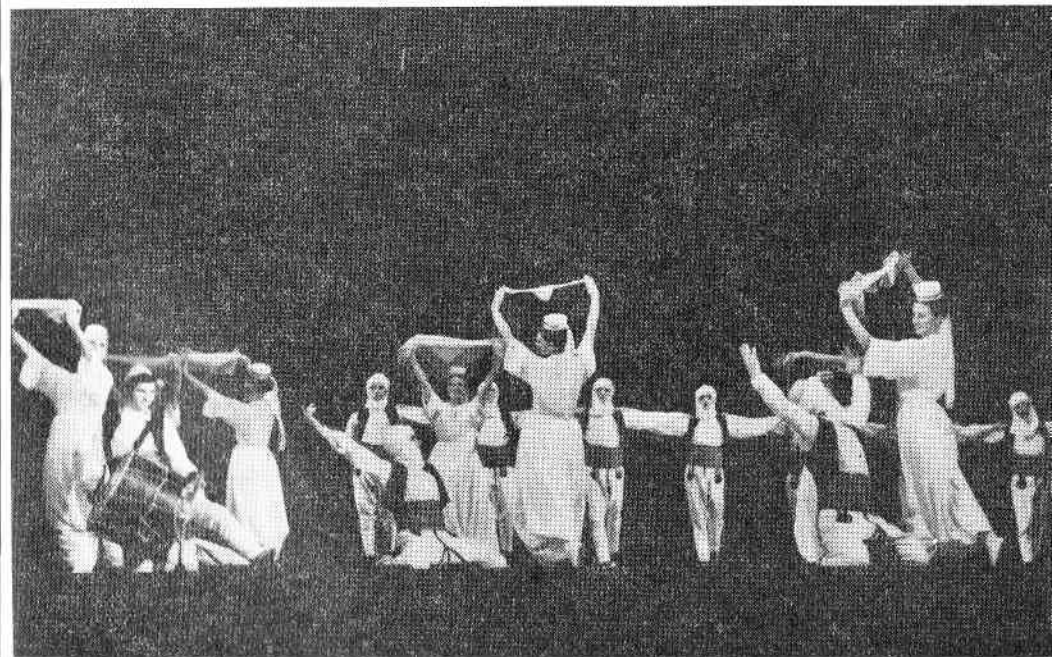
Chairman Mao has pointed out that in feudal society **“The peasants and the handicraft workers were the basic classes which created the wealth and culture of this society.”** The many valuable objects unearthed in this tomb were all produced by the labouring people and are evidence of the wisdom and creativeness of Han-dynasty craftsmen.

This ancient tomb is a significant find in contemporary Chinese archaeology, a find of considerable value for the study of the culture and history of the early Han Dynasty.

Chronicle

Yugoslav Song and Dance Ensemble in Peking

The “Ivo Lola Ribar” Song and Dance Ensemble from Belgrade, Yugoslavia, led by the ensemble leader Nikola Radas arrived at Peking on August 6. Leading members of the Culture Group Under the State Council, the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship With Foreign Countries and other organizations as well as literary



and art workers of Peking went to the station to welcome the visitors. On the evening of the 8th a ceremony was held to inaugurate the China performance tour of the ensemble.

Vietnamese Films in China

On the 18th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Agreement on Indo-China (signed on July 20, 1954), documentary films from Viet Nam including *Determined to Defeat the U.S. Aggressors*, *Indomitable Vinh Linh* and *Heroic Con Co Island*, as well as the feature film *A Phuc*, were shown in Peking and other cities of China. These films reflecting the heroism of the Vietnamese people in their war against U.S. aggression were enthusiastically welcomed by the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, who have expressed their determination to give resolute support to the Vietnamese people as long as U.S. troops remain in Viet Nam. The three peoples of Indo-China will be backed to the hilt by China until they win complete victory in their war of resistance to U.S. imperialist aggression.

New Handicrafts

Peking handicrafts comprise nearly forty arts including ivory carving, jade carving, lacquer with gilded and inlaid ornamentation, cloisonne, lacquer carving and artificial flowers. Since the start of the cultural revolution in 1966, the use of new themes and new techniques has produced some striking works such as ivory carvings of the new ocean-going liner "East Wind", the bridge across the Yangtse at Nanking and a girl herding deer; the jade carving of Chairman Mao's old home at Shaoshan; and the lacquer carving of the Tachai Brigade in Shansi. Most of these works reflect recent achievements in our socialist revolution and socialist construction, further developing the traditional techniques and distinctive features of Chinese handicrafts.

A gilded lacquer screen with a scene in colour of General Cheng Cheng-Kung's battle against the Dutch in 1661 portrays a hero who played a progressive role in history. Other attractive new works include an ivory carving depicting the popular myth of Chang Ngo's



flight to the moon, and a cluster of chrysanthemums made of satin hanging from a miniature cliff.

The craftsmen who create these works have not only mastered traditional techniques but have learned from traditional Chinese painting and sculpture, as well as from painting in oils. Thus the ivory carving of the Yangtse bridge at Nanking makes full use of the minute detail and realism characteristic of Chinese ivory carving, to show the 240 lamp-posts along the bridge and a train packed with passengers; while the ripples, swirling waves and white foam on the river below remind us of modes of expression in Chinese painting and sculpture. The ivory carving of Chang Ngo's flight to the moon is an improvement on a traditional model, reflecting the longing of the people of old to shake off oppression and advance to a better life.

New Novels Published in Shanghai

Three novels *Struggles in Hungnan Village*, *Chiangpan State Farm* and *Buffalo Swamp* were recently published by the Shanghai People's Publishing House.

Struggles in Hungnan Village deals with socialist construction in the countryside. It describes how a mutual-aid team set up after Liberation in the suburbs of Shanghai evolves into a full-fledged co-operative in 1956. The central figure is a local functionary who persists in taking the socialist road under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

Buffalo Swamp is a story about the People's Liberation Army. Some troops build dams to turn tens of thousands of *mu* of marshland on the seacoast into arable land producing rice. Steeled and tempered in the course of this arduous work, they become new men with a communist outlook.

The theme of *Chiangpan State Farm* is the complex class struggle over the wheat harvest of a certain brigade in a state farm in the summer of 1963. Here we have a struggle between the people and the enemy, a struggle between two different lines, and a struggle between progressive and backward ideas. These contradictions sharpen as the plot develops, until finally the revolutionary forces defeat the reactionary forces, foiling their attempts to sabotage the harvest and winning victory in both revolution and production.

New Clay Figures of Huishan

For more than four hundred years Huishan, a mountain near the city of Wusih on the south bank of the Yangtse, has been known for its gay and realistic clay figures which have always been popular with the working people.

Since the cultural revolution the Huishan craftsmen, by carrying out Chairman Mao's instructions to "Let a hundred flowers blossom" and "Weed through the old to bring forth the new", have created many new clay figures reflecting present-day life. Some depict heroes of such model revolutionary operas as *Taking Tiger*

Mountain by Strategy, *Shachiapang* and *The Red Lantern*; others depict the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America like *The Vietnamese People Defeat the U.S. Brigands*, *The Fight of the Okinawa People* and *Battle Drums in Equatorial Africa*; yet others are portrayals of the life and struggles of Chinese workers, peasants and soldiers like *The Steel Workers*, *Flowers of Tachai Brigade*, *Sentry at the Seacoast* and *The People's Commune Is Fine*.

While creating new works with fresh revolutionary themes, the artists are also producing traditional works. They adopt an analytical attitude to this time-honoured art. While continuing to produce those figures which are long-standing favourites and which reflect something healthy, they make improvements on those which have certain shortcomings. Thus this traditional art has a new look today.



Published by Foreign Languages Press
Yu Chou Hung, Peking (37), China
Printed in the People's Republic of China

LEARNING TO FARM (coloured woodcut)



中国文学

英文月刊 1972 年第 10 期

本刊代号 2-916