

S. HARRISON

CHINESE LITERATURE



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1974

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Stage Photographs from "Azalea Mountain" 26-27

Front Cover: Sword Dance — *Ou Yang*

QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO

Armed struggle by the Chinese Communist Party takes the form of peasant war under proletarian leadership.

A single spark can start a prairie fire.

AZALEA MOUNTAIN

(September 1973 script of the Peking Opera Troupe of Peking)
Written by Wang Shu-yuan and Others

Time: Spring, 1928

Place: Azalea Mountain in the border region between Hunan and Kiangsi

- Scene 1 **Darkness Before Dawn**
- Scene 2 **Spring Makes Azaleas Blossom**
- Scene 3 **Class Feeling Deep As the Ocean**
- Scene 4 **Bamboos Grow Apace**
- Scene 5 **Firm As a Rock in Midstream**
- Scene 6 **A Lesson in the Lock-up**
- Scene 7 **Flying Over the Cloud-wrapped Chasm**
- Scene 8 **The Sun Scatters the Mist**
- Scene 9 **Keep the Red Flag Flying**

Published by Foreign Languages Press
Yu Chou Hung, Peking (37), China
Printed in the People's Republic of China

For the background of this opera see the article on p. 114.

Characters

Ko Hsiang	<i>a woman of thirty, Party representative of the peasants' self-defence corps</i>
Lei Kang	<i>35-year-old leader of the self-defence corps</i>
Li Shih-chien	<i>a cadre of thirty in the self-defence corps, who joins the Party and becomes a member of the branch committee</i>
Granny Tu	<i>a poor peasant of sixty, widow of a revolutionary killed by the reactionaries</i>
Tien Ta-chiang	<i>32-year-old hired hand who joins the self-defence corps and the Party</i>
Cheng Lao-wan	<i>45-year-old fighter of the self-defence corps, who joins the Party</i>
Tu Hsiao-shan	<i>Granny Tu's 15-year-old grandson who joins the self-defence corps</i>
Lo Cheng-hu	<i>20-year-old fighter of the self-defence corps, who joins the Party</i>
Other partisans	
Soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army	
Other peasants	
Wen Chi-chiu	<i>renegade deputy leader of the self-defence corps</i>
Chiu Chang-keng	<i>formerly Wen's orderly in a warlord's army</i>
The Viper	<i>landlord and head of the local reactionary "civil guards"</i>
Captain of the "civil guards"	
Civil guards	

SCENE ONE

DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

Spring 1928, late at night.

Lion's Jaw on Azalea Mountain.

(The curtain rises to show a precipitous mountain pass shrouded in darkness. The barking of dogs, rifle-fire and the sound of shouting approach from the distance. Men yell offstage: "Lei Kang's escaped! Catch him!") Some of the landlord's civil guards run in with lanterns and search. The Viper enters followed by a guard with a lantern.)

Guard (*points at the cliff*): Look!

(*A shadowy figure clinging to a vine swings over a chasm and disappears into the forest beyond.*)

Viper (*fires his pistol*): After him!

(*The Viper and his men give chase.*)

(*Blackout.*)

(*The stage lights up again. It is the next morning. Distant mountain ranges can be glimpsed through the clouds. Close by yawns a chasm shaped like the jaws of a lion. Among the trees and undergrowth azaleas are coming into bloom, their red and white flowers brilliant and vigorous. In the left foreground is a flat rock. Further back on the right rises a large boulder. Lei Kang emerges from behind the boulder. He parts the grass and takes a good look round, then leaps out and strikes a pose. His feet are shackled and he walks with difficulty. Panting and wiping his brow, weak from hunger and thirst, he staggers towards the right and looks round, then stamps his foot in exasperation. He sees the rock and lurches over to it. Holding up his chain he whirls round, sits on the rock and picks up a stone to smash his shackles. The stone crumbles, but his shackles remain intact. Hearing someone approaching he springs to his feet.*)

(*Granny Tu appears with firewood on her back and an axe in her hand. She and Lei Kang stare at each other. She approaches him slowly and holds out the axe. Surprised at first, Lei Kang takes it to smash his shackles which he tosses behind the rock. Granny Tu puts down her firewood. Lei Kang returns her the axe. She produces a sweet-potato and offers it to him.*)

Lei Kang (*takes the sweet-potato. Very touched*):

Parched paddy soaked by sweet rain

Remembers every drop.

Granny Tu: Ten thousand leaves grow from a single root:

All the poor are one family.

(*Lei Kang tucks the sweet-potato inside his jacket.*)

Lei Kang: Every drop of kindness must be repaid.

Please tell me your name, ma'am.

Granny Tu: My name is Tu.

Lei Kang (*startled*): Your name is Tu? Who else do you have in your family?

Granny Tu: My son 'Tu Shan, driven from home by the landlord, joined Lei Kang's band of insurgents; I've had no news of him since.

Lei Kang: You are Tu Shan's mother?

Granny Tu: Yes. And you...?

Lei Kang (*abashed*): I'm Lei Kang.

Granny Tu (*taken aback*): Lei Kang? (*Urgently*) And Tu Shan?

Lei Kang (*in distress*): Your fine son, our dearest brother... Has died a hero's death.

(Granny Tu staggers and drops her axe, then takes a grip on herself and clenches her teeth. Lei Kang helps her over to sit down on the rock.)

Granny Tu (*sings*): *Countless debts of blood and tears to be repaid! But his father's death still unavenged he dies...*

Lei Kang (*sings*): *No martyr's blood is shed in vain; Each drop becomes a red azalea bloom. Do not grieve; I shall avenge you; You shall be my own dear mother. Mother!* (*Kneels before her.*)

Granny Tu (*with resolution*): Child! No axe can fell all the bamboo on the south mountain, No fire can burn the root of the wild plantain. (*Makes Lei Kang rise.*) When my husband fell there was still my son; Now though my son is killed there is still my grandson. His name is Hsiao-shan; I entrust him to you; Toughen him, temper him to take revenge!

(Granny Tu picks up the axe as Lo Cheng-hu runs in.)

Lo: Brother! (*Beckons to others offstage.*)

(Enter Cheng Lao-wan, Wen Chi-chiu, Partisan C and Chiu Chang-keng.)

Partisans: Chief!

Lei Kang: Brothers! (*He goes towards them and takes Cheng and Wen by the hands.*)

This is Brother 'Tu Shan's mother
And my own dear mother.

(The men greet her.)

Granny Tu (*caresses Lo Sheng-hu*): My children!

(Partisan C goes off to keep a look-out.)

Cheng (*to Lei Kang*): Last night came word that you had escaped; At once we sent search parties out. At last we've found you, safe and sound!

Lo: We feel joy and sorrow, both.

Lei Kang (*with feeling*): Ah!

Our band of brothers, several dozen strong...

Wen: Has been routed, with so many killed and wounded!

Lo: Brother!

(Lei Kang sighs and strikes one fist against his palm. Lo squats down holding a sword.)

(Hsiao-shan offstage calls: "Granny!")

Granny Tu: Hsiao-shan!

Hsiao-shan (*runs in*): Granny, my dad...

(Granny Tu stops him. Hsiao-shan clings to her knees and sobs.)

Lei Kang (*fervently*): His memory will live on
Evergreen as the pines on Azalea Mountain.

Hsiao-shan (*angrily*): That bloody butcher the Viper...

Lei Kang (*quickly*): What has he done now?

Hsiao-shan: He's posted a notice, sent out criers with gongs, And hung my father's head from a flag-pole. He says...

Lei Kang: What does he say?

Hsiao-shan: "Anyone who joins the partisans
Will have his whole family wiped out."

They'll take reprisals: Kill all,
Burn all, loot all!

Lei Kang (*furious*): Ah!

The rich must be sent to hell
Before the poor can win heaven.
Follow me, brothers! (*Snatches the sword from Lo.*)

(*All are burning to fight.*)

Granny Tu (*stops them*): Wait.

Lei Kang (*balts*): Mother!

Granny Tu (*firmly*): Give me that sword.

(*Lei Kang hesitates, but she insists. Reluctantly he passes the sword to her.*)

Granny Tu (*gravely*): Vines cling to the cliff,

Sheep follow the bell-wether;
We must find some leader to guide us
And stop striking out at random. (*Sits on the rock.*)

Lei Kang (*with feeling*): We heard that last September

The Communist Party
Led the poor in the Autumn Harvest Uprising
Which shook Kiangsi and Hunan.
Despotic landlords were humbled,
The poor stood up. (*Walks to rock, plants one foot on it, raises his fist and strikes a pose.*)

But I failed to find the Communist Party,
All I could do

Was to follow their example
And rise in arms.

So I unfurled the banner of revolt
And assembled partisans on Azalea Mountain. . . .

Little did we think
That it would come to this. . . . (*Sighs and strikes his fist on his palm. Sings.*)

*Three times we rose in arms, three times were crushed,
The blood of many fine brothers stained these mountains;*

*In defeat we long to find the Communist Party,
For wild geese to fly far must have a leader.
Dark the night as we wait for the dawn.
Ah, Party, you are the lamp to light up our path.
But where can I find you? (Gazes into the distance.)*

(*All gaze eagerly into the distance. Partisan C hurries in.*)

Partisan C: Here's Li Shih-chien, chief.

(*Li strides in.*)

Li (*walks up the boulder*): Brother Lei Kang!

Lei Kang (*approaches him*): Shih-chien!

(*Li leaps down from boulder and clasps Lei Kang's arms. Partisan C goes off to keep watch.*)

Cheng: Why are you back so late?

Li: I went to Sankuan to scout round the town.

Chiu: You had us worried.

Wen: While you yourself had a good time.

Li: You can stop being worried,
I've brought good news.

Wen: What is it?

Li: I've found the Communist Party. (*Leaps up the boulder.*)

All: Found the Party?

Li: Right.

Cheng: Where?

Li: So far and yet so near.

Lei Kang: What do you mean?

Li: Very near. (*Leaps down and strikes a pose.*)

All: Go on, tell us.

Li (*stands up*): Listen then. (*Turns and sets one foot on the stone.*)

The word's gone round in town
That two Communists came to Azalea Mountain;
They ran into the enemy,
Put up a fearless fight;
One was shot and killed,

The other wounded and captured.
Early tomorrow the prisoner will be paraded
Before the ancestral temple and executed.

Lei Kang: Executed?

All: What's to be done?

Li: One must plunge deep into the sea
To find precious pearls! (*Points.*)

Cheng (*understands*): You mean. . .

Li: We'll disguise ourselves,

Cheng: Set out by starlight,

Li: Launch a surprise attack,

Lo: Raid the execution ground, raise havoc in Sankuan,

All: Strike panic into the diehards. (*Turn and strike a pose.*)

Li: And the Communist. . .

Lei Kang (*steps forward to grasp Li's arm*): You mean — rescue the
Communist?

Li: Right!

All (*elated*): Rescue the Communist?!

Li: This way, at last, we'll get hold of a Party member!

(*A buzz of excitement. Lei Kang thinks it over.*)

Wen: But brother, we —

Have only a few dozen men,

A dozen guns.

An egg can't smash a stone.

Don't take such a risk!

Li: Nothing venture nothing win.

Lo: Let's get cracking.

Cheng: That's the spirit.

Lo: Go ahead.

All: Get cracking! (*They gather round Lei Kang, waiting for his decision.*)

Lei Kang (*resolutely*): Right. (*His head thrown back firmly he walks
round the stage. Sings.*)

After frost plants long for the warmth of spring,

Now the spring breeze has reached Azalea Mountain.

Tomorrow we'll raid and make havoc of the execution ground.

Granny Tu: Take this. (*Gives him the sword.*)

(*Lei Kang takes the sword and goes through dancing motions, in which
the others join. Then they strike a pose.*)

Lei Kang (*sings*): We'll carry off a Communist to lead our way.

(*Lei Kang leaps on to the rock. All cluster round to strike a pose.*)

Lei Kang: May Heaven preserve us! (*Makes an obeisance.*)

(*All strike a pose. The lights are cut to show them in silhouette.*)

(*Curtain*)

SCENE TWO

SPRING MAKES AZALEAS BLOSSOM

The next morning.

Sankuan market-place in front of the Sheh Family Ancestral
Temple.

(The curtain rises. The sky is overcast. The old temple looks forbidding, with cypress and bamboo visible over its walls. To one side of the gate stands a flag-pole on a stone pedestal. The market-place is half empty. Li and some other partisans disguised as vendors or customers, their backs to the audience, mingle with the market-goers. Lo is sitting on a cart. A beggar-girl helps an old blind man to the flag-pole and sits down. Hsiao-shan enters dressed as a hunter with a steel trident and some pheasants.)

Hsiao-shan (*shouts*): Wild geese, pheasants, foxes, wild goats. . .!

(*Enter Cheng dressed as a pedlar with a bamboo basket.*)

Cheng (*shouts*): Dried lilies, fungus, mushrooms, ginger. . .!

(*Lei Kang strides in with a towel on his head, wearing a deerskin waistcoat. He is holding a trident from which hang a fox and some rabbit bits. He waves his hand and sets one foot on Lo's cart. Li, Cheng and*

Lo quickly surround him, watching in different directions. The other partisans also keep a sharp look-out.)

Lei Kang: How are things going?

Li: Everything's ready.

Lei Kang: And the Communist?

Cheng: Will be brought out any minute from the temple.

Lo: I hear it's a woman.

Lei Kang: A woman? *(He is staggered.)*

Lo: Shall we still rescue her?

Lei Kang *(decidedly):* Yes, so long as she's a Communist.

(Gongs sound. Lei Kang and his men make off in different directions. A guard enters sounding the gong.)

Guard: Today is market-day; a Communist is to be executed.
We must have quiet; rowdies will be arrested.

(Several guards rush in to disperse the crowd. One of them knocks down the blind man with his rifle-butt. The beggar-girl, dropping her basket, kneels to support him, and the guard kicks the basket away. The girl glares at him. The partisans help her and the old man away while the crowd is dispersed. Four guards with rifles stand at attention. Their captain comes on.)

Captain: Our commander orders: Bring — the — Communist!

Four Guards: Bring — the — Communist!

(The order is repeated by the guards in the temple. The captain leaves.)

Ko Hsiang *(sings offstage):* A Communist stands firm through wind and storm.

(The four guards withdraw.)

(The temple gate slowly opens. Six enemy guards with mounted bayonets rush out from the temple to stand on both sides of the entrance.)

(Ko Hsiang in chains, her head high, strides out of the temple and turns to toss back her hair. Having crossed the threshold she halts and strikes a proud pose.)

(The six guards aim their bayonets at her.)

Ko Hsiang *(sings):* We shed our blood for the people's liberation,
Fearlessly fighting to the last,
High-hearted and undaunted.

Six Guards: Out!

(Ko Hsiang glares at them with flashing eyes and they fall back in fear. She smooths her hair, holds up her chain and walks proudly down the steps. The enemy cover.)

Ko Hsiang *(advances swiftly holding her chain in her left hand and strikes a pose. Sings):* The Party sent me here to find Lei Kang,

Guard: Get moving.

(Ko Hsiang whirls, raising her chain, to glare at him, then walks quickly to the centre of the stage and strikes a pose. The six guards raise their rifles and surround her.)

Ko Hsiang *(sings):* Though trapped by devils I keep my task in mind;
Thrusting aside. . . .

(She thrusts aside the bayonets, strikes one guard with her chain, then turns and strikes a pose.)

Thrusting aside their bayonets I gaze into the distance.

(She moves left, turns back to look into the distance, revolves, feels a wound, advances on one leg, sweeps back her hair, swings the chain at the guards, then turns to strike a pose.)

I see gleaming spears in the forest, red-tasselled spears. . . .

(She appears rapt.)

How I long. . . .

(She turns, grasps at the bayonets, revolves on one leg and strikes a pose.)

How I long to leap up to the summit of the mountain!

(Pushes aside the bayonets, turns and strikes a pose.)

Guards: Get moving!

(Ko Hsiang suddenly turns to glare at the guards. Two of them quickly raise their bayonets. She seizes their rifles and walks halfway round the stage, the guards falling back before her. Some villagers surge forward. Ko Hsiang sweeps aside the bayonets and raises her hands to greet them. The guards drive the villagers away. Glaring at the enemy,

Ko Hsiang walks round the stage among the bayonets, wheels round repeatedly, tosses back her hair, holds up the chain and strikes a pose.

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *This execution ground is my battlefield
To trumpet revolution and lash the enemy,
Expose their lies, make clear the truth,
Scatter the mist to welcome in the dawn,
And fan the sparks of revolution
In every mountain hamlet near and far.*

(Ko Hsiang leads the guards round to the back of the stage, then whirls round and rushes forward. The guards hastily hem her in with their bayonets. Ko Hsiang seizes two rifles and sweeps them aside, shakes the chain and strikes a heroic pose.)

(Enter the Viper, followed by the captain and two guards.)

Viper (*blustering to hide his fear*): You Communist bitch,
We didn't wipe you all out in Shanghai and Changsha;
Today I shall make an example of you to warn the country people.

Ko Hsiang (*firmly and proudly*): Where there's oppression
There is bound to be struggle.
I shall gladly shed my blood
To awaken millions!

Viper (*hastily to the crowd*): Don't listen to this Red propaganda;
Be law-abiding.
Obey the rules of Generalissimo Chiang —
That's the only way to save the Chinese nation.

Ko Hsiang (*cuts in*): Tell me: what year is this?

Viper (*automatically*): The seventeenth year of the Republic.

Ko Hsiang (*lashes out*): But your various levies, your taxes in money
and grain,
Have been collected for the thirty-seventh year of the Republic.
Is this your generalissimo's rule,
Your way to save the nation?

Viper (*gapes*): You. . .

Ko Hsiang: Fellow countrymen!

(The villagers surge forward. Ko Hsiang leaps on to the pedestal of the flag-pole.)

Ko Hsiang: Chiang Kai-shek has betrayed the revolution,
He's the running dog of the imperialists;
His Nanking government slaughters workers and peasants;
His dark rule is dragging our country down to ruin.
Only Marxism-Leninism can save China;
The working people's saving star
Is the Chinese Communist Party!

(Lei Kang shouts offstage: "Well said!")

Viper: Who's that?

Lei Kang: Lei Kang! (*Leaps out from the crowd with his trident.*)

(The Viper cries out and the guards scatter in confusion. Lei Kang strikes at the Viper's left arm with his trident. The Viper draws his pistol and aims it at Ko Hsiang.)

Lei Kang: Look out! (*Leaps forward to shield Ko Hsiang and is shot in the left arm.*)

(Covered by Lei Kang and Li, Hsiao-shan and others help Ko Hsiang away. Lei Kang hurls his trident at the Viper who rushes off, howling. As guards charge towards Lei Kang, who staggers in pain from the wound in his arm, Li whips out a spear from inside his carrying-pole to fight them off. More guards try to get Lei Kang but Lo blocks their way with his cart, grabs two swords from under its handles and chases the guards off. Lei Kang snatches a sword from a guard and uses the cart as a weapon too. He kills a guard, overturns the cart and swings it at another guard.)

(Ko Hsiang and Hsiao-shan rush in. Lei Kang catches a sword flung at him, puts one foot on the cart and strikes a heroic pose with Ko Hsiang, Li, Cheng, Hsiao-shan and other partisans.)

(Partisans race past in pursuit of the enemy.)

(Ko Hsiang tears a strip from her tunic to bandage Lei Kang's arm.)

(Lo and Partisan A run in.)

Lo: The devils are on the run, shrieking and wailing.

Partisan A: The Viper, badly wounded, is making for the county town.

Lei Kang: Go on scouting, and post more sentries.

Lo and Partisan A: Right. *(They leave.)*

Ko Hsiang *(warmly)*: Are you Lei Kang?

Lei Kang *(nods)*: And you?

Ko Hsiang: I'm Ko Hsiang.

Li: Are you from the Chingkang Mountains?

Ko Hsiang: The Party sent us to find your chief, Lei Kang.

Lei Kang: Sent two of you?

Ko Hsiang *(sadly)*: Comrade Chao Hsin...

Lei Kang: Chao Hsin!

(Solemnly) Though I never saw this martyr,
I shall always remember his name.

(All bow their heads in sorrow.)

Cheng: Spring has come early to our mountain.

Li: This wasteland is turning green.

Lei Kang *(clasps Ko Hsiang's hand)*: You are the Party representative
We've been longing for day and night. *(Raises his fist to shout)*
Welcome the Party representative!

All: Welcome the Party representative!

(Ko Hsiang mounts the pedestal to wave to the crowd. Partisans and villagers flock eagerly towards her. Together they strike a collective pose.)

(Curtain)

SCENE THREE

CLASS FEELING DEEP AS THE OCEAN

The same afternoon.

The back yard of the temple.

(The curtain rises. The sky is filled with clouds. In the middle

of the stage is a grey stone wall, its top tiled. To the right is part of an annex. Through the moon-gate can be seen the eaves of the temple in the front court. On both sides of the wall grow bamboos and cypresses. Swords and spears are stacked on a stand. Two partisans cross the stage carrying posters: "Down with the landlords: share out the land!" "Support the Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army!" "Long live the Chinese Communist Party!" Other partisans cross the stage with sacks of grain, weapons, fire-crackers and jars of wine. Some partisans seated round a table are drinking with Chiu Chang-keng. Enter Lo and Hsiao-shan with a red lacquered chest.)

Lo: Hey, Deputy Chief Wen's orders:

"According to the old rule,

All confiscated property belongs to us brothers." *(He opens the chest.)*

Partisans: Fine. Let's share the things out right away. *(They rush forward to take what they want.)*

(Enter Li carrying a bushel of rice.)

Li: Wait a bit, brothers. *(Puts down his load.)*

(They look at him in surprise.)

Li: We've new rules now for confiscated goods.

Lo *(puzzled)*: What new rules?

Li: All silver dollars go to the organization;

Part of the grain is reserved for army use;

The rest of the grain, goods and clothing

All goes to the local people.

Partisans: Who made this rule?

Li: The Party representative. *(Exit.)*

Lo *(snorts)*: We shed our blood, risk our necks.

Partisan D: But she gives everything away to others.

Partisan C: An outsider, after all, is less close to us.

Partisan B: With book learning but no taste of hardships

How can she lead soldiers?

(Disgruntled, they toss the things back into the chest and move it to a corner.)

Chiu *(resentfully)*: Bah! If women can lead troops
Men will lose their authority.
No, we won't obey
Her orders.

Lo: Just ignore them.

Partisans: Ignore them.

Chiu *(pounds the table and stands up)*: Come on. Let's go and have
it out with her.
What sort of rule is this?

(They shout: "Let's go." "What rule is this?" "Call this making revolution?" They surge towards the moon-gate.)

Partisan A *(points off, tensely)*: Quiet! Here she comes.

(The clamour stops abruptly. Ko Hsiang, a smile on her face, appears at the moon-gate carrying two baskets of rice on a shoulder-pole.)

(In sullen silence the partisans turn away.)

(Ko Hsiang looks thoughtful, then carries her load to the annex where she deftly stacks her baskets on the pile of baskets there. This done, she brushes the dust off her clothes.)

(Enter Li, Cheng and Hsiao-shan carrying grain.)

(Silence.)

Ko Hsiang *(smiles)*: Well?

Just now I heard the rumble of thunder;
Why this sudden lull in the storm?

(Lo angrily snatches a bundle from a partisan, tosses it into the chest and bangs the lid shut. Then he walks over to Chiu.)

Lo: Stop drinking! *(Knocks the cup out of Chiu's hand.)*

Chiu *(tipsily)*: Ha!

A woman . . . Communist

Lording it over us? *(Draws his pistol.)*

Know what's this?

No needle for embroidery!

Ko Hsiang: He's drunk.

Take away his gun.

Cheng: Right. *(Reaches for Chiu's pistol.)*

Chiu: How dare you? *(Shoves Cheng away.)*

Li and Cheng *(warningly)*: Chiu Chang-keng!

(Chiu rushes with his pistol at Ko Hsiang. All are dismayed. Ko Hsiang coolly steps forward and seizes Chiu's wrist. He stands motionless for a second, then starts to struggle; but she expertly wrenches the pistol from his grasp. Chiu staggers back, deflated, and drops on a bench.)

Ko Hsiang *(gives the pistol to Hsiao-shan. Unruffled)*: Take him away.
Help him to sober up. *(Smooths Hsiao-shan's collar.)*

Hsiao-shan: Right. *(He leads Chiu off. Some partisans follow them.)*

Cheng *(admiringly)*: So in fighting and farming both
You have what it takes.

Ko Hsiang *(modestly)*: Roughing it all year long
In wind and rain

Has given me nothing but

Iron shoulders and horny hands. . . . *(She appears lost in thought.)*

Lo: *(surprised)*: Are you from a poor family too?

Ko Hsiang *(sighs)*: Hard to tell all the bitterness I knew,
All the wrongs I suffered. . . . *(Sits down slowly. Sings.)*

My home was in Anyuan close to the River Ping,

Three generations of miners, like beasts of burden,

My folk sweated out their guts but still went hungry

In that hell on earth where all seasons are the same.

Came a strike: (stands up) my dad and big brother fought the bosses,

Failed, were shot down, stained the wasteland with their blood.

Then the black-hearted mine-owners

Fired our hut and burned alive

My mother, younger brother and little sister —

My whole family wiped out, a heap of bones.

Cheng *(fumes)*: The bosses and their foremen —

Lo: Are vipers, wild beasts! *(Pounds the table.)*

Li: We must take our revenge!

All: We must pay them back!

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *Like a sudden storm the Autumn Harvest Uprising,
A bright lamp to show the way, lit up my heart.
I saw we must take up arms to win liberation;
I joined the army, the Party, to fight for the poor.
Workers and peasants are brothers
Taking the same revolutionary road;
We must wipe out these wolves and jackals,
Fight on until the enemy is destroyed!
Until the enemy is destroyed.*

Cheng: We must advance together, united as one.

Li: Carry the revolution through to the end.

All: (*eagerly*): Right! That's the spirit.

(*Wen Chi-chiu slips in, followed by Chiu.*)

Wen: What's the row about?

(*All fall silent.*)

Wen: The chief's wounded;

He needs quiet. (*Tosses his gown to Chiu. Lo and the others leave.*)

Li: Deputy chief, what shall we do with the civil guards we captured?

Wen: You know our old rules. (*Goes through the motion of chopping off a head.*)

Cheng: And the merchant we detained?

Wen: Confiscate his goods.

Ko Hsiang (*mildly*): Deputy Chief Wen,
We should educate prisoners and let them go;
We must pay a fair price to merchants:
This is our Party's policy,
We have to carry it out.

Cheng (*worried*): Party representative,

If you let them go

Lei Kang will be out for your blood!

Ko Hsiang (*smiles*): He'll see the reason for
Our revolutionary policy.

(*To Wen*) What do you say, deputy chief?

Wen (*bides his dissatisfaction*): I'm nobody,
What I say doesn't count. (*Goes sullenly into the annex followed by Chiu.*)

Li (*shouts*): Deputy Chief Wen!

(*Turns to Ko Hsiang*) Don't mind him, Party representative.

He used to be an army officer

And still has some warlord ways.

Ko Hsiang: Oh? What's his family background?

Li: He started off as one of the local gentry.

In a squabble over a good burial plot

He got on bad terms with the Viper;

They went to law, Wen lost all his property,

Joined the warlord Leopard Liu, then came to us,

Became Lei Kang's sworn brother

And joined our self-defence corps.

Ko Hsiang: So!

(*A whistle blast. Wen calls offstage: "All fall in!" Partisans run in. Chiu hurries out from the annex.*)

Chiu (*provocatively*): The chief's in a foul temper.

(*Lei Kang, his arm in a sling, storms out of the annex and stands on the steps.*)

(*Ko Hsiang moves forward to greet him, but he ignores her. Tense silence. Wen slips in.*)

Lei Kang (*descends the steps. Puts one foot on a bench. Bellows*):

Whoever wants to let go our prisoners and the merchant

Is Lei Kang's enemy!

(*Lo enters through the moon-gate with a shoulder-pole.*)

Lo: Report! We've caught a landlord.

Lei Kang: Bring him in.

Lo: Right. (*Beckons to people outside.*)

(*Lei Kang stands angrily behind the table. Partisans with swords and spears range themselves on both sides. Wen sits arrogantly by the table. Ko Hsiang stands on the steps watching the scene closely.*)

(Two partisans offstage shout: "Come on!" They bring in Tien Tachiang, his hands tied.)

Tien: Why have you nabbed me?

Lo: You were helping the landlord to ship rice out.

Tien: I'm a hired hand, I can't help it.

I push barrows and carry loads to pay off my debt;

If I stop work for a single day, my family goes hungry.

Lei Kang: Better starve to death rather than be a slave.

Tien (angry): What!

Lei Kang: Just for this

You deserve a good beating.

Lo: Right. *(Steps forward to push Tien down.)*

Tien (struggles): Call yourselves a self-defence corps?

You're just like warlords! *(Stamps.)*

Wen: How dare you insult us? Beat him!

Chiu: Beat him.

Ko Hsiang (loudly): Don't beat him.

Wen (springs up): Why not? Carry on.

(Chiu snatches the shoulder-pole from Lo to beat Tien.)

Ko Hsiang (quickly intervenes): Stop. *(Takes the shoulder-pole.)*

This is disgraceful.

(Cheng takes the shoulder-pole from her.)

Lei Kang (furious, pounds the table): Ko Hsiang! *(Sings.)*

We risked our lives to save you,

That you might lead us to fight the enemy;

But instead of speaking up for the poor

You take the side of the landlord.

You will not let us beat the landlord's man

And want to free the merchant whom we captured.

Are you a true Communist or an impostor?

Before our brothers here you must give your answer.

(Lei Kang stamps his foot on the bench and strikes it with his sword, glaring at Ko Hsiang. Some of his men raise swords and spears to

threaten her too. Li, Cheng and Partisan A close in to shield her. Lo watches anxiously. Wen stands behind the table, pleased by this clash. Silence. The atmosphere is tense. Ko Hsiang, unruffled as ever, brushes past Li and the others to walk slowly towards Lei Kang.)

Ko Hsiang (calmly): Comrade Lei Kang. *(Points at Tien.)*

Is he a landlord?

Lei Kang: He works for a landlord.

Ko Hsiang: Is that any reason to beat him?

Lei Kang: A beating is letting him off too lightly!

Ko Hsiang (ponders, then turns to the crowd): Comrades!

Which of you here

Has ever worked for a landlord?

Put up your hands. *(Raises her own hand.)*

(The partisans are puzzled. They lower their weapons.)

Ko Hsiang: What?

Has none of you worked for a landlord?

None of you been fleeced by the rich?

Li (suddenly breaks the silence, raising his hand): I have.

I was a mason,

I carved archways and made tombstones for the gentry.

Lo (raises his hand): I've done odd jobs for landlords,

Hulling rice and turning the millstone.

Cheng (raises his hand): Me too . . . how shall I say it?

I've done jobs of all kinds for landlords.

The year the ancestral temple was built

Which of us didn't join in?

In the old days

You either worked or starved.

Partisan A: I've worked for the landlord. *(Raises his hand.)*

Partisan C: I've worked for the landlord. *(Raises his hand.)*

Partisan B: I've worked for the landlord. *(Raises his hand.)*

All: I've worked for the landlord. *(Raise their hands.)*

Li (walks slowly over to Lei Kang): Brother!

For more than ten years you carried the landlord's sedan-chair;

Have you forgotten all you went through then?

Lei Kang (*startled*): Ah! (*Thinks.*) H'm. (*Slowly raises his hand.*)

Ko Hsiang: Comrades,

Does this make us all landlords?

Should we all be beaten by revolutionaries?

(*They think this over and lower their hands. Wen sees the tide has turned against him and slinks off, followed by Chiu.*)

Ko Hsiang: Comrade Mao Tsetung has said:

"Who are our enemies?

Who are our friends?

This is a question of the first importance for the revolution."

And this means:

Enemy captives should get lenient treatment,

Ordinary merchants ought to be won over;

The landlords and imperialists are our deadly enemies,

The working people our revolution's main strength.

Yet you would kill prisoners,

Arrest merchants,

And beat up a hired hand who pushes a cart —

Why, he is our class brother.

Who is your target in the revolution?

Whom are you trying to down?

Whose arrogance will you deflate?

Whose morale will you boost?

(*With deep feeling*) Comrade Lei Kang! (*Sings.*)

All the poor on earth hate the same enemy,

(*Goes to Tien and unties him.*)

Gall and bitter-wort have the same taste;

He pushes a cart, you carried a sedan-chair,

Both of you hate rough roads,

Hate injustice among men.

See the welts showing through his rags?

How can you. . .

How can you add new scars to his old scars?

Lei Kang (*sings*): *The sight of his wounds stirs painful memories;*

All the poor are ground down by landlords.

(*Remorsefully picks up the shoulder-pole.*)

Not knowing good from bad or right from wrong

I mistook my brother for an enemy,

Mistook my brother for an enemy.

How to express my remorse?

(*Throws down the shoulder-pole.*)

(*Ko Hsiang signs to Lo to fetch clothes and money.*)

Lei Kang: Tien Ta-chiang, my brother! (*Clasps Tien. Sings.*)

Forgive me, fool that I am!

Ko Hsiang (*grasps the hands of both men. Sings*):

Class love is deep as the ocean,

Our common lot makes us one.

We suffered the same hardships in the past,

Together now we must avenge those wrongs.

Let all workers and peasants of the world unite.

All (*sing*): *Let all workers and peasants of the world unite.*

Together (*sing*): *Smash our iron chains,*

Stand up to be our own masters;

Smash our iron chains,

Stand up to be our own masters,

Stand up —

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *To be the masters!*

All (*sings*): *Stand up to be the masters!*

(*The sun shines bright amid rose-coloured clouds.*)

(*Lo returns with a bundle.*)

Ko Hsiang (*with feeling*): Ta-chiang!

You carted so many bolts of silk and satin,

Your own clothes nothing but rags. (*Gives him the bundle.*)

Here are some clothes and a few silver dollars;

Take them to feed and clothe your family.

Tien (*takes the bundle with tears in his eyes*):

My whole life has been hard,

No one cared what became of me. (*Elated*)

Brothers, give me a gun,

Let me join your force and fight!

Ko Hsiang (*grasps his hand*): Comrade Ta-chiang, we welcome you.

All: Welcome!

Lei Kang: Party representative!

I didn't understand the Party rules.

From now on, all decisions are up to you.

Ko Hsiang: Then... how about the prisoners?

Lei Kang: Release them.

Ko Hsiang: And the merchant?

Lei Kang: Let him go.

Ko Hsiang: The confiscated grain and goods?

Lei Kang: Share them out among the poor.

All (*eagerly*): Fine!

Ko Hsiang: Let's distribute the clothing and grain,

Rally the masses, expand our armed force;

Regroup and march back to the mountain.

Lei Kang (*cheerfully*): Right. We'll do as the Party representative says.

Ko Hsiang: Open the granary,

Share out the grain at once.

(She takes a list of people who should receive grain and shows it to Lei Kang. Villagers crowd in. The blind man enters supported by the girl. Hsiao-shan enters with Granny Tu. Ko Hsiang presides over the distribution of grain. The villagers are wild with joy. The blind man as he scoops grain from the basket is beside himself with excitement. Ko Hsiang holds high the list and the others crowd round her to strike a pose.)

(Curtain)

SCENE FOUR

BAMBOOS GROW APACE

A fortnight later, in the morning.

A clearing on the mountainside.

(The curtain rises slowly. White clouds drift through a blue sky.)



Ko Hsiang, the Party representative of the self-defence corps

Stage Photographs from "AZALEA MOUNTAIN"

Lei Kang and other partisans decide to rescue a Communist to lead them on



Lei Kang, leader of the self-defence corps



Ko Hsiang relates the bitter history of her family

Lei Kang acknowledges his mistake over Tien Ta-chiang

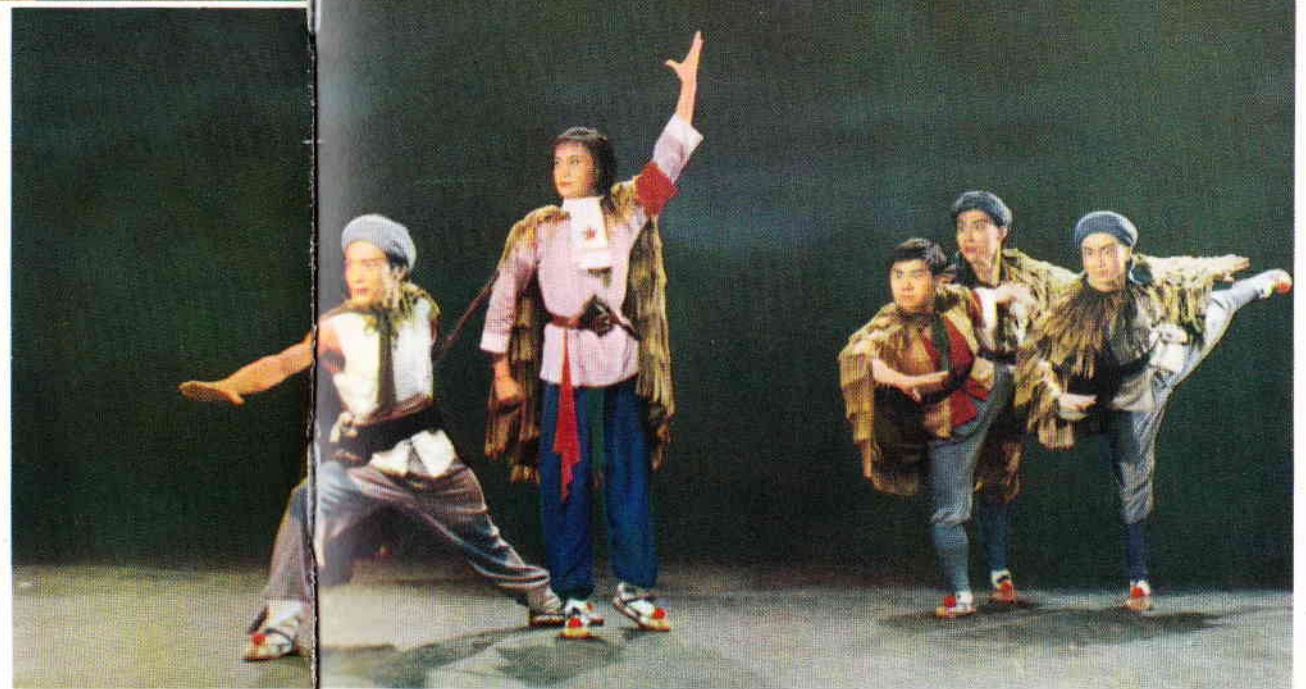




Ko Hsiang holds a Party branch meeting to discuss how to rescue Lei Kang

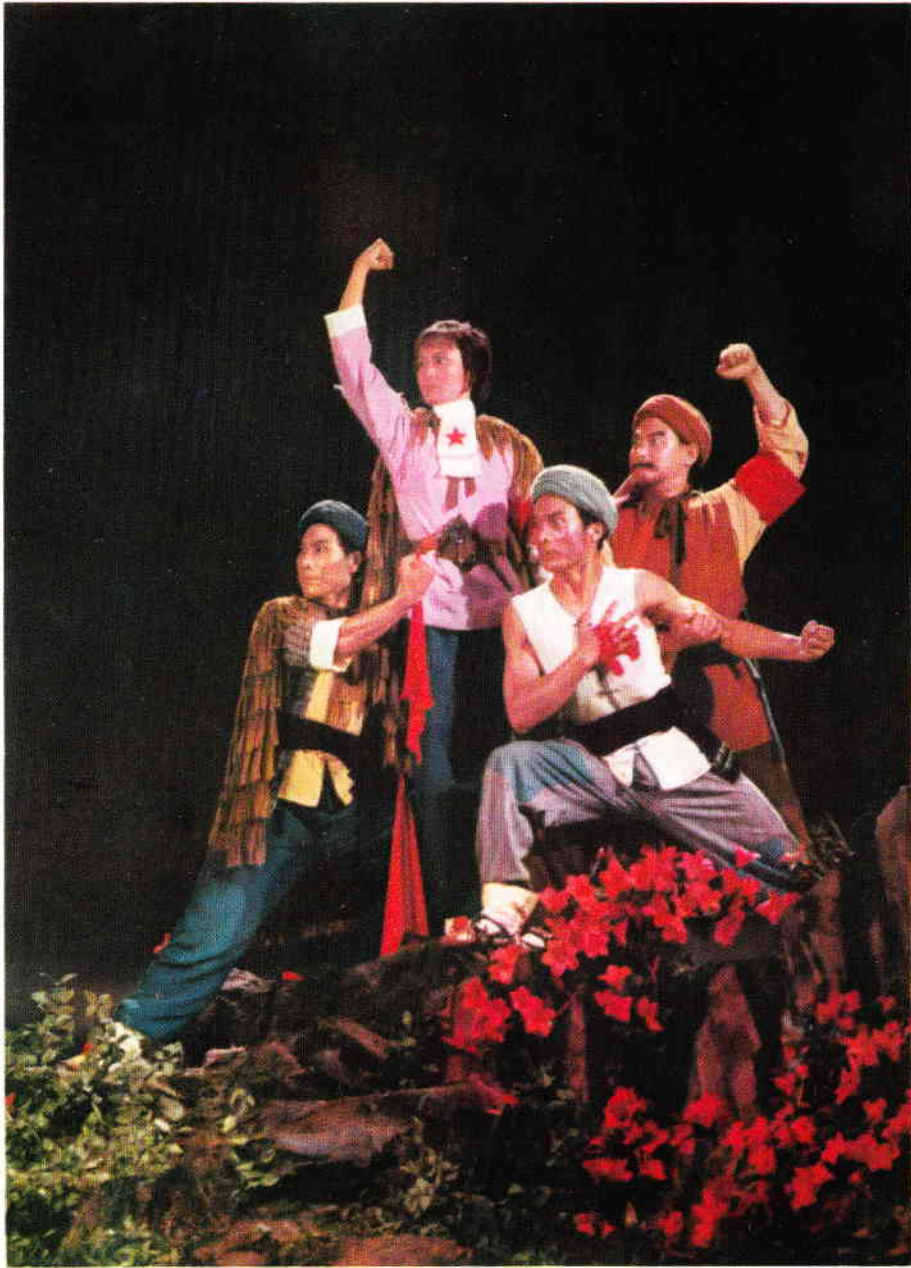


Ko Hsiang tries to stop Lei Kang from charging down the mountain



The dagger squad fly across Eagles' Sorrow on their way to rescue Lei Kang





Tien Ta-chiang dies a heroic death in battle



Ko Hsiang helps Lei Kang to understand revolutionary truth



Sunlit mountains covered with terraced fields stretch off to the horizon. Bamboos are sprouting, azaleas are in bloom. In the distance are cottages with white walls and tiled roofs. A boulder stands at one side of the stage. Li is writing a slogan on the boulder: "Step Up Vigilance, Beware of. . ." Villagers carrying grain and pumpkins cross the stage. Men and women partisans armed with red-tasselled spears, swords, clubs, shields and chain-missiles cross the stage, exuberantly brandishing these weapons. Li, brush in hand, watches them cheerfully.)

Li (sings): *Like bamboo growing apace on Azalea Mountain,
Our self-defence corps trains hard and grows in strength.
Down with the landlords, share out the grain, all are happy
Amid red banners, battle-songs and slogans.*

(Enter Granny Tu with villagers carrying shoulder-poles and bamboo baskets.)

Granny Tu (jokes): Hello, young mason!

Li: Auntie, you're working hard for us again.

Granny: Just bringing a few sweet-potatoes and some salt.

Girl: And oil and paprika sauce.

Granny: You need feeding up.

Villagers: Then you'll win more victories!

Li (touched): Your loving-kindness

Warms our hearts.

Granny: Goodbye then. Look after yourself.

Li: We won't let you down.

Granny: Fine.

Li (remembers something): Oh!

The Viper may be fighting back;

You must be on your guard.

Granny (laughs, confidently): Just look:

All these camellias on the slope

Didn't shed their leaves even in the bitter winter,

And now it's early spring. *(Laughs.)*

(All laugh cheerfully. Li takes Granny Tu's arm and sees her off.)

Li (*turns and ponders. Sings*):

*The ice has melted, the spring thunder rumbled,
But we must beware of frost in early spring,
Watch for the smoke of war across the mountains
And keep our guns well polished.*

(Li turns and completes his slogan by writing "Enemy Agents" on the rock.)

(Lei Kang enters reading from a copy-book: "Overthrow the landlords, share out the land...")

(Hsiao-shan bounds in.)

(Enter Tien with a bamboo crate on his back and a gourd containing medicinal herbs. With him is Cheng.)

(Hsiao-shan, Cheng and Li tiptoe towards Lei Kang. Tien sits down to sort out his herbs.)

Hsiao-shan (*claps Lei Kang on the back*): Hey!

(Lei Kang gives a start and looks up. The others laugh.)

Li: I say, Old Lei,

You are certainly going all out learning to write.

Lei Kang: H'm.

You can't learn politics and read textbooks
When you are illiterate.

Now that I've joined the Party,
I mustn't be like a blind man,
Muddling along. (*Laughs.*)

Li: Right.

Lei Kang: Come here, master mason.

Have a look at the characters I've written.
Are there any strokes missing?

(Hsiao-shan snatches Lei Kang's copy-book.)

Hsiao-shan (*reads*): "Overthrow the landlords, share out the land..." All correct.

Cheng: Yes, all correct.

Li (*takes the copy-book and studies it*): Why has the character "landlord" one leg missing?

Lei Kang: Has it? (*Takes the book and looks at it. Laughs.*)

When we overthrew the landlord,
I must have broken one of his legs!

(They laugh. Lei Kang adds a stroke with his pencil.)

Lei Kang: H'm.

Seems to me it's not too hard
To learn to write.

Learn five words a day,
In ten days that's a platoon,
In a month it's a company,
In half a year a regiment,
In a year or two (*pauses*)
I'll be an army commander!

(They all laugh.)

(A whistle.)

Hsiao-shan (*mischievously*): Report, commander,
The new recruits want some sword drill.

Lei Kang: Oh, they're waiting for me to instruct them.

Li: Has your wound healed properly?

Lei Kang: Yes, thanks to Brother Ta-chiang's care
And the herbs he fetched from the mountains.

Hsiao-shan: Early this morning Uncle Tien went off for herbs again;
He swung on a creeper halfway down the cliff,
'Tore his clothes and cut himself
'To get this (*takes the gourd from Tien's belt*) magic peach!

(Blushing, Tien takes back the gourd.)

Hsiao-shan: If you don't believe me, look. (*He rolls up Tien's sleeve.*)

Lei Kang: Ah! So many bruises... (*Reflects.*)

Tien (*quickly pulls down his sleeve. Smiles*): Don't waste time talking.
The new recruits are waiting.

Lei Kang (*waves his hand*): Right. Let's go. (*Turns to leave.*)

(*Offstage Ko Hsiang calls: "Old Lei!"*)

All (*turn*): The Party representative!

(*Enter Ko Hsiang with a bundle of new straw sandals on her back, carrying tools.*)

Ko Hsiang: Old Lei, take these sandals to the new recruits.

Lei Kang (*taking the sandals*): Good. Just what we need. (*Turns to leave.*)

Ko Hsiang: Wait.

(*Lei Kang halts.*)

Ko Hsiang: Raise your foot.

(*In bewilderment Lei Kang raises his foot. The others see that the sole is worn out and laugh.*)

Ko Hsiang: See, you need a new pair even more.

Lei Kang: No, these sandals are too small for me.

Ko Hsiang: Here. (*She takes another pair from her belt.*) Here's a big pair for you. (*Tosses the sandals to him.*)

(*Lei Kang catches them and measures them against his feet.*)

Hsiao-shan: Ha, our commander is quite a chap,
The sandals he wears make a flap.

(*They all chuckle.*)

Lei Kang (*pushes him and puts on a stern face*): Stop chortling. Off with you to drill!

Hsiao-shan (*springing to attention*): Yes, sir. (*Marches off like a clown.*)

(*Lei Kang goes off with him, roaring with laughter. The others smile.*)

Tien: Ever since he joined the Party,
Lei Kang has been training troops and studying hard.

Li: After the reorganization,
Our self-defence corps has changed completely;
It is so energetic and vigorous.

(*Ko Hsiang takes some of Tien's clothes from the bamboo crate and sits on a stone to mend them.*)

Cheng: Still, the ten fingers on a man's hands are of different lengths;

Some people are full of complaints and talking rubbish.

Li: What do they say?

(*Li and Tien sit cross-legged by the stone, sorting through the herbs.*)

Cheng: They say: "We keep drilling all day
With nothing to eat but pumpkins and coarse rice,
Hiding in gullies so as not to fight —
What sort of life is this?
We should go places
And live on the fat of the land."

Li: What crap! Who talks that way?

Cheng: Who do you think? The deputy chief's man. (*Squats down.*)

Tien: Just now Granny Tu said those two
Were in the wineshop this morning.

Ko Hsiang (*breaks off the thread, puts the needle away and hands the mended clothes to Tien. Significantly*):

When ants climb a tree it foretells a storm. (*Stands up.*)
When the mole-cricket burrows it can destroy a great dyke.
We are all Communists,
All the more reason for us. . . . (*Points at the slogan.*)

Li and Others (*catching on*): To step up our vigilance.

(*Lo and Partisan A hurry in.*)

Lo: Report. In disguise we scouted round Sankuan:
The Viper's raised a levy, enlarged his forces.

Partisan A: Looks as if he'll soon be launching an offensive.

Lo: Why not deal them a head-on blow?

Ko Hsiang: Being so far outnumbered,
We'd come off worst in a head-on confrontation.

Lo: How shall we fight then?

Ko Hsiang (*her mind made up, decisively*): When the enemy attacks, we'll withdraw. (*Sings.*)

*Our deep mountains and forests give us room to manoeuvre,
Guerrilla tactics will beat a strong enemy. (To Li)*

*Make haste to the Ching kang Mountains for instructions,
Every moment counts; don't delay.*

We must also discuss this carefully with Lei Kang:

Our victory depends on unity.

Let's go!

(They leave. Wen emerges from behind the boulder.)

Wen: Go? Wherever you go,

You won't escape my clutches! (*He takes a few steps forward, craftily.*)

The Viper's just sent secret word through Leopard Liu:

He wants me to help him clean up Azalea Mountain;

Once that's done he'll return me my precious burial plot,

And make me the top man in his civil guards.

I shan't have to put up any more with the gall of these Reds,

Then, Ko Hsiang and Lei Kang,

You'll die — and nobody will bury your corpses!

(Leering, he turns and catches sight of the slogan: Beware of Enemy Agents! He hisses in alarm. The light fades. A golden spot-light picks out the slogan; a blue light shines on Wen.)

(Curtain)

SCENE FIVE

FIRM AS A ROCK IN MIDSTREAM

Several days later, in the evening.

Azalea Mountain.

(The curtain rises on the forest with narrow paths, towering cliffs, flaming azalea flowers and stately pines. In the distance mountains

loom rugged and grey against the blood-red sunset. A gap at the back of the stage leads to the foot of the mountain. In front, on the left, are a cliff and a tree stump. Intermittent firing is heard. Lei Kang gazes anxiously towards the foot of the mountain.)

Lei Kang (*turns and sings*):

Our force just circles the mountains, never fighting,

While the enemy runs amuck.

Will we never sweep down to cut the Viper in two,

Unsaddle the enemy and smash them up?

(He whirls his sword and slashes hard at the tree stump to let off steam.)

(Enter Wen.)

Wen (*provocatively*): Too bad!

A fine sword to slash off heads only slashes a tree.

(He sidles up to Lei Kang.)

Lei Kang: An eye for an eye —

Our day of vengeance will come!

Wen: It hurts, brother, but you'd better take it;

Without her orders, who can go down and fight?

(Lei Kang heaves a sigh of frustration and sits down on the stump.)

Wen: Brother, have you heard

The talk that's going round?

Lei Kang: What talk?

Wen: Some of the men are saying. . . . (*He deliberately hesitates.*)

Lei Kang: Out with it! Don't hedge.

Wen: They say:

"A cloud's obstructing our chief's vision;

A giant of a man's come under the thumb of a woman."

Lei Kang (*stung into action, springs to his feet and seizes Wen's wrist*):

What do you mean?

Wen: Brother! (*Makes him sit down. Sings.*)

The Party representative comes from the Anyuan coal-mine.

Does she hate the Viper? Not she!

*Though our folk are in torment at the foot of the mountain
She remains completely unmoved.
That she remains unmoved I can understand
(He maliciously rounds on Lei Kang.)
But how strange that a man
Born and bred here
Cares nothing now for our Azalea Mountain!*

Lei Kang (*stands up quivering with indignation*): Who cares nothing for Azalea Mountain?

Wen: This is setting adrift the boat once the river's crossed.

Lei Kang: It's a lie!

Wen: That's what everyone is saying.

Lei Kang: It's dirty slander!

Wen: No, the bitter truth.

Lei Kang (*seizes Wen by the jacket*): Get out!

Wen: Brother. . . .

Lei Kang: Get out! Get out! (*Shoves Wen away and turns his back on him.*)

Wen (*sighs*): That it should come to this!

I've followed close at your side,
Risked my life to serve you,
But never a word of thanks did I get
And now — well, it's just too bad!
All right, I'll clear out.
Goodbye!

(*With a malevolent look at Lei Kang he goes off.*)

(*At the foot of the mountain smoke billows and flames gleam red.*)

Lei Kang (*turns, upset and bewildered*): So I was born and bred here
But now I care nothing for Azalea Mountain?!

(*The fire below blazes more fiercely. Lei Kang walks up the slope to watch, burning with impatience.*)

Lei Kang (*sings*): *Smoke is billowing, flames are spreading,
(Descends the slope.)
Like tossing waves the tumult in my heart;*

*Yet the Party representative looks on
And will not let us fight.*

*Is she heartless and cold as ice,
Terrified by gunfire, a coward?*

(*Ponders.*) No.

*On the execution ground she never changed colour
But lashed out at the enemy like a good Communist.*

My head is swimming, my mind is in a whirl.

(*He frowns and goes up to the gap, then turns and rushes to the tree stump to pick up his sword. Thinking better of it, however, he whirls round.*
Sings.)

Why is it so difficult to make revolution? (Strikes his fist on his palm.)

(*Li hurries in.*)

Li: Lei Kang!

(*Wen sneaks back, followed by Chiu.*)

Lei Kang (*goes straight up to Li*): What instructions have come down?

Li: "We're outnumbered; the situation is grave;
We're to withdraw at once from Azalea Mountain."

Lei Kang (*shocked*): What! Abandon Azalea Mountain?

Li: Right. To preserve our strength, leave the mountain
And join the main force to smash the enemy offensive.
The Party representative says, "To save the situation
We must at all costs carry out these orders."

(*Offstage Lo calls "Lei Kang!" and runs in from the gap.*)

Lo: Bad news!

Lei Kang: What's happened?

Lo: The Viper has arrested Granny Tu. (*Seizes Lei Kang's hands.*)

Lei Kang: No!?

Lo: She's tied up at the entrance to town, being cruelly tortured.
(*Stamps his foot.*)

Lei Kang (*agabast*): Ah! (*Shakes off Lo's hands and dashes towards the gap.*)

Wen: You owe Granny Tu a great debt of gratitude, brother;
You mustn't just look on with folded arms.

Lei Kang: Muster the troops. We'll set off at once. (*Rushes to the tree stump to retrieve his sword.*)

Li (*stops him*): Don't be so rash — we're no match for the enemy.

Wen (*to Lei Kang*): Resolute action's needed at this critical moment.

Li: We mustn't go against orders.

(*Lei Kang turns and rushes to the tree stump. Again Li stops him.*)

Lei Kang: No! (*Struggles. Sings.*)

We must hurry — a life is at stake.

I am burning to fly like an arrow from the bow.

Even if the mountain falls, the earth gives way,

I swear not to return (*seizes the sword from the stump*)

Till I have killed the Viper! (*Whirls his sword and prepares to dash off.*)

(*Ko Hsiang runs in and stops him. Tien and Cheng follow behind her.*)

Ko Hsiang: Lei Kang!

Lei Kang: Granny Tu is in danger. . . .

Ko Hsiang (*equally distressed, but calm*): My heart is on fire.

(*To Lo*) Where have they taken her?

Lo: She's tied to that tree at the entrance to town.

Ko Hsiang: At the entrance to town? (*Thinks.*)

Lo: Those swine are beating gongs and cursing;

All hell is let loose.

Ko Hsiang: Who are they cursing?

Lo (*reluctantly*): Just our chief, Lei Kang.

Lei Kang: Damn you, Viper!

Ko Hsiang: Just cursing Lei Kang, eh? (*She thinks this over.*)

Lei Kang: What are they saying?

Lo: "Lei Kang has no sense of gratitude; he's a coward

Afraid to come down from the mountain."

Lei Kang (*gnashes his teeth*): Dirty snake! I'll have it out with him!

(*Brandishes his sword and turns to leave.*)

Ko Hsiang (*stops him*): Where are you going?

Lei Kang: Down to Sankuan.

Ko Hsiang: Just what the enemy wants.

Lei Kang: What do you mean?

Ko Hsiang: Why tie Granny Tu to that tree just in front of the town?

(*Lei Kang looks blank.*)

Ko Hsiang: Why are they beating gongs, cursing and raising hell?

(*Lei Kang looks blank.*)

Ko Hsiang: The enemy's needling you.

Lei Kang: Because they think me a coward.

Ko Hsiang: No, because you're hot-headed and easily taken in.

They're dangling a tempting bait

To hook you and destroy our force completely.

(*Lei Kang is still mystified.*)

Cheng: That's it.

To reach Sankuan from here. . . .

Li: You must go through the Passage to Heaven.

Cheng: They're bound to lay an ambush there.

Li: You'd be walking into a trap.

Li and Cheng: And you'd never come out alive. (*They hold Lei Kang's arms.*)

Lei Kang: Even if they try to trap me, (*throws off their hands*)

I'll go down fighting and drag them to hell with me!

Ko Hsiang: One wrong move

Can lose the whole game.

Lei Kang: But her life is in danger;

How can I just sit watching?

Ko Hsiang: First withdraw from the mountain,

Then find some means to save her.

Lei Kang: No, my mind is made up.

Ko Hsiang: You must think again.

Lei Kang: You're too subjective.

Ko Hsiang: You are too impulsive.

Lei Kang: I refuse to leave the mountain
Till she's rescued. (*Starts dashing off again.*)

Ko Hsiang (*stops him again*): Your rescue plan
Can only make things worse.

Lei Kang (*astonished and puzzled*): Worse? In what way?

Ko Hsiang (*patiently*): "If the fish doesn't rise to the bait,
The bait stays untouched;
If the fish is hooked
That's the end of both fish and bait."
Don't go down, and she can still be saved;
Go down, and both of you may die together.
(*With growing vehemence*) You'll only
Destroy yourself,
Destroy our self-defence corps
And destroy your old white-haired mother!

Lei Kang: But. . . . (*He plumps down on the tree stump.*)

Wen (*not liking the way things are going, pretends to play ball*):
What the Party representative says is right.
You must act with prudence, brother. (*Takes Lei Kang's sword.*)

(*Ko Hsiang is about to speak to Lei Kang, but Wen cuts in.*)

Wen: Just take it easy.
Cool off a bit.

(*Lei Kang snorts. Wen leads him away, followed by Chiu.*)

Tien (*suddenly*): Look, the fire below is spreading.

(*All turn their heads. Ko Hsiang walks up the slope to look, returning presently.*)

Ko Hsiang (*quietly to Li*): Old Li,
Call a meeting right away of our Party branch
To analyse the enemy situation
And decide on united action.

(*Li nods.*)
(*Offstage Partisan A calls: "Party representative!" and hurries through the gap. Other partisans enter.*)

Partisan A: That cruel, vicious Viper
Has piled faggots in front of the tree
And is threatening to burn Granny Tu alive.
She is . . . in deadly danger!

(*Ko Hsiang burns with anxiety.*)
(*Offstage Wen calls: "Party representative!" He runs in, followed by Chiu. Hsiao-shan and others hurry in, hearing his shout.*)

Wen (*with a show of dismay*): Bad news!

Ko Hsiang: What is it?

Wen: When he heard that Granny Tu would be burnt at the stake,
Chiu: Lei Kang charged down with some men to rescue her.
Wen: I did my best to stop him.
Chiu: He wouldn't listen.
Wen: He's headed straight for Sankuan.

(*General dismay.*)

Wen: Our chief's plunged into danger,
The situation is more serious.
We must lead our men down like lightning;
There is no time to be lost.

Partisan A: Give the order, quick.

Partisan B: We must go to the rescue.

Several Others: Debts of blood must be paid with blood.

All: Wipe out the diehards!

(*Gunfire is heard below. Ko Hsiang wheels round and runs up the slope.*)

Wen (*seizes this chance to incite the men*): Come on!

Partisans: Let's go! (*They surge towards the gap.*)

Ko Hsiang (*turns abruptly and stops them*): Wait!

(*They halt in surprise. Ko Hsiang is about to speak.*)

Wen (*quickly*): Brothers!
Through thick and thin Lei Kang has shared our hardships;
He is our well-loved brother, flesh of our flesh;

Now to save that dear old soul
He has gone alone to fight the enemy.
If we make no move, afraid to risk our necks,
If we lift not a finger, just watch him go to his death,
We must be (*pretends to weep*) utterly heartless! (*Wipes his eyes.*)

(*The men are in a tumult. Some stamp their feet and sigh. Ko Hsiang signs to Li to keep cool.*)

Wen: Brothers, as long as we have breath in our bodies,
We mustn't forget his goodness, mustn't be heartless.

Chiu (*incites them*): All those with guts, charge!

Some Partisans: Charge!

(*Wen and Chiu lead them towards the gap. Li, Tien, Cheng and Lo leap to higher ground in front of Ko Hsiang, barring the way.*)

Ko Hsiang, Li, Tien, Cheng and Lo (*sharply*): Halt!

(*They stop.*)

Ko Hsiang (*gravely*): Our chief has made a big mistake
By going down the mountain.
If we act blindly too
We shall all be wiped out.

Wen: Hsiao-shan! (*Pulls Hsiao-shan over.*)

Your granny is going to be burnt;
Our hearts are afire;
How can you take this so calmly?

(*Hsiao-shan beats his breast, unable to speak.*)

Wen: Others may not care,
But how can you be so heartless?

(*Hsiao-shan squats down in anguish.*)

Wen: Who brought you up?
Were you bred on Azalea Mountain?

Hsiao-shan (*springs up, overcome by grief and rage, and sobs*): Granny!
Even if I can't rescue you,
I'll turn to ashes with you!

(*Hsiao-shan stamps his foot, tears open his jacket, pulls out two daggers and dashes off to the gap. The others rush after him.*)

Ko Hsiang: Hsiao-shan! (*Stops him.*)

(*Hsiao-shan turns to charge forward again.*)

Ko Hsiang: Hsiao-shan! (*Stops him again.*)

(*Hsiao-shan turns and charges a third time. Li quickly intercepts him. Hsiao-shan pushes Li aside and darts to the gap.*)

Ko Hsiang (*with emotion*): Hsiao-shan!

Hsiao-shan (*pulls up abruptly, turns away and cries*): Party representative!

(*He drops the daggers and rushes in distress to Ko Hsiang, who clasps him to her, tears welling from her eyes. The others weep.*)

Ko Hsiang (*earnestly*): Hsiao-shan,
My heart, like yours,
Is torn with anxiety, with grief and anger;
If by going down the mountain we could save her,
I would charge through fire and gladly give my life.
But no, we cannot,
Cannot act so rashly.

Wen (*overbearingly*): Brothers,
You can't believe her,
She's an outsider.
She has no place in her heart
For the folk of Azalea Mountain.

Tien (*beside himself with rage, shakes his fist*): You!

(*Ko Hsiang motions to Tien to keep quiet and looks angrily at Wen.*)

Wen (*avoids her eyes*): Brothers!
She's not close, as we are close,
To Brother Lei Kang;
She doesn't grieve for him the way we grieve.

(*Ko Hsiang, Li, Tien and Cheng all watch Wen closely.*)

Wen (*blusters*): Brothers, let's get going!
Chiu and a few others: Let's get going.

(A few partisans prepare to leave.)

Ko Hsiang (*sternly*): Wen Chi-chiu!

(Those about to leave halt.)

Ko Hsiang (*to Wen*): You are the deputy chief
And you have been an army officer.
The enemy's stratagems
And the traps he lays
Are common tactics in war —
Can't you see through them?

(The men think this over.)

Wen (*flustered*): Why...

Ko Hsiang: If we strike at random
Our force will be finished for good;
The serious consequences are all too clear —
Can't you foresee them?

Wen: Well...

Ko Hsiang (*raises her hand and cries*): Comrades!
In a crisis we mustn't let ourselves be blinded,
We must distinguish between right and wrong.
The people's armed force must carry out Party instructions;
Go back to quarters now and wait for orders.

(The partisans hesitate. They are about to leave when shots are heard at the foot of the mountain. They turn their heads, eager to fight.)

(Ko Hsiang's mind is in a turmoil, but she resolutely signs to them to return to their quarters. Frowning thoughtfully, the partisans withdraw slowly on both sides.)

(Wen beckons to Chiu and they slip away.)

(Li, Cheng, Tien and Lo step closer to Ko Hsiang.)

(The twilight deepens.)

Ko Hsiang (*incisively*): Sturdy grass withstands high wind,
True gold stands the test of fire.

Comrades,
Let's hold a Party branch meeting
And decide how to deal with the situation.

(They look round vigilantly, then gather by the tree stump.)

Li: I think we must obey orders and withdraw.

Tien: But our dear ones are in danger, how can we desert them?

Lo: Let's go down and rescue them.

Cheng: Impossible to get through the enemy cordon.

Lo: You mean pull out at once?

Ko Hsiang: If we don't rescue Lei Kang, morale will slump,
And it will be hard to carry out our withdrawal.

Lo (*worried*): Then...

All: What shall we do?

Ko Hsiang (*decisively*): In this new situation
The crucial task is rescuing Lei Kang;
Before daybreak we must set him free
Then withdraw at once to safety.

All: Good!

Ko Hsiang (*to Lo*): Go and find out from the villagers how the
land lies.

Is there any other way down but the Passage to Heaven? (*To Li*)

The rest of you quickly form a dagger squad;

Get everything ready and wait for orders to start.

All: Good. (*Turn to leave.*)

Ko Hsiang: Wait.

(They turn back.)

Ko Hsiang (*calmly and firmly*): Much depends
On this night's action.
Make all your preparations carefully
And maintain strict secrecy.

All (*nod*): Right. (*They leave.*)

(The wind rises, clouds scud past. Gunfire breaks out again below and the glare of the flames grows brighter.)

(Ko Hsiang climbs the slope to listen and look into the distance, deeply disturbed.)

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *Storm-racked clouds, soughing pines, surging mountains; (Goes down the slope.)*

Bursts of gunfire — the battle is joined!

Heavy the weight on my shoulders,

My heart is burning.

Granny Tu, cruelly tortured, is at death's door;

Lei Kang may never return from the tiger's lair;

Our men raring to rescue them are hard to restrain

And Wen, out of character, is egging them on —

What is he really up to?

The Viper has laid a trap, crafty and sinister.

We must watch out for hidden enemies in our own ranks

Whose stab in the back may endanger our whole force.

Victory hangs in the balance; my comrades' peril

Weights heavily on my heart.

(Turns and paces round.)

Chorus of Women (*sing offstage*): *With heavy heart*

I gaze into the distance,

Gaze into the distance

And think of the Ching-kang Mountains.

Ko Hsiang (*turns and sings*):

I seem to see the red flags on those heights

Where Mao Tsetung charts our course,

His brilliance illuminating our world!

Chorus of Men and Women (*sing offstage*):

His brilliance illuminating our world!

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *The thought of you*

Brings redoubled strength, resolution and confidence;

Resolution and confidence;

Relying on the Party and the masses

We shall overcome obstacles, defeat all foes

And turn back the powers of darkness,

Our men fearless and high-hearted.

(Dark clouds lour, the night grows blacker.)

(Li, Tien and Cheng hurry on.)

Li: Party representative, we have organized our dagger squad.

Cheng: When do we go into action?

(Before Ko Hsiang can answer, Lo enters panting from the gap.)

Lo (*in a low voice*): Party representative!

Ko Hsiang (*quickly goes to him and hands him a towel*): What's the situation?

Lo: I'll tell you. (*Mops his head.*)

Ko Hsiang: What of Granny Tu?

Lo: She's transferred to the temple lock-up.

Ko Hsiang: And Lei Kang?

Lo: He fell into the trap and was captured.

Ko Hsiang: Where is he now?

Lo: All those captured have been taken to Sankuan.

Ko Hsiang: Sankuan ... and the way down?

Lo: There's no way except the Passage to Heaven.

Ko Hsiang: No other way?

(Lightning flashes, thunder rumbles.)

(All are wrought up. Ko Hsiang racks her brains, tosses back her hair and turns.)

Ko Hsiang: Comrades!

Can we scale the heights and circle round to Sankuan?

Cheng: Scale the heights? That's a tall order.

Li: Why?

Cheng: The cliffs are steep.

Lo: We have muscles of iron!

Cheng: The undergrowth is dense.

Li: We can cut through the brambles.

Ko Hsiang: The night is dark.

Lo: All the better for a surprise attack.

Ko Hsiang: And a storm is brewing. (*Whirls round and strikes a pose.*)

Li, Tien and Lo: Good cover for our sortic. (*They whirl round and strike a pose.*)

Cheng: Fine.

But I hear there's a chasm a thousand feet deep.

Tien: It's called Eagles' Sorrow.

Cheng: Its sides are sheer precipices.

Tien: And a torrent races through the valley below.

Cheng: An impassable barrier! What can we do?

Tien (*confidently*): I know a way.

I've gathered herbs by Eagles' Sorrow;

Both cliffs are overhung

With long green creepers. (*Whirls round and strikes a pose.*)

Ko Hsiang: Is it possible to swing across on those creepers?

Tien: Yes, I've swung across and back again.

Li, Cheng and Lo: Right! We'll cross the chasm by the creepers.

Tien: I'll lead the way. (*Lunges forward and strikes a pose.*)

Ko Hsiang (*decisively*): Fine. (*Leads them to the tree stump and uses it as a sand-table.*)

I shall lead the dagger squad

To scale the heights, cross to the other side

And swoop down on Sankuan,

Li and Others: To rescue our dear ones from danger.

Ko Hsiang (*to Li*): Send out a scouting team

To make a feint withdrawal from Back Mountain.

Li: Lure the tiger away from its lair, eh?

Ko Hsiang (*nods*): Our main force will keep under cover in the mountain;

You'll take charge of Party work.

And remember: (*leads them to the front of the stage*)

Watch out not only for an open attack

But for a stab in the back!

Li: A stab in the back!

(*They catch on and nod.*)

(*Thunder and lightning.*)

Ko Hsiang: Comrades! (*Steps on to the stump. Sings.*)
Peals of thunder urge our heroes on.

Li and Others (*sing*): *Bitter struggle strengthens our determination.*

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *Swooping down on the enemy across Eagles' Sorrow*
(*Leaps down.*)

At dead of night

Li and Others (*sing*): *Under cover of the storm*

Together (*sing*): *We shall drive fearlessly forward.*

(*With Ko Hsiang in the centre they rush to the front and strike a heroic pose.*)

(*Lightning followed by a clap of thunder.*)

(*Curtain*)

SCENE SIX

A LESSON IN THE LOCK-UP

The same night.

Sankuan, the lock-up in the backyard of the Sheh Family Ancestral Temple.

(The curtain rises. It is raining steadily. From the caves hangs a dim lantern. Outside are a rockery and bamboos. In the gloomy lock-up is a prisoner's cage made of iron bars, with a massive stone lock in the centre. In the cage Granny Tu, haggard and dishevelled, leans against the bars and looks out anxiously. She walks slowly to the stone lock.)

Granny Tu (*sings*): *The savage white bandits have set a crafty trap;*

I only fear Lei Kang my headstrong son

Will charge down from the mountain.

(*She leans limply against the stone.*)

(*Black clouds scud past overhead; rain pelts down.*)

(*Shout offstage: "Bring the prisoner!"*)

Lei Kang (*sings offstage*): *After a bloody battle I fell into the enemy trap.*

(Shout offstage: "Come on!" Lei Kang in heavy shackles, his temples bleeding, is pushed on by four guards. He staggers forward then halts. A guard shoves him, shouting: "Get a move on!" Lei Kang leaps back and swings his chain at the man, kicks away another, draws himself up and strikes a pose.)

(Thunder and lightning.)

Lei Kang *(sings):* Wounded, captured and loaded with chains,
Unable to take revenge, I burn with rage. . . . *(Staggers.)*

(The guards open the cage, push Lei Kang in, lock the door and leave. Lei Kang swings his chain against the bars. The sound wakes Granny Tu.)

Granny Tu *(softly):* Who's that? *(Struggles to her feet.)*

Lei Kang *(unable to see clearly):* Mother?

Granny Tu: Lei Kang?

Lei Kang *(with emotion):* Mother!

(They stumble into each other's arms. Thunder and lightning.)

Granny Tu *(sings):* I little thought to meet my son in prison.
(She takes hold of his chain.) My child, you. . . .

Lei Kang *(sighs):* I came to rescue you
But fell into their trap.

Granny Tu: Did you come alone?

Lei Kang: With a few other men.

Granny Tu *(quickly):* Did the Party representative send you?

Lei Kang: No, it was my own decision.

Granny Tu: So you didn't listen to Ko Hsiang! *(Sits angrily down on the stone.)*

Lei Kang: My feud with the Viper
Is a fight to the death;
She has no private scores
To settle with him.

Granny Tu: What? *(Stands up.)* No private scores?
Far from it.

(Lei Kang helps Granny Tu to sit down and kneels on one knee beside her.)

Granny Tu: Remember, two weeks ago,
How many were sent here from the Ching kang Mountains?

Lei Kang: Two comrades: one man and one woman.

Granny Tu: The woman was Ko Hsiang.

Lei Kang: The man's name was Chao Hsin.

Granny Tu: Ko Hsiang was wounded and captured.

Lei Kang: Chao Hsin died a hero's death.

Granny Tu: But do you know
The relationship between them?

Lei Kang: The relationship between them?

Granny Tu: They were husband and wife for three years. *(Weeps.)*

Lei Kang *(shocked, springs up):* Ah, her husband?

How she must be longing for vengeance!

Yet she never breathed a word of this.

Granny Tu *(with admiration):* She takes the Party's instructions to
heart,

Swallows her own grief

And keeps the whole world in view. *(Stands up.)*

But what of you?

You act on impulse,

Ignoring larger issues;

You knew this was a trap

But you had to have your own way,

Involving others in danger

And putting your neck in a noose. . . .

How badly you've let down

Your old folk and brothers on Azalea Mountain. *(Sings.)*

Three times we raised the banner of revolt; three times we met defeat;

The bright flames leapt a while and then died down.

Happy the day when from the Ching kang Mountains

They sent us a Party representative

Who led our forces back to the right road,

To grow from strength to strength.

Who could have thought that you

Would forget the lessons of the past, the lessons of the past,

Would lose your head and fall into this trap!

*You have hurt our folk, broken my heart
And ruined the good work of the Party.
(Sits down on the stone steps by the door.)*

Lei Kang (*sings*): *Mother's words like a flash of lightning
Make me see reason.
The Party representative suppressing her own hatred
Works hard, shouldering the heaviest load:
She is noble-hearted.*

(Thunder)

Lei Kang (*sings*): *But I wrecked our plan by charging down so rashly;
If our force is wiped out through my fault,
A thousand deaths will not atone for my crime.
(Stamps his foot and clashes his chains.)
Remorse and sorrow cut me to the quick.*

Granny Tu (*stands up and sings*):
*Leaning against the bars I think of our dear ones
And my tears fall like rain. (Wipes her eyes.)*

Lei Kang (*sings*): *How I hope,
How I hope that our force
Will swiftly withdraw to win new victories.*

Granny Tu (*sings*): *Then the clouds will roll away from Azalea Mountain,*

Together (*sing*): *And songs of triumph will echo to the sky.*

*(Granny Tu makes Lei Kang sit on the stone lock. A guard with a lantern leads in the Viper to make an inspection. Another guard and the captain follow.)
(Lei Kang starts to get up but Granny Tu stops him.)*

Viper (*to the captain*): Are all your posts well manned?

Captain: Inside and out, the town is closely guarded.

Viper (*points to the cage*): Take special precautions here.

Captain: Each bar has been checked several times.

Viper: Learn from your last lesson;

Don't let the tiger escape to the mountain again.

Captain: Since we've gained our object, commander,

Why not kill him at once to avoid trouble later on?

Viper: Use your head, you fool!

To catch a big fish you have to pay out the line;
Keeping this chair-bearer here
Is bound to bring Ko Hsiang down from the mountain.
So with one single cast
We'll hook the whole lot!

Lei Kang (*springs up, bursting with anger*): You poisonous snake!
I'm itching to cut you to pieces!

Viper: Ha, still talking so big, eh?

Just wait.
When Ko Hsiang comes down
We'll send all three of you together to Heaven.

*(Lei Kang batters the door with his chain. The Viper recoils in alarm.
Granny Tu makes Lei Kang sit down to examine his wounds.)
(Offstage Guard A calls "Report!" and runs in. The Viper signs to him
to keep quiet. They go to one side.)*

Guard A (*in a low voice*): Commander, there's a new development.

Viper: Out with it, quick.

Guard A: The self-defence corps is withdrawing towards the
border;

Our sentries spotted them.

Viper: Withdrawing?

(Offstage Guard B calls "Report!" and hurries in.)

Guard B (*in a low voice*): Commander, a confidential note! (*Hands
a note to the Viper.*)

(The two guards go out.)

Viper (*opens the note*): "The self-defence corps is leaving the moun-
tain tonight..."

Confound it! This spoils my plan.

Captain: What shall we do?

Viper: I'll take troops at once to Back Mountain.

Captain: How about Sankuan?

Viper: We'll leave your company here.

Don't let the prisoners escape.

But most of your men
Must guard the Passage to Heaven.

Captain: How many shall I leave here?

Viper: One squad will do.

Captain: Just one squad?

Viper: As long as we hold the pass,
Even if they had wings they couldn't reach this temple.

Captain (*folds his hands in prayer*): May our ancestors protect us!
May all go well!

(Lei Kang and Granny Tu are listening carefully.)

Viper (*waves the secret note and laughs raucously*):

Aha, Ko Hsiang, Ko Hsiang!
Even if your withdrawal is a feint
And you try to raid our jail,
We're ready for you.
Come on!

(The Viper and his men hurry off. Lei Kang and Granny Tu are frantic. The light fades.)

Granny Tu (*looks at the night sky*): Party representative!

On no account come down the mountain!

Lei Kang: On no account come down....

(They gaze towards the distance, earnestly raising their hands. Lightning and thunder are followed by pelting rain. Blackout)

(Curtain)

SCENE SEVEN

FLYING OVER THE CLOUD-WRAPPED CHASM

The same day, late at night. A storm is raging.

A rugged height between Azalea Mountain and Sankuan.

(With Tien leading the way, in speed Ko Hsiang, Hsiao-shan and two

partisans, all wearing straw-capes. They strike a pose. At a signal from Ko Hsiang, they race off. Enter six men and women partisans. Miming, they advance fearlessly, united as one, along muddy paths in the teeth of the storm, then leave the stage.

The slope is steep, the path slippery. Six men partisans somersault across the stage and off. Four women partisans bound in, do the splits, spring up and run off. Hsiao-shan somersaults in, then staggers; Ko Hsiang bounds in after him and saves him from falling. Enter several men partisans. They do the splits and Ko Hsiang helps them up one by one. They leave together. A group of women partisans bound in, whirling their straw-capes. They are followed by men, leaping and dancing.

On a gauze curtain at the front clouds drift past, then mountains loom through the mist. Tien springs in through the brambles, carrying a bamboo pole, and strikes a pose. He turns a somersault, leaps, shades his eyes against the wind, wipes rain from his face, then parts the grass to lead the way forward. The grass grows rank and the path is slippery. Tien feels the ground with his pole, somersaults and does the splits, stumbles, struggles to his feet, then slips again. Finally he stands up and beckons to people behind him. Two men partisans leap in from the trees, hacking with their swords at the brambles. Tien dances with his bamboo pole. All three turn somersaults, strike a pose and lead the way off.

The wind blows stronger. The partisans battle against the storm and in succession whirl off. With Tien in the lead, the partisans march briskly across the stage. They re-enter and go through the motions of climbing the mountain, clutching at the undergrowth and lending each other a hand. They do the splits and spring up again. Hsiao-shan and others somersault on. They reach the top of the cliff, gaze down into the chasm and strike a pose.

Clouds drift past on the gauze curtain. After the clouds have passed, Eagles' Sorrow appears. The precipices on either side are covered with green creepers. Tien catches hold of a creeper and swings himself across the chasm. Other partisans follow suit. Partisans leap and somersault over the cliffs and off.

Clouds drift over the gauze curtain. After the clouds have passed, the Sheh Family Ancestral Temple appears. Tien and Partisan A enter and drop to the ground. The enemy captain enters in a raincoat, followed by a guard with an umbrella, to inspect the sentry posts. Tien overpowers the captain, takes off his raincoat and finds the key to the lock-up on his belt. Partisan A kills the guard. Tien puts on the captain's raincoat. Ko Hsiang enters with other partisans. They slip into the temple.

Blackout.

The lights come on again, showing the backyard of the temple and one side of the cage in which Lei Kang and Granny Tu are imprisoned. Guards with rifles in their arms are dozing on the steps outside the cage. Enter Tien and Partisan A in disguise. A guard stands up, approaches Tien and salutes. Tien turns towards the cage. The guard, growing suspicious, is killed by Partisan A. Other partisans run in. The guards wake up, but before they can resist Tien trains his gun on them and shouts: "Don't move!" The partisans disarm them, tie them up and gag them. Tien unlocks the cage and opens the door.

Ko Hsiang goes over to Lei Kang. He wants to speak, but she signs to him to keep quiet. Ko Hsiang and Granny Tu embrace. Ko Hsiang signs to the partisans to lock the guards in the cage. A partisan shoulders the guns captured. Then they quickly withdraw.

Spotlight on the cage door. Inside, the guards huddle together disconsolately.

Blackout.

The lights come on again, showing a valley with steep cliffs by the chasm, a strategic pass. Ko Hsiang directs the withdrawal of the rescued partisans and villagers. Lei Kang and Hsiao-shan enter, supporting Granny Tu. Lo, Cheng and Tien follow. Granny Tu and Hsiao-shan go off. The sound of gunfire comes closer. They halt to listen.)

Tien: Judging by the sound, the enemy's main force is after us.

Ko Hsiang: The Viper must know they've been foxed, so he's turned back.

Cheng: Eagles' Sorrow's just ahead. The going's rough.

Lo: The enemy is close. We're in a tight spot!

Ko Hsiang (reflects): Lei Kang, lead them over the chasm and back to the mountain, fast!

Lei Kang: And you?

Ko Hsiang: I'll keep a few men on this height to cover you.

Lei Kang: No, our brothers need you as their helmsman.

Ko Hsiang: They're longing to have you back.

Lei Kang: It's my rashness that exposed you to this danger.

Leave the rearguard action to me. (*Comes over dizzy. Cheng and others support him.*)

Ko Hsiang: You've been wounded, lost blood,
And are half starved, too weak to fight.

Lei Kang: We're outnumbered, short of guns;
I can't leave you in the lurch.

Ko Hsiang (exuberantly): Just look! (*Whirls her cape and strikes a pose.*)

The trees will shelter us,
Stones serve as missiles.

With this gully as our defence works,

The cliffs as our fortress, (*flaunts her cape, climbs the slope and strikes a pose*)

Even if the enemy (*walks down the slope*)

Surges forward like the tide (*circles swiftly round*)

I shall stand firm as a rock. (*Dances with her cape, turns and strikes a pose.*)

(*The partisans join in the dance movements.*)

(*The sound of firing draws nearer.*)

Ko Hsiang: The situation is critical.

Lei Kang: The enemy's closing in.

Ko Hsiang: You must leave at once. (*Tugs at Lei Kang.*)

Lei Kang: I refuse to go back!

Ko Hsiang: This is the Party's decision;
You mustn't delay.

Lei Kang (pleads): Party representative! (*Staggers.*)

Ko Hsiang: Go quickly!

Lei Kang: Party representative!

Ko Hsiang: Go quickly!

(Two partisans help Lei Kang up the cliff. He wrenches free, turns and steps forward, meaning to rush down again. They hastily stop him.)

Lei Kang *(leans down from the cliff. With emotion):* Party representative!

Ko Hsiang *(waves her hand):* Hurry!

Lei Kang *(hoarsely):* Party representative, Party representative!

Ko Hsiang *(firmly):* Quick! Hurry!

(Lei Kang is dragged off, still protesting. Some partisans follow him. Intensive gunfire. Ko Hsiang, Tien, Cheng and Lo fire at the enemy and throw hand-grenades.)

Ko Hsiang: Comrades,
Save your ammunition;
Prepare for close combat.

(Raising their weapons they strike a pose.)

Ko Hsiang *(sings):* The storm closes in, earth and sky turn dark,
But a bright lamp lights up my heart.
Our hot blood will turn into thunderbolts and lightning. . . .

(Shouts go up offstage. The enemy chase in. Ko Hsiang and her men put up a fierce resistance. Tien parries and thrusts with his sword and kills an enemy guard, then picks up a rock and hurls it at the enemy. The enemy are forced back.)

Ko Hsiang *(beckons):* Withdraw!

Tien, Cheng and Lo: Right. *(They rush up the cliff.)*

(An enemy rifle cracks. Tien is shot.)
(Ko Hsiang, Cheng and Lo cry out and swiftly prop Tien up. He presses his right hand to his chest and stubbornly raises his head to glare at the enemy. Blood seeps through his fingers.)

Chorus of Men and Women *(offstage vigorously):*

*Glory irradiates our land,
Glory irradiates our land!*

(Ko Hsiang and the others stand erect on the cliff, undaunted. They strike a pose. Lightning rends the sky; thunder shakes the earth. The light fades, showing them in silhouette.)

(Curtain)

SCENE EIGHT

THE SUN SCATTERS THE MIST

The next day before dawn.

Azalea Mountain, as in Scene 5.

(The curtain rises, showing a scene after storm. Grey mountains stretch to the distance. Clouds drift over the moon: a few stars are visible. A red flag flutters in the wind on the hillside. Sporadic rifle-fire crackles down below. Wen watches the scene below and listens uneasily.)

Wen: Sporadic bursts of rifle-fire below —
Has Ko Hsiang gone to rescue the prisoners?

(Chiu runs in, flustered. Wen hastily beckons him.)

Wen: Our intelligence?

Chiu: I delivered it.

Wen: Why the firing?

Chiu: Ko Hsiang has raided the lock-up.

Wen *(dismayed):* Damn!

Maybe she's seen through my plot,
And I've been trapped.

Chiu: Let's join the Viper. Quick!

Wen: Impossible!

Since our intelligence proved wrong,
The Viper is bound to mistrust us.

Chiu: Then. . . .

Wen (*rolls his eyes*): That way is out,
But I have another plan. (*Produces paper and pen and scribbles a note.*)

Take this to Leopard Liu.

Chiu (*takes the note*): To Leopard Liu? What's the idea?

Wen: On pretext of withdrawing
I'll take our force to his garrison area. . . . (*Gestures to indicate encirclement and mopping up.*)

Chiu (*catches on*): Ah!

Wen: Off with you. Quick!

Chiu: Right. (*Runs to the gap.*)

Wen (*bears someone coming, deliberately raises his voice*): Hey!
Go to that height

To check up on the enemy's movements.

Chiu: Right. (*Runs off.*)

(*Li enters.*)

Wen: Old Li, time's running out,
Why not start the withdrawal?

Li (*hedges*): Why all the hurry? (*Gazes in the direction taken by Chiu.*)

(*The firing becomes more intense.*)

Wen: Come on! That gunfire makes it clear:
Ko Hsiang's small raiding party
Must have been routed.
As deputy chief
It's my duty to save the situation. (*Blows a whistle.*)

(*Partisans run on.*)

Wen: Listen, everyone!
No news has come since our chief went down the mountain;
Now the Party representative is trapped, in deadly danger.

(*The partisans exclaim in dismay.*)

Wen: We must carry out our orders,
Set off at once and withdraw to the border region.

(*The bewildered partisans start talking together: "Yes, we should withdraw." "Withdraw?" "Of course, it'll soon be light." "But the Party representative's not back yet. . . ."*)

Li (*in a loud voice*): Comrades, don't listen to this nonsense!
Our Party representative has gone on a mission;
She told us to hold our ground here;
We're not going to pull out until she's back.

Partisan B: Right. Don't pull out.

All: We mustn't pull out.

Wen: But she won't be coming back;
Don't be so stubborn.

Li: You've made this up,
It's all a pack of lies.

Wen: As deputy chief I'm in charge;
I have the authority to make decisions.

Li: The army is commanded by the Party;
What right have you to order a withdrawal?

Wen: In this emergency
Who dares delay our plan of action?

Li: Even if the sky falls
We can prop it up. (*Points angrily at Wen.*) Wen Chi-chiu!
(*Sings.*)

*First you incite Lei Kang to charge down, disobeying orders,
Now you preach obedience to superiors;
You keep shifting like the clouds,
Are you trying to destroy us?*

Wen (*sings*): *The situation's changed, we must be flexible to win.*

Li (*sings*): *You are throwing dust in our eyes.*

Wen (*sings*): *Every second counts: how can we wait?*

Li (*sings*): *In this crisis we must stand firm and keep cool-headed.*

Wen (*sings*): *Let's take off our armbands, lower our flag and pull out.*
(*Pulls off his armband and orders*) Take off your armbands!

(*A few partisans hesitate, but the majority ignore him.*)

Wen: Lower the red flag!

(The partisans make no move.)

Wen: What insubordination! *(Rushes to the slope to take down the flag.)*

Li *(in a voice like thunder):* Don't you dare!

(Li shoves Wen aside. Partisans spring forward to protect the flag. They strike a pose.)

Li *(sings):* We'll hold our ground, guard our red flag;

United, we're strong as a fortress.

Wen *(draws his pistol):* I'll shoot you!

Li *(draws his pistol):* Don't move!

(They face each other tensely with levelled guns. The partisans intervene. Someone calls offstage: "Old Li!")

Partisan C: The chief's back!

(Li and Wen put away their pistols. Enter Granny Tu, Hsiao-shan and other partisans. They greet each other.)

All *(happily):* Our chief!

(Lei Kang hurries on.)

Li *(grasps Lei Kang's arms):* Brother, where's the Party representative?

Lei Kang *(in distress):* To cover our withdrawal. . .

Lei Kang and **Others:** She intercepted the enemy.

Lei Kang: But now the firing has ceased.

Granny Tu: We are frantic with worry. *(Staggers.)*

(Lei Kang supports her. A partisan helps Granny Tu off and some others follow.)

Wen *(to Lei Kang):* Brother. . .

Lei Kang *(eyes Wen suspiciously):* H'm! *(Walks away.)*

Wen *(with a show of cordiality):* Brother!

I'm partly to blame

For your leaving the mountain so rashly;

Eagerness to save Granny Tu made me too impulsive;

I should never have urged you on to act so wildly.

It was very wrong of us to disobey orders;

We must carry out all instructions to the letter.

Let's pull out at once;

We can't afford to wait.

Li *(strides quickly up to Lei Kang):* The Party representative's not back yet;

We mustn't do anything rash.

Lei Kang *(in profound agreement):* True!

Wen: When the river bends, a boat must alter course!

Li: Who do you think you're fooling?

Wen *(to Lei Kang):* Brother!

If we wait till it's light

We'll never get away;

And when our force is wiped out

Your remorse will be too late.

You'll be unable to face Granny Tu,

Unable to face our fellow countrymen,

Unable to face the spirits of our martyrs;

You'll have betrayed the trust of our Party representative.

Lei Kang *(with feeling):* Our Party representative! *(Gazes into the distance.)*

A Few Partisans: Brother, let's go.

The Majority: No, chief, we mustn't leave.

Lei Kang *(worried and confused, sighs. Sings):*

The Party representative risked her own life to save me;

She hasn't come back; my heart is bursting with grief.

Our force must carry out the Party's orders

But I shall brave a thousand deaths to find her.

Let our main force withdraw at once

While I go back with a small rescue party.

We shall not return without her.

(Staggers, recovers himself and turns to go.)

Partisans *(some urge him to go; some try to stop him):* Chief, chief. . .

(Someone calls offstage: "The Party representative's back!" All rush eagerly up the slope. Wen hastily steps aside. Ko Hsiang strides in swiftly in her cape.)

Lei Kang and **Others** *(with great emotion)*: Party representative!

(Enter Cheng and Lo.)

Ko Hsiang *(sings)*: Rejoining my comrades, I am too moved to speak.
(Shakes hands with Lei Kang, Hsiao-shan, Li and some women partisans, greeting them.)

Lei Kang *(to Ko Hsiang)*: At last you're back!

Wen *(steps forward)*: You had us all worried.

(Silence. Ko Hsiang turns slowly to look at Wen.)

Ko Hsiang *(meaningfully)*: Yes, deputy chief, you've been very worried.

Wen: Sure. The moon's sinking, the stars are fading. . . .

Ko Hsiang: We should pull out right away?

Wen: Well, we can't stay here.

Ko Hsiang: Tell me, where is it best to break through the enemy's cordon?

From Back Mountain?

Wen: The enemy have Back Mountain sewn up tight.

Ko Hsiang: Must we make a detour then?

Wen *(promptly agrees)*: Right.

Ko Hsiang *(raps out)*: Cut through Leopard Liu's garrison area?

Wen *(overjoyed because this fits in with his scheme)*: The very thing!

Great minds think alike —

This is my view exactly.

Leopard Liu's on bad terms with the Viper

But has no grudge against us:

On the strength of my old connection,

If I ask him to let us through he's bound to agree.

Ko Hsiang: Deputy chief, you've worked the whole thing out;
You've really been racking your brains.

Wen *(struts round, elated)*: For the revolution
I have to do my best.

Li: H'm. For whom are you doing your best?

Cheng: For whom are you working?

Partisan B: Why did you want us to take off our armbands?

Women Partisans: Why did you want to lower the red flag?

Lo: What are you playing at?

The Majority: Just what is your game?

Wen *(approaches Ko Hsiang)*: Party representative. . . .

Ko Hsiang *(sternly)*: You've betrayed the revolution,
Sold out to the enemy!

Wen *(protests)*: This is slander,
Wild aspersions!

Ko Hsiang *(forcefully)*: Our evidence
Is irrefutable.
Bring him in!

(Offstage a partisan shouts: "Come on!" Chiu is led in. Wen draws his pistol and fires, wounding Chiu in the arm. Chiu falls down on his knees. Li snatches the gun from Wen.)

Chiu *(nurses his wounded arm)*: Damn you, Wen Chi-chiu!
You're more vicious than a beast.

Captured the moment I left,

I've given them the dirt on you, I'd have you know.

Your letter's in her hands!

(Ko Hsiang signs to a partisan who takes Chiu off.)

Ko Hsiang: Comrades!

Wen Chi-chiu is in secret league with the enemy.

And they have had frequent contacts.

The Viper laid a trap to lure us down the mountain;

Wen, in our ranks, furthered the enemy scheme.

Now he's trying to use our dilemma

To entice us into Leopard Liu's garrison area,

To force our men to join Liu's bandits,

So that he can share their loot.

Wen Chi-chiu!
You want to sabotage the revolution,
To lead us to destruction;
You've sold your soul to the enemy,
Hoping to wade through blood to high position.
Here's the letter in your own hand to Liu.
Every word in it is evidence of your crime!

(Ko Hsiang produces Wen's secret message and glares at him with flashing eyes. The partisans, bursting with fury, brandish their weapons. Wen shrinks back, trembling.)

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *His honeyed words hide daggers;
He has long schemed to seize control of our force
And stab us in the back;
This traitor is in league with the enemy;
Now we've exposed his true colours.*

All (*sing*): *Death to the renegade!*

(They brandish their weapons.)

Wen (*drops on his knees and crawls towards Lei Kang*): Brother!

(Lei Kang trembling with rage seizes Wen.)

Lei Kang: Bah! (*Throws Wen down.*)

(Wen scrambles to his feet. Thinking that Lei Kang means him to escape, he takes to his heels. Lei Kang takes a gun from Li, fires at Wen and kills him. Wen topples over the cliff. The partisans throw stones at him.)

(Enter Granny Tu.)

Li: Post more sentries.

Ko Hsiang: Prepare to pull out.

(All assent and leave.)

Lei Kang (*unable to express his remorse*): Party representative. . . .
(Sways.)

(Ko Hsiang, Cheng and Granny Tu help Lei Kang to the tree stump and make him sit down.)

Ko Hsiang (*to Cheng*): Fetch some herb medicine,
Dress his wounds, quick!

(Cheng fetches Tien's gourd of medicine and dresses Lei Kang's wound.)

Lei Kang (*recovering, sees the gourd*): Where's Tien? (*Looks round.*)
Tien Ta-chiang?
(Loudly) Where's Tien?

(Cheng cannot speak for grief. Lo rushes over to Lei Kang, sobbing.)

Ko Hsiang (*takes out Tien's armband. Sadly*): He has shed his fresh
blood on Azalea Mountain.

(Thunderstruck, Lei Kang staggers forward and takes the armband.)

Lei Kang (*sings*): *Rage sears my heart, tears scald my cheeks.
(Wipes his eyes.)*

My crimes are past forgiving.

Not all the rivers' water

Can sweep away my anguish and remorse.

Grief is tearing my heart.

Ah, Ta-chiang!

After years of back-breaking toil

You had just won liberation, joined the Party

And dedicated your young life to the cause;

But because of me you fell on the battlefield.

Ah, Ta-chiang. . . .

(Covers his face and sobs.)

(All stricken with grief shed tears.)

Cheng (*sings*): *Wen Chi-chiu was a black-hearted landlord.*

Li (*sings*): *How could we poor folk make him our sworn brother?*

Lei Kang (*sings*): *I nearly caused the death of my old mother.*

Granny Tu (*sings*): *It was the Party representative
Who turned the tables on the enemy,*

*Risking her life to brave the tiger's lair
And rescue us from danger.*

Lei Kang (*sings*): *Azaleas bloom red as blood year after year,
What makes me repeat my mistakes,
Bringing loss after loss?*

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *Bear in mind all these lessons paid for with blood;
(She and Granny Tu help Lei Kang to sit down and dress his wound.)
After this bitter lesson, think out the reason
Why having smashed your chains you were chained again,
Why the flag was raised three times but fell again
As those who had flocked to you scattered?
Why did you close your ears to the truth
And let blatant lies deceive you?
If you go to the heart of the matter,
It was narrow loyalty and longing for vengeance
That made you see nothing more
Than the blood and tears wrung from a single village,
Blinding you to the long, long road
We must take to make revolution.
For generations slaves have fought for freedom,
Year after year their battle-drums have sounded;
But lacking a clear aim these rebels lost their bearings;
Countless heroes died in vain, cursing high heaven.
The peasants' armed forces must keep close to the Party,
Only then can they prevail and grow in strength
Like brooks flowing into the mighty, mighty river.
Never forget the first rule of revolution:
The Party commands the guns, commands the men in arms.
Braving the storm we shall advance and never drift off course,
We shall advance and never drift off course.*

(Elated, they strike a pose. Dawn breaks.)

Lei Kang (*excited*): *Party representative!
The mists have scattered,
You have made me see clearly.
From now on, wherever we fight, I shall follow the Party,*

*Striving to be a Communist with broad vision, battling on to the
end of my days.*

(Ko Hsiang clasps Lei Kang's hands tightly.)

All (*elated*): *Always follow the Communist Party.
Always follow Mao Tsetung!*

*(Offstage Partisan A calls "Report!" and runs in with a letter in
his hand.)*

Partisan A: *Urgent orders from the command.*

*(Partisans crowd in. Ko Hsiang opens the letter and reads it, then eagerly
passes it to Lei Kang.)*

Ko Hsiang: *Our main force is approaching;
Our orders are to advance towards Lion's Jaw.*

Li: *The enemy will certainly follow us.*

Ko Hsiang: *All the better to bag the whole lot!*

All: *Fine!*

Ko Hsiang: *There's another unexpected piece of good news.*

All: *What is it?*

Ko Hsiang: *After this battle, our force will be incorporated into
the Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army!*

*(All cheer: "Fine!" "We're to be revolutionary army men!" "At
long last!")*

Ko Hsiang: *Comrades! (Sings.)*

The word we longed for day and night

All (*sing*): *The word we longed for day and night*

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *Has come at last, and every face is smiling.*

All (*sing*): *Every face is smiling.*

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *We shall wipe out the Viper's men*

All (*sing*): *And march to the Ching kang Mountains.*

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *Soon, soon we shall be seeing Mao Tsetung.*

All (*sing*): *We shall see Mao Tsetung!*

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *The battle to come will test our strength,*

All (*sing*): *Test our strength.*

Ko Hsiang (*sings*): *We must
Fall on the enemy force*

All (*sing*): *And wipe it out!*

(They strike a heroic pose.)

Lei Kang (*raises his hand*): Quick, march!

*(The red flag flutters in the wind, their swords gleam. They advance
swiftly and jubilantly.)*

(Curtain)

SCENE NINE

KEEP THE RED FLAG FLYING

The same morning.
Lion's Jaw.

(The curtain rises on the same set as in Scene 1 but now azaleas are in full bloom. Several enemy guards scurry in with rifles and make a search. A partisan slips out from the trees, fires at a guard and kills him, then quickly takes cover. Another partisan slips out from the brambles, shoots and kills an enemy guard and quickly hides himself. Partisan A kills an enemy guard with his rifle butt. Another partisan hiding in a cave stabs a guard with his trident. The guards panic. Suddenly a partisan leaps out with a spear, fights with an enemy guard, kills him and conceals himself behind some rocks. Two enemy guards start searching for him and he leaps out again, fights them with a chain-missile and kills one.

Hsiao-shan enters, snatches the other guard's rifle and kills him with the bayonet. Then he and the partisan with the chain-missile strike a pose. Many partisans emerge simultaneously from hiding and look round. Hsiao-shan fires the rifle to draw the enemy over. The partisans swiftly take cover. Hsiao-shan and the partisan with the chain-missile leap back into the brambles. The Viper enters with several guards. Two guards rush in, panic-stricken.)

A Guard: Commander, we've spotted the communist main force.
We've been surrounded!

Viper (*gives a cry of dismay*): Order our men to withdraw immediately.

(The red flag is raised on high. Enter Ko Hsiang, Lei Kang and Li with other partisans. Standing on high ground Ko Hsiang fires at the Viper, who dodges and escapes. Shouts go up, bugles sound the charge and shots ring out. The enemy is surrounded.)

The morning sky turns a glorious red. Ko Hsiang, Lei Kang, Li and Lo lead partisans armed with swords, spears, nets and other weapons across the stage in pursuit of the enemy. Soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army pursue the enemy. Several partisans carrying a red flag swing through the air clinging to creepers. Li enters pursuing enemy guards. With his shield and broadsword he fights fiercely, kills some of the enemy and chases another away. Two more guards start after Li, but Partisan A stops them with his staff. They fight. Another partisan springs out of the cave, swings his sword and kills an enemy guard, then swiftly takes cover.

Lei Kang enters brandishing a sword and shouting battle-cries. He fights with three enemy guards, who shrink back in fear from his sword. When they attack with bayonets, Lei Kang swings his sword, captures their rifles and marches them off as captives. Hsiao-shan leaps out of the grass, a dagger in each hand, and fights several enemy guards. Thinking him a mere boy they charge at him together, but Hsiao-shan evades them and swings off on a creeper. The enemy guards give chase. The Viper dashes in pursued by Ko Hsiang with a mounted bayonet. She fights bravely, downs several guards and knocks the Viper over. He tries to escape. Lei Kang, Li and others converge from all sides to surround the enemy. The Viper and his men mill round in confusion. The partisans spread the net they have concealed and all the enemy are trapped.

The crimson azaleas vie with the red flag. Ko Hsiang, Lei Kang and the partisans together strike a heroic pose.)

(Curtain. The end)

Li Hsia

Keep the Golden Bell Clanging

Train No. 2034 was racing along south of the Yangtse River at a speed of 110 kilometres an hour. At this rate it would reach Lake Pavilion, the first station under the local railway bureau, in exactly thirty-one minutes and twenty seconds. Before that it had to pass Lotus Pond, the last station under the next railway bureau.

Lake Pavilion Station, situated on the outskirts of a large industrial city, was already astir.

The station building, like most of those in the south, was in the shape of a horseshoe. The right wing housed the goods shed; the central block, the booking office and waiting room; the left wing, the control office.

Ting Pao-kang, the officer on duty in the control office, was filling in the arrival time of Train No. 2034 on the schedule chart. Though he couldn't tell the exact time as the train was still on its way, he was too excited to wait and put down the figures in pencil. If by any chance the train was late, he could rub out the pencil marks. But such a contingency could not be allowed. For Lake Pavilion was

a "border" station. If trains failed to leave it on time that affected the whole railway bureau's schedule. And this was the very first day of the new timetable revised during the upsurge of the Cultural Revolution. If No. 2034, the last train of the day,* was late, that would spoil their new record.

Ting looked up. Through the window he could see both ends of the platform, the waiting room, the rows of big-character posters and even the fields of green barley and golden rape in bloom around the station. These were dear and familiar sights. Those three ilex trees in the centre of the platform had grown tall and luxuriant in the fifteen years since he brought them back from a training class he had attended in '52. He had then worked for seven years in the control office before being appointed station-master. Though his hair was grey now he tried to forget his age, to retain his vigour like those evergreens. In these fifteen years, he had witnessed the arrival and departure of thousands of trains. Every time he waved the green flag and watched a train roar off into the distance he experienced enormous satisfaction, for he was a railway man from way back, having worked as a switchman for some dozen years in the old society.

But the storm unleashed by the Cultural Revolution several months previously had taken him completely by surprise, shattering his complacent calm.

"I should like to ask Ting Pao-kang: On to which line are you trying to switch our trains?"

What a ridiculous question! As if he were switching trains off the right track! Stranger still, the writer of that big-character poster was a girl in the freight transport section. Her name was Chiao-ku. To be frank, Ting didn't even remember her surname at the time, though she had been working in the station for over two years. She had arrived looking every inch a country girl: her hair in long plaits and wearing a padded jacket of red homespun with a white-flower pattern. Her father had brought her and she wept when he was leaving, whereupon her father, a veteran engine-driver, criticized her on the spot for her childish behaviour. The youngsters growing

*According to railway time, a day ends at 18:00 hours.

up under the red banner didn't know the meaning of hardship, and that was a fact. No wonder she was so naive as to raise such a question which wasn't a problem at all.

But this same question had turned out to be Ting's big problem. Overnight, big-character posters appeared everywhere, praising Chiao-ku's opening shot and denouncing Ting Pao-kang. They asked: Why are you so wrapped up in Lake Pavilion Station that you never think of our city or the country as a whole? Why are you so keen on reaching transport targets but so uninterested in class struggle? Why do you peddle all sorts of material incentives but fail to carry out Chairman Mao's instructions on putting proletarian politics in command? All these posters came under one general heading: We want to ask Ting Pao-kang: On to which line are you trying to switch our trains?

This was such a bolt from the blue that Ting was stunned. He could hardly eat or sleep for three whole days and nights. For a dozen years and more he had worked hard, believing himself heart and soul for the revolution. Why had he never thought about even one of these important questions? What was the matter? Then it dawned on him that Chiao-ku was really a smart youngster. When she first came she was so shy that she blushed each time she opened her mouth. But before long she became very active. She proved a good speaker and singer when she did propaganda work among the passengers. She could write and draw too for black-board bulletins or wall-newspapers. After she joined the Party, she and some of her work-mates organized a group to study Chairman Mao's philosophical works under the guidance of the Party branch. No wonder she had spotted Ting's problem at once! But, for him, it was too late. . . .

Just at this juncture, Chiao-ku had appeared in person. A bowl of rice, piping hot, in one hand and a dish of fried eggs and vegetables in the other, she came in, plonked the food down on the table and sternly commanded Ting, "On behalf of the masses who wrote those big-character posters, I order you: Eat up at once!" Ting was startled at first, but then he saw light. A sense of well-being swept over him. The food tasted delicious and he ate it quickly with

relish. As the girl deftly gathered up the dishes and mopped the table, she told him with a smile, "You're a senior cadre and should set a good example for us younger people. How can you let a little criticism get you down? Life's been so comfortable that you've forgotten to continue making revolution. That's why you couldn't understand the Party's policy and what's in the mind of the masses. Don't you know the purpose of our posters? We hope you'll return to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line as quickly as possible." She started out then but turned back to enjoin, "You must give serious thought to your problem and make a thorough self-criticism before the masses."

Now, when he thought back on this unforgettable experience, Ting could not help saying to himself, "What fine youngsters our Party and Chairman Mao have brought up!"

He stood up, hooked one finger round a glittering chain attached to the second button of his uniform, and pulled out a big pocket-watch. He checked the time with the clock on the wall and put the watch back. Then he straightened his cap and coat and took up the furled signal flags ready for his usual inspection of the lines before a train's arrival. All his colleagues in the railway bureau knew that, however bad the weather, Ting never skipped a single inspection trip.

"The water's boiled, Master Ting!" Little Shen his assistant called out, a cup of hot water in his hands.

At the platform end of the control office was a control board equipped with telephones and switches. The other end of the room, where railway officials could study or relax, was littered with books, clothes, a wash-basin and towels, as well as a stove for boiling water, heating food, and for warming the place in winter. Little Shen was a vigorous youngster who thought nothing of carrying a sack weighing a hundred and fifty pounds or swinging a heavy sledge-hammer, but he was hard put to it to light the stove and make the kettle come to the boil. Although he had stripped to his red jersey he was still sweating and there were coal smudges on his cheeks.

Ting Pao-kang was a serious person. Instead of laughing at the young man he signed to him to put on his coat so as not to catch cold. He was just about to take the cup of water when some men rushed

across the platform. One of them called through the window, "Comrade, will you help ship off our seeds right away? The sowing won't wait, you know."

His accent was that of another province, but his companions looked like local people. All of them were dressed like peasants. Ting opened the window and pointing to the other wing with his signal flags explained:

"That's the goods depot over there. They'll help you. We've simplified our procedure since the Cultural Revolution. You may rest assured that your freight will reach its destination within a day or two."

"Can we send it off on Train No. 2034 which is about due? It's seed-rice and time presses," put in the local peasants.

What had happened was this: During the Cultural Revolution, the Red Star People's Commune in the neighbourhood of Lake Pavilion Station had succeeded in producing a high yielding strain of rice which they named "808". It was adaptable to different climates. So when the commune members learned from the newspapers that Ever-Abundant People's Commune up in Nanling County had decided to start planting rice in response to Chairman Mao's call to make the north self-sufficient in grain, they wrote to Nanling recommending their new strain "808". The man with the northern accent had come from Ever-Abundant People's Commune and his companions were his hosts from Red Star People's Commune.

Ting felt a surge of warmth when he heard the story. So many new things had sprung into being since the Cultural Revolution and here was another of them! But thought of the train schedule damped his enthusiasm. If getting the seed off by the next train merely meant more trouble and work for himself, that was nothing. But what if it held up the schedule? Today, for the first time, trains were running according to the new timetable revised during the Cultural Revolution. No. 2034 happened to be today's last train. Though Ting hadn't understood the Cultural Revolution at the beginning, he believed that he now felt quite differently about it and had identified himself with this great revolution. It was said that border stations were storm-centres. And Lake Pavilion was not only a bor-

der station but an outpost of a big city. The grass here always bent with the wind blowing in from the city. A couple of days previously, carping remarks had drifted in from the railway bureau: It was said that the new cadres were incapable of running things and this would be seen as soon as the new timetable came into force. What nonsense! As if Comrade Chiao-ku, now in charge, were not capable enough! Why, when the timetable was being revised, she had got everyone to study its significance in the light of the struggle between two lines and explained why they must go all out to ensure the safe running on time of the trains. The Cultural Revolution had spurred industrial and agricultural production and that meant more traffic, which was why there were more trains each day on the new timetable. She not only explained everything clearly to all ninety-six members of the station staff, but also went to the hostels to mobilize their families to play a supporting role. Ting had years of experience on the railway, but when had he ever done such meticulous and detailed work? Now some people were waiting, hoping for a fiasco. All right. In the past, when the timetable was revised, Lake Pavilion had never been able to ensure the punctuality of every train on the very first day. But today, in another half an hour, those people would see!

Ting opened all the windows and leaned out the better to explain to the commune members: "Sorry, we can't put your seed on No. 2034. But we'll ship it out as early as we can."

Little Shen, still standing there holding the cup, when he heard Ting's answer, turned away and gave the water to the man from Ever-Abundant People's Commune. His lips were pursed in anger. How could Old Ting be so hard-hearted? Here were people urgently needing help, yet he remained unmoved. How could he slip back into the old rut after all those big-character posters criticizing him? Agriculture is the foundation of the national economy, and for this reason alone they should put the seed on No. 2034. Of course, Ting didn't know this but only yesterday a call had come from the bureau's dispatchers' office telling Lake Pavilion Station not to put old cadres on duty today when the new timetable was to come into force. This was to be a retort to the ridiculous charge that

the new cadres were incompetent and a demonstration of their boldness. Chiao-ku had had a lot of trouble explaining why she could not carry out this decision and it was she who had arranged for Ting to be on duty today. She had also told the others not to let Ting know about this for fear of undermining his morale. She put so much trust in Ting, but he. . . .

Naturally Little Shen said none of this out loud. The Cultural Revolution had taught him to distinguish contradictions between the people and the enemy from contradictions among the people and to handle both types correctly. This contradiction under his nose was certainly one among the ranks of the people, and though Ting deserved criticism it should not be rough and unreasonable. But . . . what should he say?

Just at this juncture a clear voice raised in song wafted from the door of the waiting room.

Little Shen was overjoyed. Before he could rush out, Chiao-ku had skipped through the back door of the control office, her cheeks ruddy from the cold wind. In her early twenties, she had bright eyes and two short plaits. She was wearing a faded blue railway uniform and underneath it a lined jacket, made over from the padded jacket of red homespun. It had rained that morning and probably she had come across from the goods yard, for her galoshes were muddy.

Little Shen was about to speak when Chiao-ku burst into laughter. Then, still chuckling she put her yellow satchel on the table, took up the basin in a corner, poured in some hot water from the kettle and added some cold water from a cup. She wrung out a towel and handed it to Little Shen. "You'd better wipe your face, comrade."

Snatching the towel, the youngster flung it back into the basin and burst out indignantly, "I've no time for that! Just see what Master Ting's doing. Is that any way to behave?"

Chiao-ku stopped laughing and turned her eyes towards the other end of the room. She saw Ting with some strangers, all of them looking at her. Sensing that something had gone wrong, she slung the satchel on her shoulder and hurried over, brushing back her hair with one hand.

Ting Pao-kang introduced her, "This is Comrade Chiao-ku, chairman of our revolutionary committee."

The commune members outside felt there was still hope and told her about the seed-rice. Chiao-ku didn't answer them at once. Having asked Little Shen to take Ting's place by the control panel, she opened the side door and went out with Ting. Only when she had closed the door behind her, did she ask the commune members to repeat what they had said. She listened to their request attentively, then pondered it for a while. Throwing a grave but encouraging glance at Ting, she told the commune members earnestly:

"Comrade Ting Pao-kang is on duty today. The decision's up to him."

"Oh! . . ." The commune members' faces fell. They gazed round anxiously and wrung their hands, then a few turned back to Ting.

Ting was greatly touched by Chiao-ku's words and felt surer than ever that his decision was right. If loading this grain delayed No. 2034's departure and it was merely a matter of personal responsibility, he was willing to take all the blame; but the problem was that people would use the delay to attack Comrade Chiao-ku, the new cadres and the Cultural Revolution. He would rather be labelled a conservative than risk such a contingency.

When he raised his head to announce his decision, he met the girl's unwavering gaze which made him hesitate.

Ting's inner conflict didn't escape Chiao-ku's notice. There was no doubt in her mind that the seed-rice ought to be put on the next train. However, Ting had got into such a rut that he had difficulty adapting to the new situation. He had always been over-cautious and if she now over-ruled him that would make him even more hesitant to take decisions in future. She wanted to give him the initiative so that he could change his mind himself. But his expression showed no sign of a change and Chiao-ku's grave look was to stop him from saying what was on the tip of his tongue.

An awkward silence followed.

Ting Pao-kang fished out his pocket-watch again. It was 17:26, twenty-nine minutes before No. 2034 was due. But this time he did

not put the watch back immediately. Instead, he stared hard at the golden second hand as it ticked away.

Chiao-ku suppressed a chuckle. He wants his watch to tell us that he knows the importance of sending the seed-rice, but time waits for no man. Well, let me give an answer then.

"We've come to understand through the Cultural Revolution that the safe and punctual arrival of trains is of paramount importance," she said calmly but forcefully. "We must do our utmost to ensure this. However, that in itself is not our end; our purpose is to serve proletarian politics, to help build up industry and agriculture."

"Yes, of course. Ordinarily, this wouldn't matter, but it so happens that today. . ."

"That's just it. Today is the day we begin on a new timetable. That means beginning from today we should do everything in the spirit of the Cultural Revolution, put proletarian politics first and keep industry and agriculture in mind. Don't you agree, Master Ting?"

For a moment Ting was stunned. He quickly put back his watch and after a pause murmured, "Yes."

"That's fine!" said the commune members.

Chiao-ku took a note-book out of her satchel and turned to a folded page.

"Master Ting," she began warmly, "I was working with some of the porters just now. The old workers there were discussing a new method for loading and unloading freight to ensure that the trains run on time. I've sketched a work chart on the basis of what they said. Do you think we might try it out on No. 2034?"

Ting quickly took the note-book and scanned the chart. After making a few corrections he looked up, delight on his face. "Good. This will do the trick. But we might suggest to old Master Tang adding another line of men here. Cadres from the different offices would like to pitch in and then there are the family members who could be organized to take part in the fight."

While they were talking, about a dozen porters came up with Old Tang at their head. Known for his giant size, he strode in, a wicker

helmet on his head and the piece of blue cloth over his shoulders fluttering like wings over his patched overalls.

"Old Ting," he bellowed. "Don't hesitate any more, say yes, quick. We guarantee the train'll be able to leave on time."

Ting went forward and grasped Tang's hand. "Wonderful."

Under Ting's direction, dozens of cadres and family members pitched in to move the seed-rice: they worked methodically and energetically, some unloading the sacks from the boats moored by the station, others setting up planks on the station platform in readiness for the No. 2034. Tang led them in singing work chants which reverberated in the air. Chiao-ku pulled on her homespun over-sleeves, pushed her scales on to the platform and began checking the freight with an abacus in one hand and the list of freight in the other. She was acting as tally clerk.

"Chiao-ku, your telephone."

It was Little Shen. He had popped his head out of the office window and was shouting at her, one hand cupped round his mouth and the other waving the receiver. Chiao-ku, as she jotted down the last figure, replied, "Won't you take it for me?"

"Nothing doing! He insists on speaking to you."

Indeed it was not an ordinary call. Chiao-ku was taken aback the moment she picked up the receiver and heard, "You're Cormade Chiao, aren't you?" Chiao was Chiao-ku's surname, but hardly anyone ever used it. Who could this be? She replied with surprise in the affirmative, whereupon the voice went on, "I want to talk to you about something. . . ." Suddenly she recognized the speaker and exclaimed, "Aren't you Comrade Cheng?"

Some time ago when Chiao-ku was attending a freight transport class at the railway bureau, Cheng had been one of her teachers. He was a little over thirty, a bespectacled graduate from the Railway Institute, headstrong, temperamental and liable to go to extremes. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution the capitalist-roader in the railway bureau, to save his own skin, had taken advantage of Cheng's shortcomings and given him a bad time. Later, Cheng was one of the first to rebel against the reactionary line advocated by Liu Shao-chi which was suppressing the revolutionary

masses. After the January Revolution* he became provisional head of the dispatchers' office in the bureau. He had called now to urge the station to "demonstrate the new cadres' boldness and stop using all older cadres formerly in positions of authority." The previous day, Cheng had got one of his men to ring up Lake Pavilion to this effect, but his proposal had been rejected. He was therefore calling up again in person and insisted on speaking to Chiao-ku herself.

Chiao-ku listened carefully to what he said, then asked, "Comrade Cheng, why do you make such a point of this?"

"Why do you say 'you'? Have you forgotten that we're both revolutionary rebels? You're now chairman of the revolutionary committee in your station. Don't you want to do something to establish your reputation?"

Chiao-ku chuckled. "You must be joking. I've never given any thought to being 'chairman' or to my 'reputation'."

"What's so funny?" Cheng sounded annoyed. "I want to remind you not to forget your position."

Sensing that something was wrong, the girl stopped laughing. Because Cheng was both her teacher and superior, she felt she ought to treat him with respect.

"I don't know what you mean, Comrade Cheng," she answered sincerely. "My position? I'm only an ordinary young worker. Of course, I haven't forgotten that I'm a new Party member and ought to rally everyone together to make a success of our work."

"Then why are you so fond of the old authorities?"

"That's no way to talk," Chiao-ku protested. "We should overthrow the diehard capitalist-roaders, but Comrade Ting Pao-kang is different. He's a Party cadre and vice-chairman of the revolutionary committee in our station."

"Vice-chairman is he!" Cheng retorted. "Do you know what line he's taking? Just now, for instance, he had the nerve to refuse to support agriculture and to transport seed-rice. Isn't he taking the old wrong road again? Don't let him lead you astray, comrade!"

*In January 1967, the working class and revolutionary masses in Shanghai jointly seized power from a handful of capitalist-roaders in the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.



Cheng's voice had risen. He was obviously worked up. Chiao-ku gasped. How did he know something that had only just occurred here? Who could have informed him? The struggle was certainly complicated. She must keep a cool head. But how to answer him?

She let a second tick by before saying in a quiet, composed voice, "I still can't agree with you, because your proposal doesn't conform to Party policy."

There was a moment's pause then Cheng said, "All right. Please get paper and pen ready."

As everybody on the railway knew, this was the prelude to something serious. It was a test too at this moment for young Chiao-ku, for she realized that the provisional head of the dispatchers' office was about to put his proposal into the form of a dispatch order. However, she felt no more flustered than she had two years ago when after hard study and conscientious practice she took the test set for her by Cheng, a strict teacher.

"Go ahead." She calmly unscrewed her fountain-pen.

Dispatch Order No. 3, March 25, 1967: During the first three days of the new schedule, every officer on duty in Lake Pavilion Station must be a new cadre. This is to guarantee the successful implementation of the new timetable.

— Dispatcher OI

Chiao-ku took down every word conscientiously, then read the order back in a clear ringing voice, in strict accordance with railway regulations. Then she commented:

"I think this is wrong, Comrade Cheng. This is actually a transfer order which requires ratification by the revolutionary committee of the bureau. So I shan't carry it out. Of course you can penalize me for defying orders. I'm prepared to come to the bureau to accept a reprimand."

Putting down the receiver, she felt as light-hearted as if she had just passed a difficult test. When she looked up she saw about ten people in the doorway including Old Tang, the porter, the commune

members and Ting who had just returned from the goods shed. There was dust on their hair and shoulders, sure sign that they had been carrying sacks of seed-rice. Plainly Ting had overheard some of Chiao-ku's conversation on the phone, for he looked at her intently as if to say, "This won't do. Better let me step down."

"Everything ready?" she asked with a friendly smile.

Before Ting could reply Tang's loud voice boomed out, "Yes, everything's ready for action."

Chiao-ku took out a few mugs and poured them hot water. "Have a drink," she urged. "When 2034 arrives, we've a tough battle to fight."

Ting took a mug but did not drink.

"Comrade Chiao-ku. . ." he began, his lips trembling.

The girl knew what he wanted to say. People might think that under the circumstances she was entitled to a few words of thanks. But she needed no thanks. This wasn't something between her and Ting as individuals! Such an idea had never crossed her mind. To prevent Ting from going on, she put in quickly, "Master Ting, will you ring up Lotus Pond Station and find out whether No. 2034's going to be on time?"

"Right!" The ringing tone of his reply took Ting himself by surprise. The young woman beside him seemed to possess a power which urged him, too, ahead. When someone devotes himself to the revolution whole-heartedly without any thought of self, he becomes most resourceful and courageous, quick to grasp the truth and sensitive to new things, able to rally all around him to fight hard against erroneous and reactionary forces. Our Party and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution led by it were bringing up a new generation of this type. Of course Ting Pao-kang who had led a bitter life in the old society had only a very hazy idea of all this. Even so, he felt keenly the power and the inspiration emanating from his young colleague. He cranked the telephone vigorously and spoke excitedly to the man on duty at Lotus Pond Station.

Suddenly a commotion was heard in the waiting room. Then several people darkened the back door of the office. One of them

broke into the room. "Is the chairman of your revolutionary committee here?"

Chiao-ku was just jotting down something in her record book. Looking over her shoulder, she saw a man in his late forties, a little on the short side and rather plump. He wore a grey uniform and had a glossy black brief-case in his hand. This was Fan, the man heading the investigation group sent by the bureau. Very likely it was he who had telephoned Cheng a grossly exaggerated account of the happenings here just now. She tried hard to place Fan. At last she remembered that she had heard about this man when she attended the freight transport class. He had been a deputy chief of the bureau's freight transport department but after committing a serious mistake in 1957 he had stayed at home, posing as an invalid. How had he become the head of the investigation group? Judging by his record he could hardly support the Cultural Revolution and would lose no chance of attacking the new cadres. Then why this sudden show of concern for them now? Most likely it was bogus. But Cheng, once goaded, was easily taken in. No wonder she had heard complaints that some of the investigation group were surreptitiously gathering "information" from the handful of people here who were against the Cultural Revolution, though the group was supposed to be summing up the advanced experience of Lake Pavilion Station in the January Revolution. Rumours had been spread on the one hand that the new cadres would not last long, while on the other hand they were being urged to build up their prestige by showing their ability when carrying out the new schedule. Well, she would see what new tricks these diehards got up to.

When Chiao-ku didn't bother to greet him, Fan repeated, "Where's the chairman of your revolutionary committee, Chiao-ku?"

Little Shen glared at him. "Are your eyes on the top of your head?"

Chiao-ku had felt a little keyed up when she crossed swords with her old teacher, but now that all the facts had come to light she felt nothing but contempt for the man before her. Slowly she closed her record book and put away her fountain-pen.

"I'm Chiao-ku," she said with a smile. "Haven't we met before? What can I do for you?"

"Oh, Comrade Chiao-ku, excuse me." He smiled too, then looked serious again. "I was told that the bureau's dispatchers' office has just sent you an order. Is that true?"

"You're certainly well-informed. I suppose you know too that we don't intend to carry it out."

Fan had not expected such a retort from a slip of a girl. To keep the initiative he decided to change the subject. He pulled a bulky book out of his brief-case and slammed it on the desk.

"Here are the railway regulations. Even if you don't know them all by heart, as head of a station you should at least know the gist of most of them. Just ask Old Ting, who's an old hand here. As a young hopeful who's come to the fore in the Cultural Revolution, you must realize this yourself."

"He's making things difficult for the girl on purpose!" thought Ting, furious. He wanted to stand out and speak up for Chiao-ku, but since all this rumpus was on his account it seemed hardly fit for him to intervene. On second thoughts however, he decided not to hold back for fear of being suspected of ulterior motives. He should learn from Chiao-ku and struggle against wrong ideas.

"What do you mean by talking like that?" he asked indignantly.

Chiao-ku took off her homespun over-sleeves, folded them neatly, and put them on the desk. Fixing Fan with her eyes, she said calmly, "It's true there're a lot of things I don't know yet. But I know what you meant just now. According to the rules, the dispatcher's order is law and it's an offence to defy it. Am I right?"

Fan shrugged. "No need to spell it out to someone as bright as you. But what do you propose to do about it?"

The telephone rang. Chiao-ku took up the receiver. It was Lotus Pond Station calling to ask for clearance for No. 2034, soon due at their station.

Chiao-ku handed Ting the receiver. Getting to her feet she said solemnly, "Comrade Ting Pao-kang, as the officer on duty please get ready for the incoming train."

Ting took the receiver and gave a positive answer. He then pressed a button. In that instant the two stations scores of kilometres apart switched on red levers simultaneously and two steel tablets

identical in shape but with different markings popped out of their cabinets, evidence that both officers on duty had given clearance to the incoming train. These tablets were passes in the eyes of engine-drivers.

"Master Tang, will you get your men ready?" said Chiao-ku as she quickly scribbled on a piece of paper.

Tang left the room. A moment later some dozen powerful porters came running down the platform. Startled, Fan backed away a step in alarm. But he was mistaken again for they merely lined up, numbered off and inspected their equipment, ready to unload and load the incoming train.

Chiao-ku folded her note and put it with the tablet into a special bag.

"Comrades," she said cordially to the men in Fan's group. "If you want to join us for a spot of work, you're welcome."

They all stepped forward readily.

"Come with me then, what are you waiting for?" Little Shen drawled.

"Mind your manners, Little Shen." Chiao-ku laughed. "It's the first time they've done this work. Safety first, remember. Fetch them each a shoulder pad."

Having seen that everything was ready, Chiao-ku took a small hammer from the wall and made for the door. Turning to Fan who was still standing there awkwardly, she said: "You asked me what I proposed to do. I propose to abide by your railway regulations — while a train's coming in, no outsiders are allowed in the control office."

The fellow was taken aback. Slowly he turned to slink out by the back door. Chiao-ku pointed to the book on the desk and said, "Don't forget your regulations!"

A minute later, a clanging rang out from Lake Pavilion Station — dong, dong, dong . . . as Chiao-ku belaboured a three-foot length of rail hanging over the platform.

Ten minutes later there echoed from the distance an answering clanging . . . dong, dong, dong.

Evidently the driver of No. 2034 was in high spirits for he had opened the valve of the golden brass bell above his engine and it was clanging lustily with the motion of the train.

Passers-by on both sides of the station watched with interest as the long train steamed in.

The moment No. 2034 came to a standstill, Master Tang and all his men went into action. Keeping to the lines drawn up in the new work chart, the porters unloaded nearly seven tons of miscellaneous freight then loaded a dozen tons of seed-rice, all in less than four minutes. When the last plank was removed it was just 17:59, the exact departure time according to the new schedule.

When the fireman opened the bag containing the tablet he found Chiao-ku's note and glanced through it. "Here, Engine-driver Chiao, a letter from your daughter," he said, handing it to him with a smile.

The old driver knocked the ashes out of his pipe before he took the note.

Dear Comrades-in-Arms,

Let us fight together for Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. Please see that this train reaches its terminus on time.

"You muddle-head," snapped the old driver. "Can't you see it's addressed to comrades-in-arms? Get ready for action. More steam."

"Get ready for action, more steam!" repeated the fireman.

Standing solemnly at his post waving the green flag, Ting Pao-kang watched the train move off.

Whistle tooting, the long train after its brief halt soon gathered speed again and thundered off.

Ting rolled up his flag only after he had seen the train round a green hill. Out of habit, he hooked a finger round his watch chain and fished out his pocket-watch. Ten seconds to 18 hours. Looking up he saw someone quietly sweeping the platform. There was no mistaking those plump ruddy cheeks, two short plaits and, under the faded blue uniform, the jacket of red homespun.

From behind the hills floated the blasts of the train's whistle. The second hand of Ting's watch reached 18 hours as the clock in the control office struck six.

Three days later the revolutionary committee of the railway bureau received a report headed "The Plot Behind No. 2034 Must Be Investigated." It was an exposure of a diehard capitalist-roader in the railway bureau who had attempted to start trouble at Lake Pavilion Station, an outpost on the border of two railway bureaux, by using a man named Fan. He had tried to disrupt the new schedule to sabotage the Cultural Revolution. The report was signed by Chiao Chiao-ku and three members of Fan's investigation group.

Illustrated by Kao Chuan



Meng Hsin-ying

It was time for the morning shift to begin. Greeting each other with lively banter and laughter, workers were streaming from all sides through the gate of the textile mill, just like water pouring through a wide-open sluice.

Beside the main thoroughfare in the mill was a propaganda board, before which a large crowd had gathered. An old worker, hurrying by, asked casually: "What's everyone reading?"

"An article by the Meng Hsin-ying Group. They've set themselves a new target," someone answered.

The old worker halted and elbowed his way through the throng, eager to see what this new target was. . . .

The Meng Hsin-ying Group of the weaving shop was known to all the workers of the mill. Ever since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution it has been a Red Banner winner. And people agreed that it was good all round: A1 in ideology, A1 in production and A1 in unity.

However, the group's leader Meng Hsin-ying kept urging her fellow workers not to rest on their oars but to strive to do still bet-

ter. This attitude of hers won the approval of the older women, who used to say: "Hsin-ying, you're perfectly right. 'Good, better, best; never let it rest till the good is better and the better best.'" To this the younger ones would add: "Sister Hsin-ying, just you give the lead and we'll back you up to the hilt."

Yet things always develop through struggles between contradictory aspects. While people were reading this new article on the blackboard, friction was arising within the group itself.

The mill had recently started trial-production of polyester fabrics. Since this called for better weaving techniques, the weaving workshop had decided to transfer Shen Ah-fang, a skilled hand in the MHY Group, to another section to pass on her technical know-how. A worker from that other section would take her place.

That very morning before the shift began, the news of this exchange reached the group as they were changing in the locker room. It aroused a buzz of excited speculation. The bringer of the news was Yang Pei. Tucking her short thick plaits into her cap, she announced that while passing by the office of the workshop's Party secretary she had overheard a conversation between Meng Hsin-ying and Secretary Wei. "The secretary was asking Sister Hsin-ying if she had anybody special in mind. It sounds as if she can take her choice. We can trust her to pick someone good."

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. You may be in for a shock," rejoined Chu Ting, a smile dimpling her plump cheeks.

"Know what I think? Hsin-ying will most likely choose Ku Ya-chin," added forty-year-old Hsu Hsiao-mei, who having put on her working clothes and white apron was picking some fluff off her sleeve.

"What?" Yang Pei's eyes nearly popped out of her head. "Ya-chin? Haven't you heard that jingle about her?"

Ya-chin won't speak at meetings,
To work she's not inclined;
No matter how you push or pull
She always lags behind.

"*Aiya!* Just listen to the girl!" Hsiao-mei chuckled. "So you don't think Ya-chin's up to the job, eh?"

"Whether she is or not is none of my business. But our A1 group shouldn't take anyone so backward," retorted Yang Pei, pouting.

"What's this about an A1 group? And who's backward?" demanded Meng Hsin-ying, who had just entered.

Yang Pei flushed up while the others flocked round Hsin-ying to ask her about the newcomer.

"Go on with your discussion. I'd like to hear what you think," said the young group leader whose face was radiant.

"All right then. I'll give it you straight. Anyone else will do but not Ku Ya-chin," blurted out Yang Pei, her face redder than ever, one of her plaits escaping from her cap.

"Why not?" Hsin-ying stepped up to the girl to tuck her plait back.

"Never mind why. Just tell us whom you've chosen," insisted Yang Pei. Only nineteen and a member of the Communist Youth League, Yang Pei had just finished her apprenticeship. Being quick-tempered, she looked ready to burst if Hsin-ying delayed her answer any longer.

"All right, I'll tell you, but mind you take the news in the right spirit. Our replacement is Ya-chin."

With a cry of dismay Yang Pei seated herself on a locker and said no more. Hsin-ying looked round to see the expressions on the other faces, some showing approval and others obviously worried. As she changed her clothes the scene of her talk with the Party secretary came back to her mind. . . .

Early that morning when Hsin-ying reached the mill, Secretary Wei Lin-ti had just knocked off after the night shift. She beckoned Hsin-ying to her office.

"Hsin-ying, we've decided to take Shen Ah-fang out of your group. Any objection?" Wei asked without any preliminaries.

"No, none," answered Hsin-ying equally briskly. "We have the most skilled hands, so we ought to help other groups."

"But we'll send you a replacement. Whom would you like?" Wei looked squarely at Hsin-ying.

"Give us Ya-chin," replied Hsin-ying readily.

"Ya-chin? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

Wei looked into Hsin-ying's sparkling eyes and was touched. Memories of the past flashed into her mind. Eight years ago when Meng Hsin-ying, just turned seventeen, came to this factory Wei, a loom tender of thirty years' standing, took her on as her apprentice. At first the girl had clung to her like a shadow, turning to her for every little thing. However, with the help of the Party, the Youth League and the older hands Hsin-ying, a third-generation worker, had made rapid progress. Well steeled in the Cultural Revolution, she became a Party member and was put in charge of over two dozen workers operating several hundred looms. Work in her group went with such a swing that veterans in other shops held it up as a model. Thus Meng Hsin-ying became a standard-bearer in the eyes of the youngsters, and the group under her was acknowledged by everyone to be an advanced unit. Secretary Wei, now greying at the temples, could not suppress a smile of satisfaction as she recalled her former apprentice's progress and her political and ideological maturity. She fully approved this offer to take on Ku Ya-chin.

"Now tell me, Hsin-ying, why you choose Ya-chin."

"You know, Secretary Wei, that both Ya-chin's mother and mine worked as 'contract labourers' before Liberation, and that Ya-chin and I came to this mill at the same time. When I was a group leader of the Youth League, she was in my group and eager to make progress. But after she married and had a baby she began to change..." Hsin-ying, a little worked up, paused a moment before going on: "I've never missed any chance for a talk with her, but since we're not on the same shift we haven't seen too much of each other. When I heard that jingle about her, I was really worried. I feel that one of our young people shouldn't lag behind like that."

"Don't worry, Hsin-ying," said the older woman warmly. "The Party branch has talked over this problem and we're going to transfer Ya-chin to your group. It's true she's not made much progress politically and has some unhealthy ideas, but she's essentially sound. Remember both her father and grandfather were workers

too. Your group as an advanced unit should help her to catch up with the rest of you."

"We will!" Hsin-ying sprang to her feet. "Ya-chin has quite a few good points, actually. Just after she finished her apprenticeship she was voted an advanced worker."

"Get your whole group to work on this, Hsin-ying," was Secretary Wei's parting advice. "Your own Party secretary won't be back for some time from that study course. As a member of the Party committee you must do more ideological work yourself."

This advice was in Hsin-ying's mind as she took a look at her anxious fellow workers.

Since she was silent for so long, Hsu Hsiao-mei put in, "Hsin-ying, I don't see anything wrong with taking on Ku Ya-chin. I'm not worried about her being backward, we can help her along."

"Right," said Chu Ting. "We've just been studying philosophy, let's put it into practice by turning something negative into something positive."

"Ya-chin can mend her ways, can't she?" added another.

Only Yang Pei, still unconvinced, sat tight on the locker with her back to the rest. "Help her along, help her along!" she grumbled. "With Ya-chin pulling us back we'll never get anywhere. Aren't we preparing to break another record? If so, our group..." She left the sentence unfinished.

"Our group should have a meeting after this shift." Hsin-ying completed Yang Pei's sentence for her. "We'll thrash the problem out and decide how to view it and how to cope with it. Now let's get to work."

Hsin-ying took Yang Pei's hand and pulled her up. The girl, still pouting, couldn't repress a chuckle as she met Hsin-ying's eyes which were disapproving yet so full of concern. Yang Pei pulled a long face and tossed her head. "Why are you staring at me? I don't agree, and that's that."

Ignoring this, Hsin-ying walked along with her to the weaving shop, where she patted her on the shoulder and said something. But what this was nobody could hear because of the roar and clatter of the machines.

Some people thought Meng Hsin-ying rather "peculiar" because whenever asked at meetings to introduce her Red Banner group's successful experience, she always pointed out its shortcomings. And in reply to praise she would say sincerely, "We've a long way to go yet. If we keep looking backward, we'll slow down. We should look forward and never stop advancing, just as when making our rounds between the weaving frames. Besides, compared with other groups, we're still behind in many ways." Normally, when chatting or laughing with fellow workers, twenty-five-year-old Hsin-ying was as gay as a lark, giving no one the impression of an old head on young shoulders. But from her study, work and handling of problems, people could easily see that she used her head and was far-sighted.

Now the news of Ku Ya-chin's selection spread like wildfire through the whole mill, causing a wide discussion. Most of the workers admired Hsin-ying's bold spirit but some feared that, strong as her shoulders were, she might find Ya-chin too much of a "burden".

Hsin-ying did not falter in her determination to give the new replacement a hearty welcome. And Ya-chin was surprised to find the rest of the MHY Group equally warm-hearted. Even Yang Pei showed up well: she didn't say anything at the welcome meeting but neither did she sulk. Since Hsin-ying had pointed out the fact that Ya-chin might change, she was watching to see how the newcomer would behave. As long as Ya-chin did not handicap the whole group, Yang Pei would be satisfied.

Ya-chin's transfer to the well-known MHY Group had taken her completely by surprise. Though she never considered herself "backward" she knew that she was far behind Hsin-ying, who was her own age and had come to this mill at the same time. Now that she had a home, a husband and a child, it was no longer so easy to go all out and work whole-heartedly. To complete her quota each month, she thought, was enough. As to such group activities as study and meetings, she thought nothing of often excusing herself

from them. Besides, she was quite contented with her life, especially when compared with what she had gone through in the bad old days when her parents had died of hunger. She felt lucky to live in the new society, not only with a job guaranteed but with a snug home too — something her parents never had enjoyed. That being so, she did not care what people thought of her. As long as she fulfilled her quota, what else mattered? Her close friend Liu Wei-chih, a nurse in the clinic, often said to her: "Enjoy life while you can. You're only young once. When you're getting on for forty like me, you won't enjoy life half so much. Why not just take it easy and have a good time? You're not out for a name, so why should you strain yourself?"

Nevertheless, Ku Ya-chin did feel a little tense when she came to the MHY Group. She was touched, of course, by the genuine warmth of her welcome, and particularly by being assigned Hsin-ying's twenty-four new looms instead of the old looms left by Shen Ah-fang. After a couple of days, however, she found herself quite out of step with the rest of the group. If she kept to their tight schedule of work, study, meetings and talks, it would disturb the happy home life she was used to. The group's trial-production of polyester fabrics only added to the tension. Feeling unable to stand the pace, knitting her brows, she ventured to say at a meeting, "I just haven't got the skill to raise my output."

Meng Hsin-ying who worked in the lane next to hers knew what was in Ya-chin's mind. Sometimes on an inspection tour, Hsin-ying would come over to help her re-start a stopped loom. She observed that Ya-chin was not slow at all when it came to knot-making. But she wasted a lot of time by day-dreaming, when she would stop to stare absently at the loom until reminded to get on with her work.

This made it clear to Hsin-ying that Ya-chin's trouble was not due to lack of skill but to her way of thinking. Hsin-ying used to say: Lack of enthusiasm in work can always be traced to wrong thinking. What was Ya-chin thinking about all the time? To find this out, Hsin-ying determined to have a good chat with her.

One evening the group met for a discussion after work. No sooner did it end than Ya-chin got up to go home. "Ya-chin, come here and let's have a talk," Hsin-ying called out to her fondly.

Before Ya-chin could refuse, Hsin-ying led her to sit down by the window, handing her some of the cotton waste she was holding. Ya-chin knew what this meant, for it was the custom in the group to practise knot-making in every spare moment.

"Ya-chin, you've been here a week now, haven't you? What do you think of the work here?" asked Hsin-ying, her fingers deftly making knots.

Ya-chin lowered her head, simply twisting a thread round her fingers. She kept silent for a long while, then said, "I haven't really thought about it."

"Do you remember the day we first came to the mill?" Hsin-ying glanced at the rows of brightly-lit buildings outside. "What a tremendous change!"

Ya-chin remained silent.

The ghost of a smile flitted across Hsin-ying's face at the sight of those compressed lips. "There's been quite a change in you too, Ya-chin," she said.

"In me? What sort of change?" was the rather tense rejoinder.

"From a middle-school student who'd just left off a Young Pioneer's red scarf to a textile worker; from an ignorant apprentice to a skilled weaver — isn't that a great change?"

Ya-chin, raising her head to glance at her group leader, realized that Hsin-ying was completely in earnest.

"You surely haven't forgotten the year you and I finished our apprenticeship and were cited as advanced workers? When we went up the platform to receive our prizes, I was so nervous that you had to push me forward. 'Don't be shy,' you said. 'This is only the beginning. We must do our best to keep this title every year. Remember?'"

Ya-chin hung her head again, mechanically tearing at the cotton waste in her hand.

"But you began thinking differently later on. How did that hap-

pen?" Hsin-ying paused in her knotting to have a look at Ya-chin's elaborate hair-do.

"I ... I'd household chores to attend to after my marriage. That made a big difference..." Ya-chin muttered, wondering why she couldn't give her group leader her usual reply to those who criticized her, namely that as long as she completed her quota that should be enough.

"If that's the case," Hsin-ying said smiling, "then Hsu Hsiao-mei, Chu Ting and the others in our group who have a large family and more housework than you have more reason to mark time. Right? But look at them, how keen they are in their work and studies!"

Ya-chin darted a look at Hsin-ying, then answered half in fun and half in earnest, "How can I compare with them? People say I'm backward. How can someone backward compare with advanced workers?"

"It's not what people say that counts but your own behaviour." Hsin-ying's tone was grave now. "How many women textile workers are there in our mill, how many women factory workers in our country? When they get married and have families, does that stop them from making any further progress?"

Hsin-ying stood up and stroked Ya-chin's shoulder, adding gently: "Ya-chin, we're all workers, young workers in the socialist period. We must be a credit to our class. Seriously, what did you have in mind when you first started working, and what are your ideas now?..."

Ya-chin just sat there in silence, looking worried. Hsin-ying helped her up and said, "It's late, and you've the child to fetch from the nursery. Let's go. I'll see you home."

On the way back Ya-chin continued silent, too confused to put her thoughts into words, uncertain even whether what she felt was resentment or remorse. Hsin-ying was silent too. Secretary Wei had repeatedly told her that ideological work required just as much patience and attention to detail as did the warping of threads. Now Ya-chin's case was a good test for her.

In the June sunshine the cream-coloured factory buildings were a sight to dazzle the eye. In the weaving shop looms were roaring, shuttles flying; lengths of smooth white fabric were growing inch by inch. . . .

Meng Hsin-ying and her group were hard at work minding their looms. Their faces were perspiring. It was not too hot there, actually, as the place was well ventilated, but they were working like a house on fire!

Since trial-production of the new fabric started, the whole group had gone all out to improve their skill and their output had been rising day by day. Their joy over this was tempered by worry about Ku Ya-chin, and Hsin-ying, it goes without saying, was most worried. Recently Ya-chin had been attending meetings and study classes more often than before, but she was still very unpredictable. In order to keep up with the others she paid more attention to stop-pages of the looms than to checking the fabric woven, so that several times she turned out defective products, affecting the quality standard of the whole group. Hsin-ying decided to hold an on-the-spot meeting to study the problem and find ways to solve it. But the morning the meeting was set for, Ya-chin did not turn up. Why? Hsin-ying was speculating about this while tending her own looms when someone behind her called out loudly, "Group leader!" She spun round and saw it was Yang Pei.

"Look!" bellowed Yang Pei, shoving a slip of paper into Hsin-ying's hand. Unfolding it, Hsin-ying found it was a sick-leave permit from the clinic entitling Ku Ya-chin to two days' rest for gastritis.

At noon when they knocked off for lunch, Hsin-ying stayed on to clean Ya-chin's twenty-four looms. She did the job meticulously, outwardly calm but inwardly much perturbed by Ya-chin's absence.

The previous evening the problem of how to help Ku Ya-chin had been discussed at a Party meeting. Hsu Hsiao-mei and several other veteran weavers had mentioned the close relationship between Ya-chin and the nurse Liu Wei-chih. Ya-chin obviously modelled

herself on Liu in many ways, even down to her hair-style and dress. Of course it isn't wrong for a young woman to care about her appearance, so long as she doesn't spend too much time on this. What worried them, however, was Liu's influence on Ya-chin's thinking.

While they were talking, Hsin-ying conjured up a picture of a woman of nearly forty with ivory skin, plump cheeks and a stylish hair-do. That was Liu Wei-chih, daughter of a merchant. She had been brought up by her aunt, wife of the capitalist boss of this mill before Liberation. At the time of Liberation when Liu had just graduated from middle-school her uncle gave her a job in the mill's accounting department, but she was quite unable to keep accounts. In 1960 she was transferred to the clinic to be a nurse. Having picked up the bourgeois outlook on life from her aunt, she not only ordered her own life by it but was always propagating bourgeois ideas.

Hsin-ying blamed herself for not having noticed the close relationship between Liu and Ya-chin. As a Communist she ought to have been sensitive to everything going on around her. Now that a class sister like Ku Ya-chin had fallen behind, she must help her for the sake of the revolution.

"Hsin-ying, why cut your lunch?"

Hsin-ying wheeled round and found Hsu Hsiao-mei had brought her two steaming-hot buns.

"You should take care of your health, Hsin-ying. You look thin these days," added Hsu amiably.

Hsin-ying's heart immediately flooded with warmth. She said, "I'm wondering how to help Ya-chin to forge ahead."

"Ya-chin? She's come."

"Has she? Where is she?"

"She was changing when I came in," answered Hsu.

Hsin-ying started for the locker room but was intercepted by Ya-chin who had come back to her lane.

Seeing her group leader standing beside the looms with a pile of dusters before her and the buns Hsu Hsiao-mei had been carrying in her hands, Ya-chin understood everything. She was very moved and thoroughly ashamed.

"Ya-chin, are you all right now?" Hsin-ying asked with concern. "You should be resting at home, why come to work?"

Ya-chin, flushing, hung her head and said nothing.

From her expression Hsin-ying knew how she felt. By now the rest of the group were coming back. Hsin-ying said to Ya-chin, "Tending looms requires concentration. If you have anything to say to me, wait until after the shift. If you feel unwell, let Chu Ting help you. Don't overdo it."

Ya-chin nodded.

In spite of Hsin-ying's kind advice Ya-chin couldn't control her uneasiness. While working she watched the expressions of those around her. She could have kicked herself for her stupid behaviour.

When she reached the far end of her lane she found a stoppage. Having tied up the broken thread she was just about to switch on when she saw Yang Pei glaring at her from the opposite lane. This made her lose her head and jerk the lever. Abruptly the loom started and jammed. Crack! The shuttle broke. Sweat beaded Ya-chin's nose, her head seemed to be bursting. Truly, troubles never come singly. And she could imagine Yang Pei's caustic comment: "Some weaver you are, breaking shuttles!"

Of course, Yang Pei was exasperated by Ya-chin's clumsiness — after turning out inferior work all these days she had now gone and broken a shuttle! But in order not to disturb the whole group the girl bit back the acid remark on the tip of her tongue and went on making her rounds.

Nevertheless, Yang Pei was Yang Pei. It was impossible for her to hold back her feelings for long. Soon after the shift she stirred up a storm in the workshop.

Ya-chin was just entering the locker room when she found Yang Pei close at her heels. The girl's stern face dismayed her. Taking off her cap, she turned away to fish out a mirror from her handbag, and as she picked some cotton fluff off her hair she watched the girl in the mirror. Yang Pei seized this opportunity to attack.

"Go on, have a good look!" she sneered. "Your face is so lovely, red and white. And there's red and white, too, on the lovely fabrics

you weave." This was a reference to the red and white "strings" tied on defective products in the inspection room.

Instantly Ya-chin flared up. "What do a few rejects matter?" she snapped back. "Who hasn't turned out a reject? You're only a greenhorn, it's not for you to gripe."

This so enraged Yang Pei that she bawled, "How lightly you take things — only a few rejects! You've lowered our whole group's standard. You do as you please — you didn't show up at this morning's meeting and now you've spoiled a shuttle. Anyone working in our group must keep up its good name. We can't let one stinking fish spoil the whole soup!"

"So I stink, do I! All right, why not have me transferred? Who wants to share in your glory?"

With this Ya-chin snatched up her handbag and flung out of the room. Hsin-ying, Hsu Hsiao-mei and Chu Ting who had just come in went after her, calling to her to stop, but she dashed off without even turning her head.

Returning to the locker room, Hsin-ying saw Yang Pei sitting on a locker with tears in her eyes.

"Sister Hsin-ying, you should have heard her..." Yang Pei protested bitterly, frowning and pouting.

Hsin-ying was both amused and exasperated. Yang Pei studied hard, used her head and dared to speak up, act and fight for the right. There was no holding her back. But it was time she grew up, raised her level of understanding and made fresh headway.

"I've just heard you!" Hsin-ying retorted, sitting down beside Yang Pei. "Is that the way for a Youth League member to help a comrade? All you can think of is our group's good name. Have you never reflected why we should help Ku Ya-chin? Is it just because she may spoil our good name? Think it over..."

By this time the rest of the workers had come in. They clustered round to listen, forgetting to change.

With a look at them all Hsin-ying continued, "Ya-chin is one of our younger generation, a member of the working class. She should take up the responsibility history imposes on us workers, be worthy of our Party's expectations and go forward with us together. How

can we allow her to lag behind and even fall a victim to bourgeois ideas? We must look further, keeping in mind the interests of the working class and the revolution. Remember Chairman Mao's call: **'Unite to win still greater victories!'**" As she said this Hsin-ying was gazing into the distance and she had lowered her voice as if talking to herself.

As Yang Pei listened, her knit brows smoothed out. Her cheeks were still wet with tears but her wide-open eyes took on a thoughtful expression. . . .

4

Night was closing in. It was growing dark indoors.

Back at home Ku Ya-chin sat motionless on her bed, a tumult in her heart. . . .

Since her marriage she had felt contented and happy. It had never struck her how her interest had shifted from the mill and her fellow workers to her home, family and personal problems. It would be incorrect to say, however, that Ku Ya-chin had from the start been used to a snug life like this. Not to speak of the glorious time when she had gained the title of advanced worker, even in the early days of her marriage she had not behaved as she did now. The first time she played truant from a meeting in order to go to a film with her husband she had felt rather guilty. But when Liu Wei-chih heard about this she laughed. "Don't be a fool," she said. "You're only a rank-and-file worker, you needn't take things so seriously. As long as you finish your quota that's good enough." So before long Ya-chin thought nothing of playing truant, and Liu Wei-chih became her closest friend. If the reproaches of the management and her work-mates sometimes caused her a twinge of remorse Liu soon talked her out of it.

Her experience in Hsin-ying's group had thrown Ya-chin off balance again. The warm-hearted help given her made her feel bad. She realized how far she had lagged behind the others, who were speeding ahead all the time like flying shuttles while she had ground to a stop

like a rusty loom. She was not clear why this had happened and did want to catch up with the others in production. Unfortunately those defective products turned up and an on-the-spot meeting to discuss her bad work was more than she could take. Then Liu Wei-chih supplied her with a way out—a bogus sick-leave permit.

At home that morning Ya-chin's conscience had plagued her. The faces of her work-mates rose before her: the anger and disappointment on Hsu Hsiao-mei's lined face; the fury and contempt in Yang Pei's ingenuous eyes; and, most often, Hsin-ying's familiar kindly smile. Yet Ya-chin fancied that a stern look had come into Hsin-ying's sparkling eyes as if to reproach her: "Ya-chin, we are all workers, we must be a credit to our class. . . ."

Suddenly Ya-chin's eyes fell on a photograph on the bookcase which Hsin-ying had brought to her a few days before. It showed the two of them in work clothes and caps, hand in hand and smiling as they gazed into the distance. It had been taken just after they were cited advanced workers.

"Have I really changed so much?" Ya-chin asked herself. Looking at the picture, she recalled the talk Hsin-ying had had with her here a couple of days ago.

In fact, ever since Ya-chin's transfer to this group, if there was no meeting after work Hsin-ying used to call at her home. Sometimes Hsin-ying talked of nothing in particular, only keeping her company as she read or studied; at other times she discussed with her problems of interest or helped her with her housework. This had stirred Ya-chin very deeply.

Hsin-ying had given Ya-chin this picture with the remark, "I like this photo so much I've brought it along for you in case you've misplaced your own print." The sight of the picture took Ya-chin's breath away. It reminded her of a scene she should never have forgotten.

One Sunday she had asked Hsin-ying to go with her and have a photograph taken. Hsin-ying was not too keen.

"This is a special occasion," urged Ya-chin. "After all, we've both been cited as advanced workers."



"I'd rather wait till I've really become one of the vanguard of the working class."

This was looking too far ahead for Ya-chin. "Let's take a picture now as a memento," she pleaded. "From today on we'll try together to join the vanguard, how about that?"

To this Hsin-ying had readily agreed.

But by the time Hsin-ying became a Party member, Ya-chin's aim in life had shifted.

Now, looking at the picture, Ya-chin re-lived that scene in retrospect.

"Ya-chin, remember what you said at that time?" asked Hsin-ying.

Ya-chin hung her head.

"It seems to me that your goal in life has changed. In those days you were active, eager to go forward, and understood your responsibilities as a worker and young revolutionary. But now you've thrown all that overboard," said Hsin-ying gravely.

When Ya-chin recalled this talk and her bogus sick-leave permit, she felt a great pang of remorse.

Time slipped by. Suddenly Ya-chin heard a click and the room was flooded with light. She raised her head to find Hsin-ying standing before her. Her friend was perspiring and out of breath. Obviously she had come here in a hurry.

The sight lifted a great load from Ya-chin's mind. She blurted out, "Hsin-ying, I've been wrong..."

5

Morning after rain; in the east a red-gold sky.

Carrying a bulging knapsack, Hsin-ying was heading for the mill in high spirits. Her rosy cheeks glowed with health. As she swung along she was pondering the encouraging changes in Ku Ya-chin.

In the past fortnight Ya-chin had put her whole heart into her work, into the trial-production of new fabrics. To everyone's amazement, her output had jumped from the lowest to the highest in the group. She clearly had the makings of a first-rate technician. The last few

days she had been trying out a new method of knotting polyester threads. . . .

Those who had enjoyed reciting the jingle about Ya-chin were the most astonished. To them Yang Pei said, "What's so strange about it? This is what we call spirit changing into matter." This made everybody laugh.

What pleased Hsin-ying specially was that Ya-chin had spent two evenings writing a report on her gains in her recent political studies, a description, in fact, of how her thinking had changed. Hsin-ying read this through twice, then spent a whole evening copying it out in the form of a big-character poster which ran into dozens of sheets. This was what she was now carrying in her knapsack. Posting it up, she thought, would not only encourage Ya-chin but teach the rest of them a good lesson too.

When Hsin-ying reached the mill and put up the poster, it caused quite a sensation. People flocked to read it.

Meanwhile laughter was ringing through the weaving shop where the Meng Hsin-ying Group, after a day off, were preparing for the first shift. Since it was still early they had gathered round Ya-chin to watch her demonstrate her new knot-making method.

Ya-chin's fingers moved so nimbly that Yang Pei cried, "Hey, really fast! Sister Ya-chin, will you teach me how to do that?"

"So Yang Pei's stopped calling Ya-chin a fish," someone joked, setting all the on-lookers laughing.

"Who's picking on me?" retorted Yang Pei, pouting. "I admitted I was wrong, didn't I?"

At that moment in came their group leader. The workers immediately surrounded her.

"Comrades, let me tell you some good news," began Hsin-ying. "Secretary Wei's just told me that the factory's Party committee has decided to put polyester fabrics on the mill's regular production schedule next month which starts tomorrow."

The weavers cheered and applauded.

"Not only that," continued Hsin-ying. "The Party branch of our shop has decided to popularize Comrade Ya-chin's fast knot-making method and to commend her for the marked progress in

her thinking. . . . Another thing: with the help of the management and the workers, Liu Wei-chih has made a self-examination and admitted her faults."

"Hurrah! Good for Ya-chin! Congratulations." Over a dozen pairs of hands were extended to Ya-chin. The one who grasped her hands most firmly was Yang Pei. After that Ya-chin sprang forward to grip Hsin-ying's hands and promise, "Hsin-ying, I'm going to do my best. . . to be Chairman Mao's good worker."

Hsin-ying beamed and nodded, thinking to herself: "Wonderful! This is unity: a real good fight and, finally, victory!"

Illustrated by Wang Tieb



Liu Chang

Gathering Medicinal Herbs

As I climb the heights at dawn,
Above the treetops flaunt the flame-red clouds;
Fragrant wild herbs perfume the mountain slopes,
Their sweetness inviting me to take my choice.

As the sun climbs the high vault above,
With blended bird-song for my orchestra,
I fill my arms with plants, both leaves and flowers;
Climbing a steep bank I find I'm singing, together
With the wind that sighs among the upland pines.

At noon I eat beside a mountain spring,
My basket is loaded, but I'm still not tired;

As I start to climb yet one more peak, I swear,
I'll not leave till I find some precious ginseng root.

The crests of ridges where the ginseng grows
Are seldom scaled by men, for bush and creeper clutch and cling;
But with basket held shoulder high, I struggle on,
No thorn thicket shall bar my way.

So tortuous is the climb it reminds me of the past,
When grandfather and father gathered wild herbs;
Though today I follow in their footsteps,
How lucky I am, for now our world has changed.

When grandad climbed the cloud-capped heights,
He snatched ginseng from the very tiger's jaws.
No sick or dying child of his could he afford to cure,
Though the landlord guzzled brews to prolong his life;
As my grandad gathered herbs, deep in his heart, his hatred grew.

My father in his time gathered wild herbs too,
Needed by the field hospital to save our brave guerrillas;
He searched for the most potent herbs and roots
To save and strengthen them till they could fight again
And scatter the enemy's forces across the battle-scarred plain.

Now it's my turn to gather wild herbs,
Many are the new ones I've tried and tested,
To help our peasants regain and build up their strength.
The old god of plague is gone for ever;
Now everyone is strong and working with a will.

Happy are the times when I go to gather herbs,
Each day is as sweet as honey.
We're well prepared to deal with foe or famine;
Our commune is a newly painted picture,
Where the red flag will fly for ever.



Hsing Shu-ti

Book-Markers

Halting on the march
We pore over Marxist classics,
And when the bugle calls us to march on
We pluck leaves for book-markers:

Willow leaves from the eastern coast,
Date leaves from the western mountains,
Orange leaves by rivers in the south,
Maple leaves by streams in the north. . . .

On feet of iron we've tramped for miles past counting,
Collecting a whole sheaf of book-markers;
Their green, their gold, their crimson
Irradiate the march of revolution.

Li Tsai-ping

Stacking Paddy at Night

Gusts of wind, rumbles of thunder,
Clouds blacken the dark night sky;
But the paddy, newly reaped, lies in the open.
The man watching the threshing ground rushes off for help:
“Quick! Before the storm breaks
We must get the grain under cover.”

Young Shuan grabs the gong to sound it,
But the old brigade leader stops him with a whisper:
“Those troops who put up here last night
Must be on their way at dawn. . . .”

The three of them hurry off by different ways,
Tiptoeing to the window of each cottage.

“Get the grain under cover!” Racing the storm,
The message flies round the village.

The old brigade leader speeds back to the threshing ground —
What’s this? The paddy’s been stacked!
And when he raises his lantern it lights up
The red stars gleaming on scores of army caps. . . .



Wang Shu-yuan

Azaleas Bloom Red Over the Mountains

The Chingkang Mountains are the cradle of the Chinese revolution. I visited these mountains several times to collect material for the Peking opera *Azalea Mountain*.

In spring azaleas bloom all over the Chingkang Mountains. Cliffs half hidden by clouds, winding mountain paths, sunny clearings among the pines, the banks of gurgling brooks — all are dotted with azaleas red as flame. One day I called on an old man who had served in the peasant militia in the twenties and was now herding sheep for the local commune. Stroking his white beard he pointed at the flowers on the mountain and said: “Comrade, all these azaleas are dyed red with the blood of our martyrs. These flowers remind us of the days when our great leader Chairman Mao came here to lead us to make revolution. They remind us of the blazing torches we carried in our uprising and the red flags fluttering in the wind when we charged down to fight the Kuomintang bandits. If not for the Communist Party and Chairman Mao who showed us the way

to take, we wouldn't have our glorious life today. These azaleas on the Chingkang Mountains are flowers of the revolution.”

Whenever we dropped in on the peasants, they would offer us some of their local tea and tell stories about how Chairman Mao led the Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army. All these anecdotes expressed the same idea: To make revolution we must rely on guns, and the guns must obey Chairman Mao's leadership. Following the Communist Party and Chairman Mao was the way to victory.

On the doors of many cottages in the mountains were bold inscriptions written on red paper: “Do As Chairman Mao Says; Follow the Chinese Communist Party.” These golden words express what is in the hearts of hundreds of millions of our people. They voice the basic truth of our revolution. With this in mind, we began to work out the plot of our modern revolutionary Peking opera.

The action in *Azalea Mountain* takes place in the spring of 1928. At that time the traitor Chiang Kai-shek in league with foreign imperialists, new and old warlords, reactionary landlords and local despots made a vain attempt to wipe out the Chinese Communist Party, then relatively weak, and to destroy all the revolutionary movements led by the Party. It was a reign of White Terror, during which many massacres were carried out. What was the way out for China? How should the revolution be continued? History was awaiting an answer; the people were awaiting a champion to rescue them. At this crucial moment Comrade Mao Tsetung, great leader of the Chinese people, solemnly called upon the whole Party to seize state power by means of armed force and with his glorious revolutionary practice answered the crucial question raised by history. In the autumn of 1927, Chairman Mao led the famous Autumn Harvest Uprising in east Hunan and west Kiangsi, then built up the first Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army under the leadership of the Communist Party and the first rural revolutionary base in the Chingkang Mountains.

The irresistible influence of these historic events led many revolutionary peasants to take up arms to oppose the cruel massacres launched by the Kuomintang reactionaries. Some of these spontaneous uprisings found the correct leadership of the Party and grew apace, like

small streams flowing into a river to form a mighty torrent. Other forces, which had not found Party leadership, were threatened by destruction. In the Chingkang Mountains we heard stirring tales of how peasant forces had come in search of the Party and how the Party had sent representatives to help them. These tales made us wonder: Why did the hundreds of peasant uprisings in the last two thousand years of Chinese history invariably end in failure? Why were some of the peasant forces in the old revolutionary base repeatedly crushed although they fought so bravely? With these problems in mind, we studied our material in the light of Chairman Mao's teachings: **"Armed struggle by the Chinese Communist Party takes the form of peasant war under proletarian leadership"** and **"The correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything."** These brilliant instructions enlightened us, enabling us to grasp what was essential in this complex mass of materials. The reason for the failure of many spontaneous peasant uprisings in history could be summed up in one sentence: They lacked a correct revolutionary line, lacked Marxist-Leninist leadership, the revolutionary line of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao. The spontaneous peasant revolts in China could only triumph by following the correct leadership of the Party and advancing in accordance with Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. Our deepened understanding of this helped us to clarify and formulate the theme of our opera.

Our socialist drama projects revolutionary themes mainly through the creation of well-rounded proletarian heroes of a high calibre. What type of character should take the central position on the stage? What type of character should we emphasize? This is a matter of principle involving the question of which class should dominate the stage. In view of the requirements of our main theme, after summing up what was typical in our wealth of raw material we decided to make the Communist Ko Hsiang the main heroic character of our opera. Ko Hsiang is sent by the Party from the Chingkang base to take up the heavy responsibility of remoulding the peasant force on Azalea Mountain. In her fierce struggles with non-proletarian ideology, in her fight to the death against class enemies inside and

outside the peasant force, she strives to carry out Chairman Mao's proletarian line for building the revolutionary army and succeeds in remoulding the peasant partisans. She represents Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. We therefore spared no pains to depict this character well, in order to bring out the main theme of this opera effectively.

Ko Hsiang, the Party representative, embodies the splendid qualities of many Party workers in the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army of that period. Throughout the White Terror she fights on, regardless of her own safety. Scene 2 shows the revolutionary heroism of a proletarian fighter when, hemmed in by enemy bayonets on the execution ground, she propagates revolutionary truth. However, the main purpose of this opera is not to depict the conflict between Ko Hsiang and the forces of reaction but to show how she remoulds a peasants' armed force with the Party line and Party policy. Scenes 1 and 2 present the trend in the revolution—the people's longing for Party leadership—and introduce Ko Hsiang as a strong character with a broad mass basis who dares to go against the tide of counter-revolution. Then the rest of the opera, especially Scenes 3, 5 and 8, emphasizes how resolutely she carries out Chairman Mao's proletarian line for the armed forces and how hard she struggles to remould the partisans with the proletarian world outlook in order to expand the Party's armed strength in that time of complex contradictions and sharp conflicts.

Taking Ko Hsiang as the central figure, we introduced a number of interlinked dramatic conflicts, such as the contradictions between Ko Hsiang and Lei Kang, between her and the renegade Wen Chichiu and the Viper. In each case Ko Hsiang is placed in the forefront of a sharp conflict to reveal her heroic character from different angles. We depict her political maturity and acumen, her skill in changing the peasants' non-proletarian ideas and leading them to the proletarian revolutionary line, as well as her courage and staunchness and the brilliance with which she leads the armed force against opposing currents to defeat the enemy. We show her on the one hand as a fine revolutionary army cadre with broad vision and magnanimity; on the other

hand as a simple, honest worker, unpretentious, approachable and experienced in both fighting and farm work. We depict her fierce hatred for the evil landlords and local despots, as well as her devotion to her comrades and her concern for them. . . . Through these various facets of her character we show her as a fearless revolutionary with the daring and ability to oppose wrong trends, for this is her main characteristic, the crux of her proletarian heroism.

Lei Kang is a peasant leader. He has the courage to rise in arms and to persist in armed struggle. Repeated defeats fail to crush his fighting spirit and he risks his own life to find the Communist Party. All this shows his fine qualities. At the same time, however, he embodies the class limitations of a peasant: his political outlook is very limited and he acts on impulse, often most naively. The opera presents three stages in his development. He starts off as a peasant leader who fights instinctively. After finding the Party his personal desire for revenge conflicts with the Party's line and policy and his rashness nearly causes his own death and even the destruction of his whole force, but fortunately Ko Hsiang saves the situation. Finally he learns his lesson and with Ko Hsiang's help discovers the ideological reason for his past mistakes; this is a great leap in his thinking, changing him from a peasant hero who acts on impulse into a fine proletarian fighter devoting his life to the cause of the liberation of mankind.

The opera also depicts the renegade Wen Chi-chiu. This man, deputy chief of the peasant corps, comes from a bankrupt landlord family and while posing as a champion of justice tries to undermine the Party leadership and take over the armed force himself. This negative character helps to elucidate the complex class struggle and the struggle between two lines in the peasant force. Wen's machinations make it more difficult for Ko Hsiang to remould the partisans, but also vividly bring out her ability to spot and defeat wrong trends and to lead the masses through trials to victory.

Peking opera is a composite art combining declamation with singing, acting and acrobatics. In order to bring out the special characteristics of Peking opera and to heighten the revolutionary romanticism of *Azalea Mountain*, in the spirit of Chairman Mao's

instruction "Weed through the old to bring forth the new", we introduced an innovation, rhyming the dialogue throughout the opera. On the basis of classical Chinese poetry, while retaining good features of the traditional dialogue, we broke the fetters of convention and incorporated forms of expression from modern Chinese poetry to render the spoken passages more expressive. Our aim was to make the dialogue more harmonious, rhythmic, antithetical and dramatic, and to bring out the distinctive features of different characters in a way true to life by means of dialogue both poetic and easy to follow. The rhythm and cadence of the rhymed dialogue called for appropriate dance movements and striking, beautiful poses. We took pains to integrate declamation, singing, acting and acrobatics in one organic whole, to produce a poetic drama with singing and dancing imbued with a rich Chinese flavour. All this was done the better to convey the fine spirit of the proletarian heroes in this magnificent age of ours when a single spark set the whole plain ablaze.

In an old Chinese poem we read: "Azaleas in the third month bloom red as flame." Actually, in our vast motherland azaleas blossom not only in spring but sometimes in summer and autumn too. To us, these hardy, glorious flowers symbolize the revolution. This is why we decided to name our opera *Azalea Mountain*.

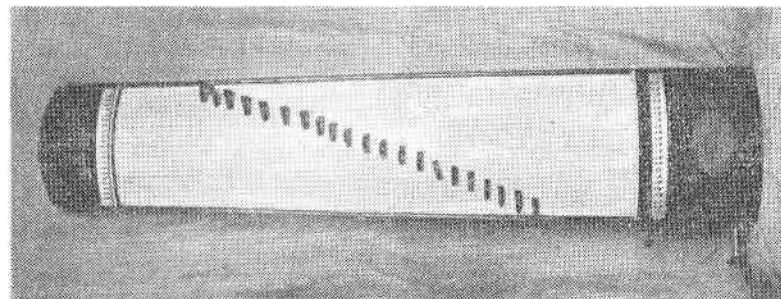
The appearance of *Azalea Mountain* marks yet another achievement in carrying out Chairman Mao's line on literature and art; it is also inseparable from Comrade Chiang Ching's concern and devoted care.

New “Cheng” Music

Legend has it that during the Spring-and-Autumn Period (770-475 B.C.) Yu Po-ya, a renowned musician, was playing his lute one day when a man called Chung Tzu-chi heard it and praised the music highly, comparing it to the grandeur of mountains and the surge of rushing streams. Yu felt that Chung was a true connoisseur and they became good friends. When Chung died, Yu was so overcome with grief that he broke his lute and vowed never to play again. A later musician wrote a composition based on this story and called it *Lofty Peaks and Rushing Streams*. It was played on the *cheng*, an ancient Chinese instrument. The score of this music still exists today, though the date of its composition is not known.

The *cheng*, a stringed instrument, is thus believed to have originated more than two thousand years ago. In the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) *cheng* music was so popular that the poet Po Chu-yi wrote:

In fast carriages they flock to see the peonies,
While horsemen slow down to hear the *cheng* music of Chin.



An improved *cheng*

There are many other references in our old literature to this instrument.

The *cheng* has a beautiful tone and distinctive style. Its rectangular sound-box more than one metre in length has a flat base and convex surface. The number of strings has varied in different ages. The earliest *cheng* had five; later instruments, twelve or thirteen. The strings are plucked with the thumb and first and second fingers of the right hand, while the left hand glides over the strings to produce grace notes and trills.

In feudal times *cheng* music was considered vulgar by the ruling class, so the number of musicians playing this instrument gradually diminished, the tunes became monotonous, the tonal range narrow and the volume small. After Liberation, guided by Chairman Mao's directive to let a hundred flowers blossom and weed through the old to bring forth the new, teachers of traditional Chinese music in various conservatories started special *cheng* classes, folk artists were encouraged to improve the instrument, and old tunes were collected and rearranged. To increase its expressive power, the *cheng's* strings have now been increased to twenty-one or more. Formerly made of silk or steel, they are now often made of nylon which is not affected by climatic changes. These nylon strings retain the tonal quality of the silk strings as well as the sonority of the steel strings. Thus the tonal range and volume of sound have increased.

Since the Cultural Revolution further improvements have been made in the *cheng*. The improved instrument retains its old form but

can play complex works in different keys. This greatly facilitates the composition of new music for our modern musicians. We now have several types of these improved instruments: one has twenty-five strings and is pentatonic, another has forty-four strings and uses a seven-note scale. In recent years virtuosos have also learned to pluck the strings with both hands in two or more keys, thereby enriching the content of the music. Many new *cheng* are highly decorative too. In 1972, the All-China Handicrafts Exhibition displayed a *cheng* on which were carved in relief the Great Wall and the Yellow River, making it a fine work of art.

The *cheng* repertory developed over two thousand years includes many fine musical scores such as *Lofty Peaks and Rushing Streams* with its theme of friendship in ancient times. Another old favourite, *Fishing Boats Return at Dusk*, conveys the jubilation of fishermen who are bringing home a good catch. Many other popular scores have come down to us. Now modern *cheng* musicians are writing new music for the improved *cheng* reflecting today's socialist revolution and socialist construction and praising China's heroic workers, peasants and soldiers. An example is the composition *Fighting the Typhoon*.

Fighting the Typhoon reflects the heroic selflessness with which dockers in New China battle against a storm to safeguard state property. The composition, short and compact, has great vitality and distinctive Chinese features. By developing three basic motifs, it gives a faithful portrayal of the dockers. First, a cheerful, lively melody shows the rhythm of their arduous work and the enthusiasm with which they are building socialism. Then a melody with a quick forceful beat conveys the heroism of these men as they battle with the typhoon. And finally an exuberant lyrical movement expresses their revolutionary pride after the typhoon is defeated as they prepare to plunge into new battles. These three sections with their sharply contrasting motifs are successfully organized into one harmonious organic whole.

Emphasis in this composition is placed on the dockers and on depicting their thoughts and feelings in different situations. While some passages deal with the storm and the calm which follows it, these

are used as a foil to the men. For example, the middle section conjures up the approach of the typhoon, but a controlled crescendo against the background of the raging storm vividly brings out the fearlessness of the dockers. In the last section, again, the buoyant, expansive andante not only indicates that the storm has passed over, leaving the air fresh and the ocean calm, but it also reveals the nobility of spirit of the working class. The natural scene expresses and is integrated with the feelings of the human characters.

The introduction of revolutionary content in a work of art must bring about innovations in its artistic form. *Fighting the Typhoon* embodies innovations of this sort in form and style.

First, the *cheng*'s traditional modes of expression are fully exploited and carried a step forward. For example, thrumming the strings to produce a staccato effect is a traditional technique employed in the middle section to heighten the tension of the battle; while trills and grace notes are used in the third section to increase the local colour and the atmosphere of elation. These traditional techniques are integrated with the vigorous tempo of the composition to express its revolutionary content.

Secondly, when traditional modes of expression are found inadequate to express the new content, they must be boldly modified or new forms of expression must be created on the basis of the traditional technique by adopting certain good features of other art forms. For example, strumming is a traditional *cheng* technique but in the past it was done with one hand only and therefore the sound range was narrow, strumming serving mainly for decorative effect. In *Fighting the Typhoon* both hands strum the strings to express the fury of the storm and thereby to bring out more strongly the spirited fight put up by the dockers. In the middle section, thrumming in the bass suggests the men's fortitude and drive. This technique, derived from the thrumming of the *pipa* (a Chinese guitar), builds up an atmosphere of suspense to convey the indomitable spirit of our workers, thus rendering *cheng* music more expressive and stirring.

Revolutionary literature and art must have a revolutionary socialist content to educate the people and arouse their fighting spirit; at

the same time they must make use of all that is beneficial in our national art heritage, critically adopting those things which still have vitality and are loved by the masses. This new composition *Fighting the Typhoon* is a successful example of the way in which our traditional instrumental music can make discriminating use of China's musical heritage to reflect the spirit of our socialist age.



Chronicle

All-China Photography Exhibition

The All-China Photography Exhibition held in the Nationalities Palace of Culture in Peking last October displayed over three hundred works produced by professional and amateur photographers during the preceding year.

These works had a fresh and lively artistic form. They showed how the Chinese people, united as one, are carrying out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and throwing themselves whole-heartedly into the socialist revolution and socialist construction. The exhibits were rich in content and varied in theme. The excellent situation in agriculture and industry; young graduates in the countryside and mountain areas; workers, peasants and soldiers in the universities and cadres in "May 7" schools were all vividly presented in these pictures.

Yugoslavian Art Exhibition in Peking

An art exhibition depicting Yugoslavia's war of national liberation was held in Peking last October. On display were over sixty works: oil-paintings, lithographs, etchings and wood-carvings. Most of these were created by fighters who took part in the war themselves.

The exhibition has given the Chinese people a better understanding of the heroic struggle of Yugoslavia's people for national liberation and independence.

Chingtehchen Porcelain Exhibition

An exhibition of new products from the well-known porcelain capital of China — Chingtehchen in Kiangsi Province — opened in Peking last October.

Chingtehchen porcelain is rich in variety, exquisite in form and highly decorative. It has been described as “white as jade, bright as a mirror, thin as paper and sonorous as chimes.” Recent years have seen great developments in the production of this porcelain. Over three thousand objects of more than six hundred kinds were displayed, including dinner-services, tea-sets, drinking-sets and daily utensils as well as vases, table-lamps, porcelain sculptures and paintings on porcelain. New varieties of the traditional blue-and-white porcelain and flambé glazes so popular with the masses were exhibited. Further advances in technique and content were evident in the polychrome porcelain reminiscent of folk art and the gorgeous famille-rose wares.

Handicrafts Exhibition in Anhwei Province

An exhibition of Anhwei handicrafts was recently held in Hofei, the capital of Anhwei Province. It presented over two thousand exhibits, among them Anhwei's celebrated ink-stones and wrought-iron pictures from Wuhu, all showing improvements in technique and content.

Iron pictures are made by using iron as the medium and hammers as brushes to create lively, three-dimensional pictures of human figures, scenery and flowers. In recent years the Wuhu craftsmen have adopted certain methods of traditional Chinese painting and produced many works reflecting the new spirit of the Chinese people and socialist construction.

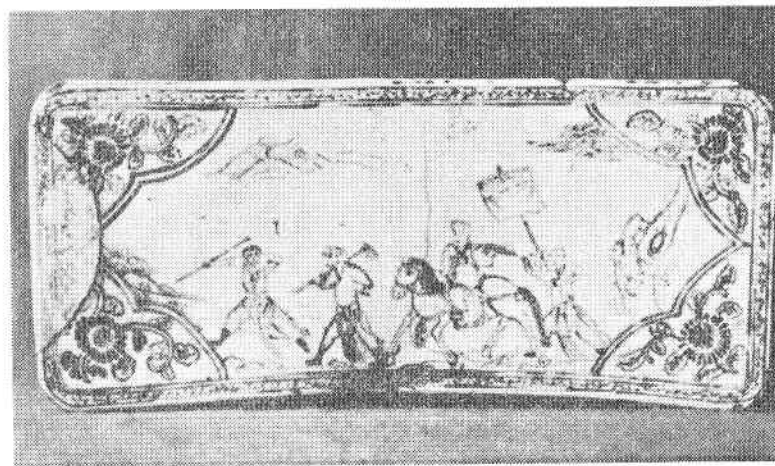
Hsi ink-stones are highly prized. One of the finest in the exhibition showed nine dragons carved on its sides frolicking by a lake amidst clouds and rain. All the eyes of the dragons in this magnificent scene were carved out of bright flecks in the stone. The craftsmen who made this little masterpiece have enriched their traditional technique by adopting certain methods of brick sculpture.

In addition to traditional handicrafts, the exhibition introduced new works such as the delightful straw picture *The Yangtse Bridge at Nanking*. A freighter is steaming up the turbulent Yangtse, while a train speeds over the railway bridge and the highway above it is thronged with pedestrians and traffic. The three red flags on the huge bridge-head towers are fluttering in the breeze. Along the banks are numerous factories. The whole splendid picture reflects the rapid headway made in China's socialist construction.

The feather picture *The Goddess Flies to the Moon* based on a folk story is another excellent new work. The artists carefully selected about a thousand feathers from peacocks, cocks, pheasants and geese, then used some of the techniques of scissor-cuts and traditional Chinese painting to depict the goddess flying through iridescent clouds up to the moon.

Two Ancient Porcelain Head-Rests Found

Tzuchow in Hopei Province has long produced porcelain. In recent years a large quantity of ancient wares have been found here. The most artistic are two porcelain head-rests of the type used as pillows in summer which are painted with scenery and human figures.

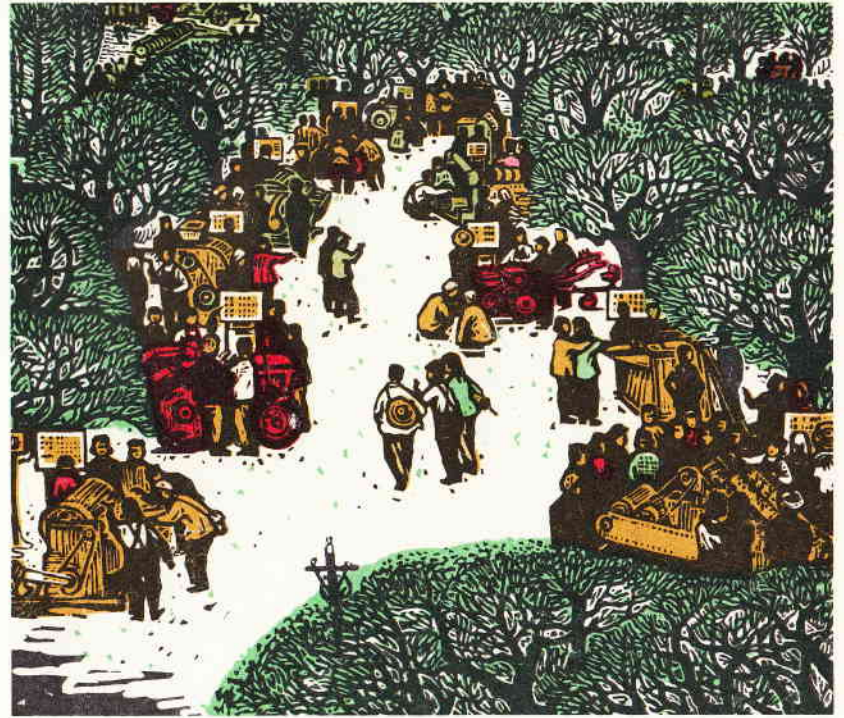


One of the head-rests dates back to the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279), the other to the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Both are white with black designs.

The front of the Sung head-rest is painted with distant mountain peaks which circle to the right. A carriage coming from the valley below has stopped near a mount on which grow three pines. To the left is a wooden bridge. A man approaching it has a brush in his hand and his head is raised as if he is about to write a poem. Beside him, a boy holds an ink-stone. Behind the bridge is a forest. The whole landscape is full of poetic feeling.

The Yuan head-rest shows a lifelike scene from Tripitaka's pilgrimage to the west. The corners are decorated with chrysanthemum designs. On the front side are bamboos and pines; on the back, a spirited, formidable tiger.

The Chinese monk Tripitaka went to India early in the seventh century, returning to China after seventeen years with 657 volumes of Buddhist scriptures. Tales of his adventures appealed to the popular imagination, becoming more and more legendary with the telling. It was on the basis of these folk-tales that in the 16th century Wu Cheng-en wrote his novel *Pilgrimage to the West*. This head-rest provides us with valuable material on the growth of the legends on which his great novel was based.





中國文學

英文月刊1974年第1期
本刊代号2-916