

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Chairman Mao at Mount Lushan (oil-painting)

by Li Tien-hsiang, Wen Li-peng, Li Hua-chi and Chung Han

Sons and Daughters of Hsisha

Editors' Note: This is a novel in two parts. Part One came off the press in June 1974 and Part Two is still being written. The background of Part One is the people's armed struggle led by the Chinese Communist Party against Japanese invaders in the South China Sea. It depicts the heroic struggles of the Hsisha fishermen to defend their islands against traitors, despots and Japanese aggressors, and portrays two proletarian revolutionaries, Cheng Liang and Grandad Wei.

We publish below Chapters 11-27 from Part One which comprises 35 chapters in all. The story begins in the small town of Chiungya on Hainan Island where the poor fisherman Cheng Liang and his wife are overjoyed at the birth of their baby daughter Ah-pao.

Shark, a local despot and traitor who collaborates with the invaders, lords it over the people and the coastal sea. He rents out boats and exploits the poor fisherfolk by appropriating their catch, sucking their blood like a leech. When the Japanese occupy Hainan, trampling China's fair island under their brutal heels, Cheng Liang longs for the arrival of the Red Army* and the

*The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, forerunner of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, was a people's army led by the Chinese Communist Party during the second revolutionary civil war period (1927-1937). After the War of Resistance Against Japan began in 1937, the Red Army was reorganized into the Eighth Route Army but in some places the people still referred to it as the Red Army.

Communist Party. Shark is afraid of Cheng Liang and his popularity among the fisherfolk; he decides to frame him. If he can make Cheng's wife serve as wet-nurse and provide milk for the chief of the Japanese, he can accuse Cheng of going along with the invaders too.

When the baby is barely a hundred days old, Shark takes advantage of Cheng Liang's absence to seize his wife. But the brave woman refuses to have anything to do with the invaders and jumps overboard to escape them. She is killed by an enemy bullet.

Grief-stricken and burning with wrath, Cheng Liang tries to avenge his wife but is foiled in his attempt to kill Shark. Ah-ming, a seaman and leader of an anti-Japanese armed force, advises him to join the Red Army. With the help of other fishermen, Cheng Liang gets away with Ah-pao and heads for his birthplace, Treasure Island in the Hsisha Archipelago, in search of the Red Army.

11

The South China Sea is a hot-tempered giant. When it flies into a rage, no power on earth can control it.

Clear weather, and its waves rise three feet high;

In wind and storm they hurtle to the sky.

Then fishing-boats, their masts snapped, their sails torn to shreds, are tossed one moment to the crest of great waves and the next moment flung deep into their troughs.

But Cheng Liang kept his head throughout the tempest. A brave and powerful boatman with thirty years' experience of the high seas, he tightened the straps binding baby Ah-pao to his back and with a crock baled out the water threatening to swamp the boat. This done, he took the rudder to hold course before the wind.

For two days his small vessel scudded before the wind. At dawn on the third day the rain stopped and the wind and waves subsided.

Cheng Liang was dizzy. Each bone in his body ached. He touched Ah-pao's leg and, relieved to find it still warm, gritted his teeth to pull on his battered oars while straining his eyes through the swirling mist in order to chart his course.

At last he descried a hazy black line in the distance.

He rowed towards it as hard as he could, until a white band appeared above the black line.

A few more hard pulls and he could see a green haze above the white.

And now it became clear that the black line was a reef, the white band a coral beach, the green haze the foliage of trees. . . . Yes, it was a small coral island!

Indeed, this was the place he knew and loved best. How could he ever forget it?

The sight filled him with fresh confidence and hope, giving him the strength to row on with redoubled vigour.

The South China Sea surging from the far horizon was thrown back by the barrier reef in front of the island. It surged forward again to be thrown back once more with a swirl of tremendous currents.

The small fishing-boat rode in on the waves but was carried back when they retreated. After this had happened three times, Cheng Liang was limp and trembling with exhaustion.

The racing current splattered his boat with spray and threatened to capsize it.

The beach was only a few dozen feet away. The reef calling to him, the trees beckoning him, made his heart burn with frustration.

Now, abruptly, the clump of ram-horn shrubs on a sand dune started swaying.

Cheng Liang fixed his eyes on the spot.

The green foliage parted to disclose a grey head, a bronzed face and two flashing eyes.

In pleased surprise Cheng Liang yelled: "Grandad! Lend me a hand!"

An old man emerged from the shrubs: broad-shouldered, powerfully built, with gleaming bronzed arms. He was wearing ragged shorts, and to his ankles and bare feet clung blades of grass and sand.

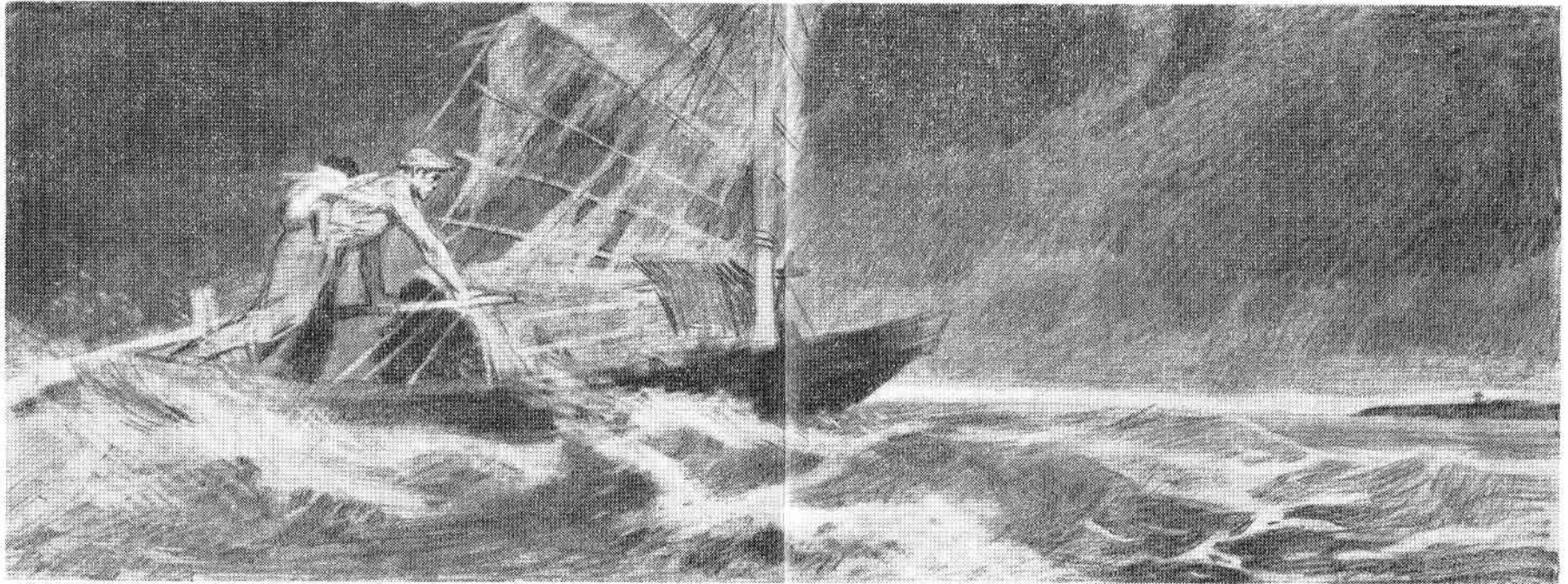
"Grandad!" yelled Cheng Liang again. "Grandad!"

Approaching unhurriedly, the old man shrewdly appraised this boat which had appeared out of the blue, then halted on the shingle.

"Help me ashore, grandad, quick!"

"Are you a fisherman?" the old man asked.

"A fisherman born and bred," Cheng Liang called back. "Thirty-five years, man and boy, I've sailed the seas."



Hearing this, the old fellow advanced to the water's edge. "What brings you here?" he demanded.

"I was caught in a storm. It was touch and go with us. We drifted here with the tide."

The old man plunged into the water and swam with powerful strokes straight towards the boat. Once alongside, he reached out and grasped the gunwale.

"Come on!" he cried to Cheng Liang. "Row hard!"

One pushing, the other rowing, they impelled the little craft through the waves to the beach.

Cheng Liang jumped ashore holding his hawser and made it fast round a rock.

Only then did the old man see the child on his back. His face lighting up, he caught hold of Ah-pao and clasped her in his arms.

"Well, little 'un!" he exclaimed, tears in his eyes. "You're a true fisherman's daughter."

Relieved to be on firm land at last, Cheng Liang drank in the scene around him while the old man assured him proudly: "This is one of the finest, loveliest and richest islands in the whole of China's Hsisha Archipelago."

Too moved to speak, Cheng Liang took a few strides forward then turned to look out to sea. There was not a vessel in sight, much less a Red Army troopship. It must have put into some harbour to shelter from the storm. Well, after a breathing space here, he could resume his search and would surely find it.

"Hsisha, Hsisha!" he murmured. "Two years I've tossed in the tempest of life, tasting the bitter and the sweet. Now here I am back again."

"Have you been here before then?"

"Yes, I was born in Hsisha."

"On which island?"

"This one. There's a coconut palm in the middle, and not far from it a well fed with clear spring water. That's how it came by its name — Treasure Island."

"Right you are."

Cheng Liang bounded forward to take his little daughter. "Smile, Ah-pao, smile!" he urged her. "You're home. We've come home again!"

12

Cheng Liang had brought his baby daughter home to fair and fertile Hsisha.

In the vast expanse of the South China Sea, scattered among the rolling waves are the reefs and islands of four archipelagos: Nansha, Tungsha, Chungsha and Hsisha.

Treasure Island is typical of the whole Hsisha Archipelago. A massive reef rising sheer from the ocean bed lurks under the clear shallow water, only a ridge like a "cocoon" protruding in the centre. This ridge was built up by the tides of countless ages. Each tide deposited fragments of coral and shell on the central reef, raising it higher and higher as this debris accumulated and eroded. Later, sea birds alighted to rest here, letting fall droppings and seeds and changing the sand into soil which supported a variety of plants. The leaf-mould from these made trees grow luxuriantly, attracting even more birds. The area also expanded and rose higher above the ocean. This is how, over millions of years, these islands were formed.

Treasure Island has majesty as well as beauty. Its rocky coast of undulating reefs withstands the onslaught of wind and waves like a wall of bronze guarding the island.

Within the reef is a beach formed of particles of coral white as the snow of north China.

Behind this rise sand dunes golden as the waving paddy fields of east China.

These sand dunes enclose a central basin. And in this basin grows lush tropical vegetation: vigorous ram-horn shrubs, sturdy nettlespurge, lofty casuarinas, thick Hsisha creepers, a profusion of long-living kalofilum trees.

The ram-horn shrubs remain green the whole year round, lovely as carved jade or emerald silk. Forest fires kindled by lightning cannot destroy them.

The nettlespurge has the toughness of pine, the resilience of willow. It can stand the fiercest typhoons. If blown down it puts out fresh roots and shoots which soon grow to a considerable size.

The casuarina is unique. Inured to scorching heat, it delights in the spray of salt water and thrives best in alkaline soil, where it shoots up rapidly.

The Hsisha creeper, resembling a grape vine, throws out its wiry tendons in all directions to form a meshwork protecting the fertile yellow sand.

The kalofilum trees ranged side by side, with trunks too large for two men to encompass, shut out the sunlight with their thick intertwined foliage. Their roots, the upper part visible above ground, interweave in a dense tangle.

As if by design, there are clearings in this primeval forest. In these, gem-like meadows are overgrown with spiky agave and tenacious cactus, as well as a profusion of wild flowers of all colours of the rainbow. Few people know all their names, but once seen these exotic blooms are never forgotten.

This panorama recalled the past to Cheng Liang.

And then he saw the coconut palm.

This palm rose straight as a flag-pole in the centre of the little island. Its feathery, down-hanging leaves enfolded coconuts which seemed carved from fine marble.

While Cheng Liang was yet in his mother's womb, she had come to Hsisha to catch fish.

His father had brought a coconut from Hainan and planted it in the earth here.

Eagerly awaited, Cheng Liang had been born and the coconut had sprouted on the small island.

Thereafter, fisherfolk sailing this way, when they moored by this island, had refreshed themselves with its sweet coconuts and spread their fame.

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Then Cheng Liang saw the well of sweet spring water.

This well seemed like a dazzling mirror inset in the island to reflect the blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, red blossoms, and the faces of generations of sons and daughters of China.

Cheng Liang's great-grandfather had come here twice yearly to fish, and each time had dug two wells. Not until his last trip did he find the best source of water — this sweet crystal spring.

Cheng Liang's grandfather, a fisherman all his life, used this clear well water to wash clothes and boil rice.

Cheng Liang's father, a fisherman all his life, used this clear well water to boil rice and wash clothes.

When Cheng Liang was born, his first sip of his motherland's water came from this well fed by the crystal spring.

For long years now, fishermen in these seas who ran out of water would stop at this island to take on fresh supplies. And their appreciation knew no bounds.

Cheng Liang himself, in thirty-odd years in Hsisha, had often eaten its fruits and drunk its water. This had given him the strength to go out to sea to catch turtles and fish, to mend nets and sails or caulk his boat on the beach. Risking death many times, he had yet lived to see this day.

No wonder he was devoted to Hsisha and its sweet spring water. Now, after this last battle with the storm, Hsisha had become his haven again and its water a draught to restore him from exhaustion. To him, this seemed an omen that he would succeed in finding the Red Army.

Under the coconut palm, the greyhead with the ruddy face questioned him closely.

Cheng Liang told him about his family and his adventures.

The old man as he listened nodded and sighed. "In a vast country like ours, the poor outnumber the grains of sand on the beach. Generation after generation they suffer and are hounded to death.

Our hate is deeper than the South China Sea. Don't just take your own family's sufferings to heart — they're only a drop in the ocean."

Cheng Liang nodded. "True. That's how I see it myself these last few years. The poor have been so cruelly ground down, that taste of blood and tears can never be settled!"

"No!" The old man put up one hand. "It can be settled. If we have a great, wise leader and all the poor in the country pull together, in unity there's strength enough to overturn rivers and seas, to change the world."

Impressed by this, Cheng Liang answered: "Just what I think. I want to join forces with other poor folk and go all out to beat the Japanese and down the fishing despots. That's why I'm set on joining the Red Army."

There by the well, the cool-headed experienced old man carefully sounded out Cheng Liang's intentions.

Cheng Liang explained in detail how he had heard of the Red Army's whereabouts and risked his neck to find it.

After sizing him up, the old man smiled quizzically. "The Red Army's not what you imagine," he said. "The way you're rushing about to track it down, even if you see it you won't recognize it. And the questions you ask, even those in the know won't answer."

"How long have you been here?" Cheng Liang inquired.

"A long time."

"Ever seen the Red Army?"

"Yes."

"Where are they now?"

"They've left."

"They can't have vanished into thin air. Point out the way and I'll climb hills of swords or cross seas of fire to find them!"

"Don't be in such a hurry. We'll find them together."

Cheng Liang's face lit up. "So you want to join them too?"

"That's right. In future, the whole country will join forces with the Red Army."

"Fine. Let's go together."

"Don't be in such a hurry. Wait a couple of months till my mates' boats call in here on their way from Hainan to Nansha or from

Nansha to Hainan. We'll talk it over with them, then decide what to do."

"What? Just sit here waiting?"

"We can go fishing together and dry our catch for people to take to Hainan in exchange for food and clothing."

Cheng Liang saw sense in this. Still he hesitated. He was burning to find the Red Army, to join in a stirring fight.

"Don't be in such a hurry," the old man reiterated. "You need to build up your strength here and put on some weight before joining the Red Army. Besides, your daughter's still small. Wait till she's big enough to walk, and we'll join the army together. How about it?"

Cheng Liang lowered his head in silence.

"Take it easy, young fellow," the old man urged confidently. "Just do as I say and I guarantee you'll find the Red Army."

Cheng Liang sprang to his feet. "Very well, I will. Anything to find the Red Army."

"That's the spirit." The old man beamed. "In the meantime you and your little girl must stay here. This is your home."

The palm nodded its approval, the well smiled fondly.

Welcome them, Treasure Island! Your children's children have come back to your arms.

13

The old man on the island was something of a mystery.

He obviously welcomed Cheng Liang's arrival. But although his matting hut was large enough to hold a dozen people, he wouldn't let them share it.

His excuse was: "I snore at night."

"I don't mind if you thunder!" Cheng Liang retorted.

"And I don't want to be disturbed by your baby crying. I'll help you put up another hut."

Cheng Liang could not object to this. He built a new hut.

The old man was open, communicative and cheery, with a wide fund of knowledge. But he never talked about himself. If ques-

tioned about himself, he changed the subject. So Cheng Liang soon stopped asking personal questions.

One day Cheng Liang came upon him in his hut writing something on a pink paper package.

The old man instantly put his pencil away. And Cheng Liang pretended to have noticed nothing.

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They went fishing in the same boat, cooked in the same pot. By degrees they slipped into a daily routine. But all the time Cheng Liang's impatience mounted.

Often, he stood staring fixedly out to sea. Often, he sighed over Ah-pao's rosy cheeks.

He had not avenged his country or family, and had no idea what the future held for him and his small daughter. This peaceful existence was more than he could stand.

One day, instead of going out to sea, the old man dried fish on the beach while Cheng Liang painstakingly repaired a broken mast and awning.

The old man sensed what was on his mind but asked no questions about it. And this deterred Cheng Liang from telling him his plan to leave the island to find the Red Army.

After supper the two of them sat on the reef smoking. They were soon deep in conversation.

Under a clear sky full of twinkling stars, the wind soughed and billows rolled.

Suddenly the old man pointed northeast with his pipe across the sea.

"Know Sanyuanli* north of Kwangchow, Liang?" he asked.

"You mean the place where they beat the British pirates?"

"That's it. A hundred years ago those British devils were licking their lips at the sight of our rich resources. They knew they couldn't

*In May 1841, when British invaders stormed the fort outside Kwangchow, the Ching government was forced to sign a peace treaty. But the people of Sanyuanli north of the city rose in arms, fought and routed the British invaders in a battle which displayed the resolute spirit of the Chinese people in resisting aggression.

just loot them, so they made a show of trading and shipped tens of thousands of cases of opium to Kwangchow. They hoped to weaken the Chinese with this narcotic so that we couldn't put up any resistance. We Chinese saw through their plot, though. We burned one big batch of their opium. That made the devils frantic and they sent troops ashore. Well, at once we beat them up. But the damn Ching emperor was so scared of offending the devils that he negotiated and agreed to give them spheres of influence as well as an indemnity. That was burning incense to invite in a devil! The British sacked Kwangchow, mowing down Chinese people with their big guns, setting fire to houses and looting. They even dug up our tombs and robbed the corpses. . . . The Chinese people wouldn't stand for that. When a party of British raided Sanyuanli, a market-gardener called Wei Shao-kuang took the lead in putting up resistance. He organized his men into bands and when the enemy came he gave the word. Then peasants and market-gardeners with knives and scythes charged the invaders. Some of the devils were killed and the others fled. That vented our people's fury and spurred them on. In a few days 103 townships were astir, men aged fifteen to fifty joined up to make a big force to resist the foreign invaders. On May 30, a British commander led over two thousand troops armed with muskets and cannon to capture Sanyuanli. With a big, well-armed force like that, head-on confrontation was out of the question. So our people decided to give ground and lure the enemy into Niulan Pass. The British, hot in pursuit, suddenly found themselves bogged down in the paddy. Gongs sounded, and at that signal peasants with spears, swords and spades fell on them from every side. The British were routed, their bodies strewed the field. Two of their officers were killed and the survivors fled, howling. . . . See, that's the answer the Chinese people give to foreign invaders, the end in store for aggressors. . . ."

Cheng Liang heard the gongs sounding that charge, saw the glitter of weapons. How he burned to fight!

The old man turned to point to the northwest. "Know what that star is, Liang?"

"The North Star."

The old man nodded. "And what's the place under it?"

Cheng Liang thought that over, then ventured: "The Great Wall?"

"The western end of the Great Wall, in northwest China. There's a famous town there, Yen-an."

"Yen-an!"

"That's right. Where the leader of all our people lives. The saving star of all the poor — Chairman Mao."

"Chairman Mao!"

"Yes. Years ago, when the poor could see nothing but darkness around them and didn't know which way to turn, he came to Kwangtung, our province. In Kwangchow he set up the National Institute of the Peasant Movement to teach us poor peasants and fishermen how to get control of our country and drive away the invaders robbing us; how to overthrow the landlords and fishing despots preying on us; how to make China rich and strong so that we can have a good life. He called on us to rise up, led us to charge forward. For this, he put up with countless hardships, fighting north and south, not resting day or night. In the Chingkang Mountains in Kiangsi he built up the first resistance base and an army with guns in the hands of the poor — that's how the Red Army was born. The Japanese devils occupied our three northeastern provinces, then attacked the north-China plain. Chiang Kai-shek instead of firing a shot let the invaders in and presented them with our fine country. So Chairman Mao called on the people of all China to stand up and fight and led the people's army, marching day and night, on the Long March to Yen-an in northern Shensi. From there he's now leading the people of the north to resist the Japanese, build up a base of resistance and a new government. More and more of the poor are waking up to the facts. The people's army is growing steadily. The Japanese have suffered heavy reverses and are on the verge of defeat. In short, these splendid victories of the War of Resistance have encouraged the people of the whole country and are an example for all the poor — their influence is spreading far and wide. Now the flames of resistance have spread to Kwangtung and our Hainan Island, as well as to Hsisha in our South Sea. Revolutionary contingents have sprung up everywhere to attack the invaders. The aggressors' days are numbered, our victory's just round the corner. . . ."

Cheng Liang heard bugles sound the charge, saw the red flags of victory billowing in the wind. The tide of his heart surged high.

To give Cheng Liang time to think this over, the old man smoked a pipe before going on: "The first day we met I told you not to think only of your own family's sufferings, but of the wrongs of all the poor in the world. You must go to the root of the problem: Why is it that the poor work hard and love their country but are ground down by rich parasites who sell out to the Japanese for personal advancement? The root of the matter is: the social system we have now is rotten. The only way to settle our common score is by overturning the old society so that our children and our children's children will never be exploited the way we've been. Do you agree?"

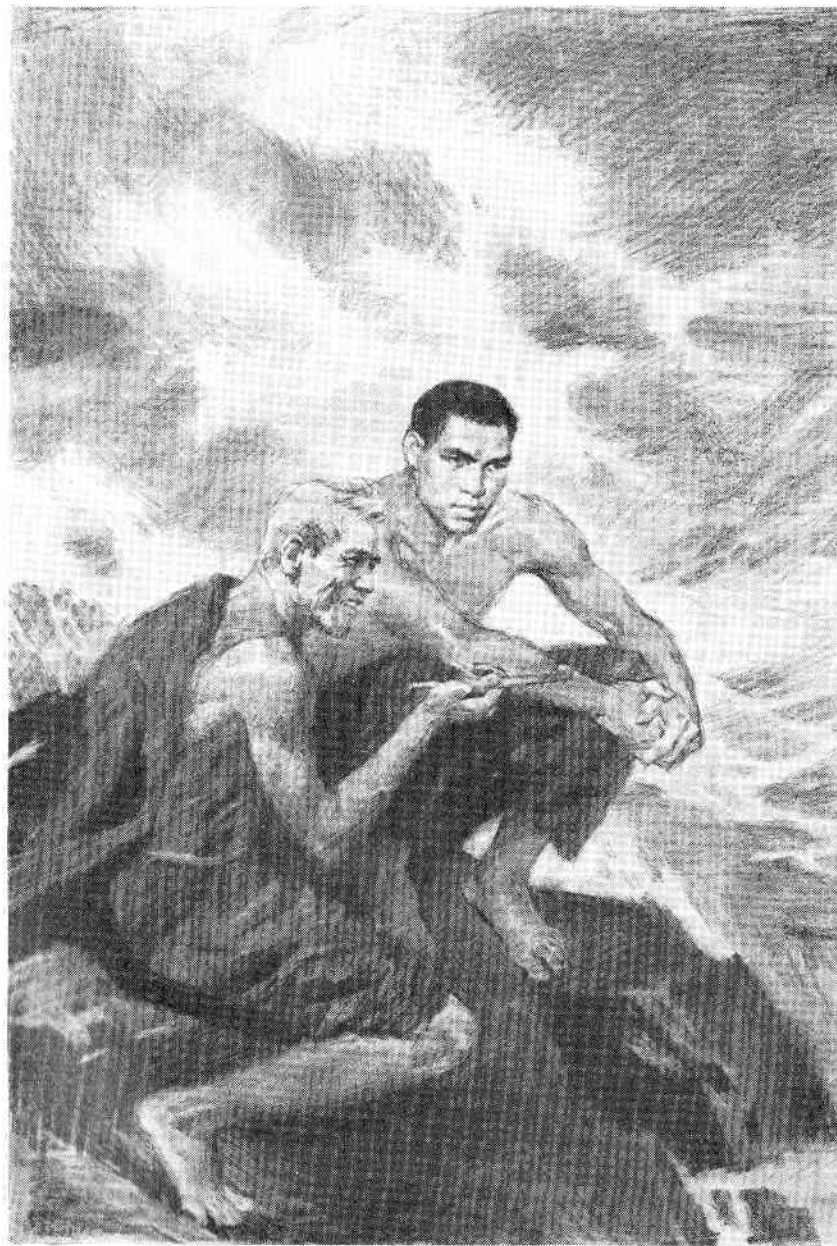
"I certainly do."

"Here's another question. Think it over carefully. We Chinese are second to none in courage, wisdom and resistance to tyranny. In the last hundred years, to go no further back, time and again our people have joined forces to resist exploitation, oppression and foreign invaders, to topple the old world and change the old order — but how did it always end? Some revolts were crushed straight away; others won half the country, then were defeated... the red blood of those martyrs flowed like rivers. Why did they always fail half way? What's the basic lesson to learn from their experience?"

Cheng Liang was listening with bated breath. He felt like a man riding over a vast plain who is suddenly transported to the mountains. "Well," he cried eagerly, "what's the basic lesson?"

"The basic lesson to be drawn is this," replied the old man slowly and forcefully. "They had no working-class political party, no Marxism. We have a working-class vanguard — the Communist Party. We have Marxism-Leninism to guide us, and our great leader Chairman Mao to lead us; so we can carry the revolution through to the end. We'll not only drive out the Japanese and overthrow landlords and despots, we'll build a new society and finally liberate the whole of mankind."

Again Cheng Liang was carried in spirit up to the heights: a vast panorama seemed to stretch before him.



The old man continued emphatically: "It's a fine thing that you want to join the Red Army, fight the Japanese and root up despots. But that's not nearly enough. You must have far-reaching communist ideals, too. Must strive to be a fighter in the vanguard of the proletariat."

Rubbing his big hands hard, Cheng Liang exclaimed: "You've said it, grandad! And I shall do as you say, not turning back until my dying day."

The old man went on to touch on other problems new to Cheng Liang. He then told him some stirring stories and some principles which gave him food for thought. Having talked till late, he stood up and went back quietly to his hut as usual.

14

Cheng Liang went back to his hut too and, having settled Ah-pao for the night, lay down himself. But he could not sleep.

He heard the roar of breakers out at sea, saw the host of stars in the sky.

His heart was filled with a vision of those heroes battling on so fearlessly to realize the glorious aim of communism and the liberation of the whole of mankind.

He recalled his life: the waves of the South China Sea, the scales at the fishing depot, the muzzles of Japanese guns, the whip of his old boss Shark . . . so many bitter memories made up of blood and tears, hatred and anger.

His heart ached for his wife so cruelly killed. He caressed the infant sleeping by his side.

He thought of his countless suffering class brothers, and longed to fly that instant to join the host of those battling to topple the old world and build a new one.

Unable to close his eyes or lie still, he sprang up and stode out of the hut.

The fresh breeze carried to him the tang of the ocean intermingled with the scent of wild flowers and fruit.

He made his way to the beach.

The tide was pounding the massive reef, throwing up silver waves which leapt to the sky.

Cheng Liang had been born in Hsisha, and now it was in Hsisha that the seeds of a great revolutionary ideal had taken root in his heart.

Cheng Liang had grown to manhood in the South China Sea, and now it was in the South China Sea that he had taken his first step as a proletarian revolutionary.

He had every confidence that he would succeed in finding the working-class Party, the troops led by great Chairman Mao to resist Japan.

He felt brimming over with strength, sure that he could live up to the old man's expectations and become a Communist, battling all his life for communism.

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Abruptly, in the distance, he spotted three boats lined up on the beach.

He took a few paces forward.

A band of men materialized beside him. With wicker crates or sacks on their backs, all were heading towards the beach.

He ducked behind a rock.

Bringing up the file, a lantern in his hand, was the old man of the island.

By the light of the lantern Cheng Liang saw that these men carrying supplies to the beach were all vigorous young fellows. Though barefoot and wearing fishermen's bamboo hats, each had a gun over his shoulder.

Cheng Liang stared wide-eyed, his heart pounding.

Who were these men? What were they doing?

As soon as the boats were loaded, they took their leave of the old man on the beach.

"You must be worn-out, Grandad Wei," said one youngster.

"Not a bit of it," retorted the old man. "It's you who've done all the work."

So at last Cheng Liang knew that the old man's name was Wei.

"Any messages for us to take, Grandad Wei?" asked another youngster.

"When you see Firebrand, tell him the situation here and the matters we've discussed. Ask him for instructions. If he can spare the time, I'd like him to come here as soon as possible."

Who was Firebrand? Cheng Liang wondered.

"Aren't you going to send for some good liquor, Grandad Wei?" someone else suggested jokingly.

"Someone else will do that. When you come back, bring some sweets."

"Isn't Ah-hai on Taiping Island in Nansha?"

"If there's a boat coming this way, I want him brought here."

Who was Ah-hai that he needed to be brought? A child?

"So long!" called the young fellows fondly.

"So long. Keep a careful lookout for Japanese patrol boats."

"Don't worry. We've crossed swords plenty of times. Those devils are no match for our revolutionary fishermen."

"For victory in the War of Resistance, I wish you a fair wind!"

The young fellows boarded the boats.

They were experienced seamen, skilled and strong. Putting out to sea, they steered steadily past the reef.

When Old Wei had watched them safely out of sight, he relieved himself by coughing so loudly that the rocks reverberated. Then he stretched, his joints cracking, and finally turned to go back.

A shadowy figure blocked his way.

He started, but kept silent.

The sea was roaring, spattering the cliffs with foam. The ram-horn shrubs were rustling, the wild flowers were nodding.

Cheng Liang, a poor fisherman already politically conscious and steadily deepening his understanding, had grasped from the end of the men's conversation who they were and on what mission. Overwhelmed with joy, his chest heaved and he rubbed his hands. He could not resist challenging the old man: "Just who and what are you?"

With a quizzical glance Old Wei twitched the jacket Cheng Liang had draped over his shoulders. "Come back to the hut before you catch cold," he said.

Cheng Liang shook his head. "I want the truth this time!"

Old Wei gave him a gentle shove. "If Ah-pao wakes, she'll wonder where you are."

Not budging, Cheng Liang retorted: "Why try to keep your business a secret from me?"

"That's our rule — our revolutionary discipline."

Still rooted to the spot, Cheng Liang said nothing.

When Old Wei gave him another gentle shove, two hot tears fell on his hand. His heart warming to the younger man, he said: "Don't take it so hard, Liang. I've only just received the letter from our command giving your credentials. The storm held those youngsters up. The letter says you're a first-rate fisherman and should make a first-rate revolutionary fighter. Our commanders and comrades have great hopes of you. We held a meeting to discuss your case. Come on back to the hut and I'll tell you all about it."

.....

They went back to the low mat hut and, sitting beside little Ah-pao, had a heart-to-heart talk.

They lit no lamp, but the fire in their hearts was brighter than any light.

They used no high-sounding language, but the heart-beats of class brothers were more moving than oratory.

Old Wei said: "Earlier this evening I told you about the struggle of the people of Sanyuanli. Sanyuanli is my old home. My grandad died a hero's death in that fight. My dad so hated the invaders, so hated the spineless Ching emperor for trying to appease foreign powers, that he swore to take revenge. Ten years later he joined Hung Hsiu-chuan's Taiping Uprising.* He fell in battle the year I was born, when the revolution was defeated; and my mum escaped with me out to sea with other children of the Taiping army. We fled to Nansha Archipelago and managed to scrape along, waiting for a chance to strike back. Since then I've been a fisherman..."

Once again, Cheng Liang seemed to hear gongs sounding the charge.

*Referring to the peasant revolutionary war against the feudal rule and national oppression of the Ching Dynasty during the mid-nineteenth century. The leader of this uprising, Hung Hsiu-chuan, started from Chintien Village in Kueiping County, Kwangsi in January 1851 and established the Taiping Kingdom.

Old Wei went on: "This evening I told you about the Communist Party, the vanguard of the proletariat. I'm a fighter in that vanguard. In 1926 my eldest son joined the revolution in Kwang-chow. There Chairman Mao educated him, tempering iron into steel. On April 12, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek massacred millions of fighters,* my son among them. Then I took over his cause. I fought the enemy on land and sea. Today we have partisans in all the forests, villages and towns of Hainan who are boldly fighting the Japanese in co-ordination with the resistance bases. Our sea transport unit operates between Hainan, Hsisha and Nansha. Under cover of fishing we ship ammunition and supplies to our main forces in the mountains. Those men who came today are fighters. Their chief's known as Firebrand. You want to know who Ah-hai is? He's the little son of our big family..."

Cheng Liang thought he heard bugles sound, saw red banners flashing.

He listened avidly, taking each word to heart.

For the first time he understood his life's true purpose and significance.

They talked on and on, yet could not express all they had in their hearts to say.

They talked until day broke and the sun rose, until Ah-pao awoke from her sweet dreams, clapping her chubby hands and chuckling at the two fighters.

15

Cheng Liang got up each day before Old Wei to mend nets. He stayed up after Old Wei each night to sharpen hooks. He finished every meal before Old Wei and was immediately busy stowing away the catch.

This tall powerful fisherman had inexhaustible energy and drive. Stripped to the waist and bronzed by the sun, he seemed a pillar of iron.

*Chiang Kai-shek launched a counter-revolutionary coup on April 12, 1927 and carried out bloody massacres of Communists and revolutionary people.

With Old Wei he cast nets and caught sea slugs.

When their hold was full of fish he exulted: This is for our front-line fighters who are killing the enemy.

When their crates were full of sea slugs he gloated: These can be exchanged for bullets and medicine for the resistance.

Thirty years and more he had fished the South China Sea, but only now did fishing take on a sacred significance in his eyes. What else could he do but work with might and main?

A small fishing-boat came to the island and, expecting Firebrand, they hurried to the beach. But it was fishermen who had run out of drinking water.

They supplied them with sweet spring water.

Another fishing-boat came. This time they expected Ah-hai, only to find that it was fishermen who had run out of fuel.

They supplied them with dry firewood from the island.

The fishermen wrung Old Wei's hands. "Thank you, good folk!"

It was Cheng Liang who hastened to answer: "It's only right for the poor to help the poor."

One evening three more boats put in to the beach and a dozen or more sturdy youngsters bounded ashore.

"How goes it, Grandad Wei?"

"Fine! Have you come from Hainan?"

"That's right. Who's this?"

"Cheng Liang. . . ."

A dozen big callused hands reached out together.

A dozen voices greeted him: "Comrade Cheng. . . ."

Cheng Liang was too moved to speak. In his heart he vowed: "Rest assured, I shan't lose face for our troops. I'll live up to that fine title 'comrade'."

Together they carried cloth, dried fish and medical supplies from the mat hut to the boats.

Many hands make light work. By the time the moon rose the loading was completed. Then they sat down in a circle on the grass to eat.

What a lively meal that was! The fighters laying down their bowls declared they had not eaten such delicious rice for months.

They slept side by side that night in the mat hut.

How close they were, these comrades of the revolutionary army! The fighters on waking declared they had not slept so soundly for months.

At dawn the three fishing-boats were to put out to sea.

They took a cordial, reluctant leave of each other.

Cheng Liang, standing on the beach pounded by surf, watched until the sails were lost in the distance.

"Just wait," said Old Wei. "Firebrand will be coming soon, and Ah-hai."

.

The strenuous days slipped happily away. Still Firebrand did not come, neither did Ah-hai.

Soldiering on, they waited. Waiting, they soldiered on. And meanwhile Ah-pao was growing imperceptibly.

One morning Cheng Liang ladled out half a bowl of gruel, stirred it with his chopsticks, blew on it to cool it, and held it in front of her. But to tease her he wouldn't let her eat.

Ah-pao's big black eyes flashed. Her red lips pouted, then parted to protest: "Dad!"

At noon one day, on his way back from fishing, Cheng Liang picked some wild flowers by the path. He dangled them in front of Ah-pao, but teasingly kept them just out of her reach.

Ah-pao clapped her chubby hands as she sat watching. Then she heaved herself to her feet and took two steps forward.

Ah-pao had learned to talk and learned to walk.

Her first word was spoken and her first steps were taken in her home in China's Hsisha Archipelago.

After that, from dawn to dusk, the island was enlivened by her prattle. After that, everywhere on the island was imprinted with the mark of her tiny feet.

Fighters fishing and shipping supplies often came to the island.

They stopped to pick up materials and sea products from Nansha, leaving rice, salt and matches they had brought from outside. But

what the men on the island appreciated most was the news they brought of all China from Nansha in the south to Heilungkiang in the north.

The fighters doted on Ah-pao. All vied to carry her and play with her.

One taught her a few words of Hainanese, another a few words of Cantonese, yet another a few words of the Chaochow dialect.

Ah-pao's mixture of dialects kept everyone laughing.

One taught the little girl to turn somersaults, another to do a handstand, yet another a Li dance.

When she got up to these pranks everyone applauded.

They all loved Ah-pao and longed for her to grow up quickly.

16

Many months passed before another group of fighters came swiftly in their fishing-boats to Hsisha and landed on Treasure Island.

Little Ah-pao was delighted by their arrival. She tagged after them, trying to keep up with them.

But none of these uncles played with her. They hardly looked at her.

Calling out to them, she followed close behind them all the way to Grandad Wei's hut. Her dad was in there talking with Grandad Wei.

One of the uncles handed him a pretty envelope. Dad said: "I can't read."

Ah-pao reached out. "Give it to me."

Instead, dad gave the envelope to grandad, and she didn't dare snatch it from him.

Grandad Wei opened the envelope and took out a slip of paper. After casting his eyes over it he slapped his knee. "Good news! Good news!" he cried.

"What is it?" asked Cheng Liang.

"Tomorrow or the day after, a boat loaded with ammunition from Hainan will pass here."

Cheng Liang slapped his thigh. "What new trick are the dogs up to?"

"The boat will be shipping out Japanese ammunition..."

"To kill people in Southeast Asia, eh?" said Cheng Liang.

"That's right. To kill poor folk in Southeast Asia. But they've got to pass through our Hsisha straits. And they'll run aground on the reefs here..."

"How do you know?"

"Firebrand will see to that."

Cheng Liang laughed heartily.

"Listen, everyone," Old Wei continued. "Firebrand has instructions for us. We're to make ready our four boats and hide them in the harbour. While waiting for further orders, we're to stoke up on food and get plenty of sleep, but we're not to light fires by day or lamps by night. When we see flames by Antelope Reef, we're to set sail for it. When flames rise there a second time, we're to go alongside the Japanese freighter. Then someone will tell us exactly what to do."

Ah-pao couldn't understand a word of this. All the uncles were smiling broadly while her dad was red in the face, clenching his fists.

"What's the matter, dad?"

"You wouldn't understand."

Ah-pao clung to her father's neck, shaking her head. "You tell me so that I can understand."

When a new recruit burning to fight goes to the front and a battle is imminent he can hardly put his excitement, his elation into words, much less explain it simply to a child.

It was Grandad Wei who answered: "Be a good girl, Ah-pao. Don't make a nuisance of yourself."

One glance at Old Wei and, pouting, the little girl let go of her father.

Old Wei turned to Cheng Liang. "Get cracking. We must cook enough food for two days."

This was something Ah-pao could understand. Up she hopped, crying: "I'll fetch firewood, I'll fetch firewood."

The fighters burst out laughing at her antics.

Only Cheng Liang remained solemn, his face as if carved from granite.

He took Ah-pao to the forest to cut firewood, then to the well to draw water. After that he lit a fire under the big cauldron.

As he fed the fire he let his fancy wander. In the leaping flames he seemed to see the Japanese barracks on Hainan Island, the Japanese battleship in the small bay, the blood spurting from the wounds made by Japanese bullets. . . .

He reflected: A whole boatload of ammunition, and they want to ship it all to Southeast Asia to massacre poor folk there. . . . All our transport unit can do is ship supplies. Can we beat the Japanese in a head-on clash with all the guards they're bound to have on a big freighter?

He gritted his teeth, resolved to fight at all costs. Impossible to stand by and let all those innocent people abroad be mown down. Old Wei had told him that proletarian revolutionaries must be internationalists as well as patriots. The oppressed of the whole world were one family and must join forces to win liberation. I'll go to the front, he determined, and fight my damndest. To die in battle is a glorious death!

His mind clear, he fed the flames till they leaped even higher.

Turning now, he saw that his comrades-in-arms had gone to the beach to bathe. Taking Ah-pao in his arms, he solemnly gave the child her first instructions about the splendid cause of revolution.

"Do you want to be a good girl, Ah-pao?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then you must do as dad says."

"I will."

"We'll be eating cold rice tomorrow. All right?"

"All right."

"And we won't be lighting lamps at night."

"All right."

Cheng Liang kissed the little girl's cheeks. "Good. To topple this wicked old society, Ah-pao will grit her teeth and put up with hardships."

Ah-pao's eyes flashed. "Who is the old society?"

Touched by her naive question, he clenched his fists. "It's the old society that killed your great-grandad, your grandad and your mum,

as well as ever so many other people. Since the day you were born it's tried to eat you up too."

Ah-pao fumed. Stretching out her little hands as if pushing hard, she answered: "Let's topple it as hard as ever we can!"

Cheng Liang could not but laugh.

17

The fighters observed strict discipline. They lit no cooking fires by day and no lamps after dark.

Unwilling to rest in the hut, they stayed in the ram-horn grove watching Antelope Reef.

Ah-pao surprised them all by her good behaviour. She ate cold rice just like the men and crouched beside them among the trees, not moving.

She didn't complain when no lamps were lit at night, just listened quietly to her father's stories.

The first was a story about a big bad wolf.

The second was the story of Master Tung Kuo who out of kindness rescued a wolf who later tried to eat him.

She fell asleep in the middle of the third story.

For two days they cooked no food and lit no lamps. Ah-pao waited among the trees and listened to stories.

By the time the third day dawned all the men looked anxious. They had cooked food enough for two days. Now all the rice and fish they had cooked were finished.

What was to be done?

The men tightened their belts and sipped a little cold water.

"We can take it," said one of the fighters. "But what of the child?"

"Cook something for the kiddy," proposed another.

Old Wei swallowed back the words on the tip of his tongue and turned to look at Cheng Liang.

"No!" Cheng Liang gritted his teeth. "No cooking. We must observe discipline."

"But suppose the child falls ill of hunger?"

"Yes, how can she take it?"

Cheng Liang brushed this aside. "Even if she falls ill, we can't cook. She'll just have to take it."

Old Wei nodded and asked: "Ah-pao, can you stand hardships and put up with hunger so as to beat the big bad wolf and the Japanese?"

Ah-pao rolled her eyes, looking at each man in turn. "I'm not the least bit hungry," she said crisply. "Even if I were, we mustn't cook."

Not a man of them smiled at this innocent, touching answer. They all nodded gravely at her.

By that afternoon everyone's belly was rumbling with hunger.

Ah-pao in her father's arms blinked her eyes and said nothing.

The fighters did not like to look at her. Grandad Wei, too, was deeply concerned.

Cheng Liang put his little daughter on the old man's knee, then bounded into the forest and made for a clearing. . . .

He was back before long with a hatful of cacti.

These cacti, shaped like thumbs, were covered with tiny spikes. Unless you were careful you were liable to prick yourself on their needles. Cheng Liang sliced off the top of each cactus, then peeled it, revealing a fleshy purplish fruit with small seeds embedded in it. The taste was sweet yet sharp.

After eating this fruit Ah-pao lay down to sleep in the shade of a tree.

The fighters, after this painful spell of waiting, were ready for a rest too.

Just then the youngster with the keenest sight noticed a strange black dot on Antelope Reef.

All eyes instantly turned to that spot.

"It's the freighter!"

"How long has it been there?"

"Is it at anchor, or has it really run aground?"

"Why don't we see any flames yet?"

They exchanged comments as they waited and watched.

The sun sank below the horizon, the tide rose.

Then through the murky darkness flames shot up: the signal to go into action.

The fighters raced out of the ram-horn grove towards the harbour.

Cheng Liang made to follow them but Old Wei stopped him.

"You stay here on guard."

"No, this is the day I've been living for," cried Cheng Liang.

"You must let me go and prove myself. I want to do my bit. I want the Party to test me."

"You've Ah-pao to think of."

"You can look after her."

"You trust me?"

"Of course. Ah-pao belongs to us all — we're all thinking of her."

"All right then. Just leave her to me."

Cheng Liang bounded down the sand dune to the harbour and sprang on to one of the fishing-boats just as it was casting off.

Weigh anchor — put out to sea!

The flames ahead beckoned them forward.

18

The fishing-boats fanned out to speed before the wind towards the sound of gunfire and the leaping flames.

The seas were roaring, breaking in huge billows as the revolutionary fighters cleaved the waves.

By the time they could see the hulk of the big freighter, the flames had disappeared.

But when they drew close enough to make out figures moving on the deck, fresh flames shot up.

Their boats sped forward like arrows.

This was Cheng Liang's first action of this kind. On edge with excitement and consumed with curiosity, he was so busy straining his eyes and ears that he nearly forgot his task.

Now a seaman standing in the prow of the freighter yelled to the men in the small boats:

"Comrades, this freighter is packed with ammunition. The Japanese aggressors want to ship it to Southeast Asia to murder the people there. . . ."

Cheng Liang nodded. "That's right. That's what Old Wei and I reckoned."

"... Comrades, we infiltrated the crew and wiped out the Japanese escort. We've seized their weapons. And we're going to keep them in China to wipe out more Japanese invaders!..."

Cheng Liang clapped his hands. "That's the spirit. That's the way for our Chinese workers to free all mankind."

Lights went on, making the freighter bright as day.

Cheng Liang had a good look at the man addressing them.

A man in his thirties, in a seaman's trousers and cap, he was stripped to the waist. In his belt was a pistol with a red silk tassel. His broad back glistened with sweat. With his ruddy face, glowing eyes and thick black eyebrows, he was an imposing figure.

Cheng Liang fancied he had seen this fellow before. Who could he be?

A whistle sounded, and the freighter's crew lowered chests of ammunition over its side.

Chest after chest was lowered, till the holds of the fishing-boats could take no more. At once they turned to race back.

Cheng Liang strained on his oar. The prow threw up foam and the stern trailed a silver wake, as if exulting in their victory.

At Treasure Island they unloaded their cargo, then made straight back to Antelope Reef.

By the time they had taken back three loads and returned again to the reef, the east showed a glimmer of light.

The seaman with the pistol in his belt hailed them again from the prow. "Comrades, you've completed your mission successfully. You're to take our crew aboard now and get clear fast. I'm going to blow up this boat."

"Hey!" yelled Cheng Liang frantically. "Is there any ammunition left in your hold, mate? Let's make another trip. What's the hurry?"

A shout of laughter went up from the other boats.

"Who's that talking?" demanded the seaman.

"Me? I'm from Treasure Island, Hsisha. I've just joined the revolution."

Another shout of laughter.

"Comrade Cheng Liang, is it?" asked the other cordially.

"That's right. So you know me, eh?"

"I know you from way back, mate. We're old comrades."

Cheng Liang narrowed his eyes for a better look and tried to identify the other man's accent. His heart missing a beat, he exclaimed: "I know! You're Ah-ming."

The seaman grinned.

Cheng Liang's mind was flooded with memories, some sweet some bitter, all invigorating. "It was you who sent me to Hsisha to join the revolution, Comrade Ah-ming," he cried. "I'll never know how to thank you."

"It's Chairman Mao we should be thanking. It's our great leader Chairman Mao who's led us poor fisherfolk of the South China Sea and Hsisha to take the revolutionary road of struggle, the road to liberation."

"I'll follow Chairman Mao all my life to make revolution."

"Good for you. We're counting on you."

"Let me take back one more load then."

"All right, one last load, but hurry. And look out for enemy reconnaissance planes. We mustn't let them see a thing. Keep them playing blindman's buff. Come alongside."

Once more the crew of the freighter lowered chest after chest of ammunition into Cheng Liang's boat, then yelled to him: "Hey, Cheng Liang! Cast off. You're full up."

"Don't worry. I can take another chest."

"You may capsize."

"I guarantee not to."

Not until his draught was dangerously low did Cheng Liang call a halt. At once the bare-backed seaman made the other small boats draw alongside to take on the crew of the freighter. Very soon he was the only man left aboard it. Glancing swiftly round, he held up one hand and shouted: "Off with you, quick! Get well clear of the reef."

One by one the fishing-boats moved off. Soon all were a good distance from the freighter. Cheng Liang, bringing up the rear, turned back to look. He saw a moving sight,

Ah-ming leapt into the hold and out again, then sprinkled some liquid round the engine room. Having straightened up to make sure that the small boats were well away, he looked over the side of the vessel. Last of all, he bent down to strike a light. At once a great pillar of flame shot up from the freighter.

As Cheng Liang stared at this huge conflagration illumining the sea for miles around, *The Internationale* rang in his ears and he started singing it softly.

Once Ah-ming saw that the vessel was ablaze, its destruction certain, he ran to the bulwark and vaulted overboard. Though no splash could be heard, foam flew up as he vanished from sight.

Cheng Liang clapped admiringly.

The fire raged fiercer and fiercer, reddening the waves, the rocks on the shore, the faces of the men on the fishing-boats.

Then from the boat next to his sounded Ah-ming's voice: "Get moving! It's dangerous here."

Cheng Liang steered alongside and asked: "What danger is there if I stick with you?"

"We're going to Nansha to have a look, after which we'll return to Hainan. You must go back to Treasure Island and stay there with Old Wei."

"When shall I see you again?"

"From now on we'll be fighting together to defend the South China Sea and Hsisha. Our hearts will be linked together, won't they?"

Cheng Liang smiled. "That's right."

"Comrade Cheng Liang," the other continued, "they say you've made rapid progress and are keen to join the Party. The Party welcomes a good fighter like you. Our task is a most glorious, most arduous one. But as Chairman Mao has taught us: **'We the Chinese nation have the spirit to fight the enemy to the last drop of our blood, the determination to recover our lost territory by our own efforts, and the ability to stand on our own feet in the family of nations.'** Go ahead, comrade. Go all out!"

Cheng Liang's heart burned. Fresh energy flowed through him. He nodded vehemently.

"How is your Ah-pao?" asked the other.

"She's doing fine."

"Before long we'll be sending Ah-hai to stay with you on Treasure Island. The two children can play together." With this Ah-ming flung over a bag. "Here are some victory fruits for your kiddy."

Cheng Liang found that the bag contained biscuits and called out his thanks.

"Don't thank *me*." Ah-ming grinned. "She has all of us, including you, to thank. Well, so long."

.....

Back on Treasure Island, as Cheng Liang unloaded the chests with Old Wei he described all that had happened at Antelope Reef, dwelling particularly on Ah-ming, the intrepid seaman who had so impressed him.

Grandad Wei remarked thoughtfully: "That sounds like our Firebrand."

"Oh? Well, he handles a boat like a real seaman."

"Firebrand's real name is Chao Kuang-ming. He was born on Taiping Island in Nansha and brought up on Maochu Island in Hsisha. Since a boy he's fished these seas; their wind and waves made him a powerful swimmer. Then he went to the mainland for a year for military training so that he could learn how to fight the Japanese. When he came back here, representing the Party, he got us organized to make revolution with him. Our small unit is getting stronger the longer it fights. And he's learning more skills all the time..."

Cheng Liang clapped his hands. "I'm sure you're right. It must be him."

Just then from Antelope Reef they heard thunderous explosions. The freighter's powder-magazine had gone off like great fire-crackers to celebrate victory, like shouts of jubilation!

19

Shells and cartridges lay row upon row in the chests hidden deep in the forests of Treasure Island. There they stayed for nearly three months with the fighters awaiting fresh orders.

During this time Old Wei noticed a great change in Cheng Liang's attitude to Ah-pao.

Before, Ah-pao had followed him like a shadow. If she disappeared for a moment, her father would call for her or search for her, not resting easy in his mind until he had her safely in his arms. Now, when Ah-pao traipsed after him, he said: "Run off and play."

One day they set off to fish without Ah-pao. When Old Wei wanted to fetch her, Cheng Liang stopped him. "She can wait for us on the island."

"All by herself?"

"Why not?"

As they cast their nets, Old Wei noticed that Cheng Liang kept turning to look towards the island. The powerful warm-hearted fisherman obviously couldn't keep his mind off his little daughter.

One day at noon Old Wei saw Cheng Liang produce a tattered mosquito net which he started mending. He then hung it up in one corner of his hut. Asked the reason he said: "Ah-pao ought to sleep alone."

"Won't she want you when she wakes up?"

"Why should she?"

Late at night Old Wei often saw Cheng Liang light his oil lamp to have a look at Ah-pao in her corner. He knew the big fisherman's fatherly concern for his little daughter.

These changes in Cheng Liang's behaviour brought about corresponding changes in Ah-pao. But for some time Grandad Wei could not understand what her resolute, thoughtful father was driving at.

Several familiar boats came back from Nansha. The fighters, coming ashore, saw that Ah-pao had grown.

Now that the strong winds and scorching sun of Hsisha had reddened the little girl's cheeks, with her black hair, oval face, silky eyelashes and curved lips she looked sturdier and more lovable than ever.

One day Ah-pao ran along the beach from which the tide had just receded, carrying two hermit crabs. Her footprints in the sand promptly filled with water.

The crabs, knowing they had been captured, crawled out of their shells and nipped the little girl's arm with their sharp pincers.

She raised both arms and dashed the crabs down on the sand. When they scuttled back into their shells in alarm, she picked them up again.

Two sturdy arms closed round her. She turned to see whether this was her grandad or dad, and discovered that some "uncles" had returned to the island. She said: "Let me go or the crabs will get away."

"You're not going to get away either, Ah-pao. You've been taken prisoner."

"I didn't see you. If I had, you wouldn't have caught me."

"What would you have done?"

"I'd have hidden behind a tree and thrown sand in your eyes."

The fighters' laughter rang out through the quiet island, drawing Cheng Liang and Old Wei to the spot.

The fighters passed on two instructions. Their three boats were to be loaded with ammunition which they would ship to Hainan. And preparations were to be made to receive Ah-hai who was coming at long last.

The first of these instructions pleased Cheng Liang, the second pleased Ah-pao.

Old Wei, apparently pleased by both, advised: "Rest in the shade while we cook a meal. You can load your boats and leave at dusk."

They all sat round under a kalofilum tree.

As Old Wei killed and cleaned fish he chatted with the youngsters about conditions in Nansha and asked after the health of the comrades there. He wanted to know what catches they had been getting. But what interested him most was Ah-hai. How big was he now? Could he swim yet? Did he miss home?

Cheng Liang, washing rice, had something on his mind. His face flushed, his eyes shone. Presently he went over to Old Wei and said: "Look, grandad, our troops on Hainan are short of ammunition to fight the Japanese, and we have a big store here. Three boats can't carry much. It'd take them a long time to ship the whole lot."

"That's true," agreed Old Wei.

"If we use another boat, we can take more ammunition and wipe out more invaders. That'll hasten the day when we overthrow the old man-eating society."

"Quite right."

"I'd like to take our boat and go with the others."

"The trip there and back will take several months, even if nothing happens to hold you up. What about Ah-pao?"

"I'll leave her to you."

"Won't she miss you?" Old Wei glanced at the little girl.

Ah-pao was watching them wide-eyed. When her name came up and Grandad Wei glanced at her, she turned her head away and played with the crabs.

Cheng Liang said: "Since the day I resolved to join the Party, I've given myself and this child of mine to the Party. Besides, she can't go on clinging to me for ever. If we want our children to win back our country, we've got to make fighters of them. If I can do this, I'll have done my duty as a father and won't have lived in vain. Don't you often say, a revolutionary must brave storms to temper himself?"

In a flash Old Wei understood the reason for the recent changes in Cheng Liang's behaviour. "You take the long view," he commented. "You're absolutely right. Only, she seems to me a bit too small still."

Ah-pao playing beside them suddenly piped up: "Don't you dare, you wicked shark!"

The men stopped talking to see whom she was scolding.

The little girl was kneeling on the grass dotted with wild flowers. In one hand she held a coloured shell, with the other she was pulling a crab out of it. Teeth clenched, eyes fixed, she pulled with all her might. "Come on out! You've got to come."

She finally tugged out a tiny hermit crab, which she broke in two and angrily tossed aside.

With a chuckle a youngster teased: "How unkind Ah-pao is!"

She eyed him disapprovingly and retorted: "You can't be kind to these crabs."

"Why not?"

"You know why."

"No, I don't," he protested. "You tell me."

She held up the shell, pulling out of it another crab with pincers. "These are bad crabs," she insisted. "They don't make shells for themselves but sneak into other creatures' and refuse to move out. That's bad, isn't it?"

The youngster nodded. "So that's the way it is."

"They're like the Japanese devils," Ah-pao added.

This comparison touched a chord in the hearts of all. They fixed earnest approving eyes on the child's face and little hands.

Yes, the little girl's artless indictment added fuel to the fire in the hearts of these seasoned fighters, setting up a tumult in their minds.

They pondered her words.

What were they thinking? Were they struck anew by the sacredness of the revolutionary cause? Or considering the weight of the load on their shoulders?

Old Wei slowly rose to his feet. Weighing his words he answered Cheng Liang: "Very well. I'm in favour of your going with the rest."

"I'll fulfil my mission if it costs my life!" declared Cheng Liang with emotion.

After supper they all set to work loading the boats.

They stowed the chests under their bunks and at the bottom of their holds.

They also made ready nets with which to catch fish to put on top of the chests, in order to fool the Japanese patrol boats.

At dusk when the tide was high, the four boats hoisted sail ready to start.

Old Wei told Cheng Liang: "Go with an easy mind, Liang. I'll look after Ah-pao just as you would."

Cheng Liang smiled. "Don't just look after her, grandad. You must teach her as you've taught me."

Old Wei nodded solemnly as if accepting an onerous assignment. Taking Ah-pao by the hand, he went to the cliff to see their dear ones off.

Ah-pao, neither merry nor sad, did not speak or smile. When her father and the other fighters had gone aboard, she stood staring for a second and then pulled her hand out of Old Wei's and ran off.

He hurried after her, afraid she might wade out to the boats and be swept off her feet by the tide.

But instead of making for the boats she ran along the shore in another direction.

Cheng Liang standing at the prow was tempted to call her, but didn't want to upset her. He kept his eyes fixed on her little figure as she scampered across the sands, skipping over the rocks.

From time to time the flying spray hid her from sight.

She seemed to be playing light-heartedly, too intent on her play to look back at her father.

Cheng Liang murmured to himself: "Goodbye. Ah-pao's dad doesn't have to worry when his little lass shows such good sense." All of a sudden the sky seemed loftier, the ocean wider, and he was fired with fresh strength and resolve to fight.

20

Flocks of birds returning south, white clouds heading north, all pause for a while above the emerald Hsisha Archipelago, tempted to linger there.

Now Ah-hai came back to Hsisha, to Treasure Island.

He came with two fishing-boats on their way from Hainan. Before they had even moored, he jumped ashore.

He was sturdy as a tiger cub this boy, with thick eyebrows, brilliant eyes, ruddy cheeks and flashing teeth. Straddling the sand he looked every bit as solid as the anchor of a big steamship.

Old Wei, beside himself with joy, caught hold of the boy as he flung himself into his arms. He tried to lift him but found him too heavy. "Ah-hai, lad," he chuckled. "How you've grown!"

"Where's the little girl? My small sister?" demanded Ah-hai.

Old Wei stroked his black hair and smiled. "She's waiting for you in the hut over there."

Ah-hai tugged at the old man's hand. "Let's go and see her. I've brought her something to play with."

"If you're in such a hurry, go by yourself while I see to our friends on the boats."

Ah-hai bounded off in the direction of the hut, while the old man went to meet the men on the boats.

Although strangers, they greeted each other like old friends.

The two boats had a cargo of processed abalone and sea slugs from Hainan. In addition, they were to take aboard a secret consignment of ammunition here.

They were too engrossed with this important business to pay any attention to the children.

Ah-hai climbed the yellow sand dune and plunged into the ram-horn grove. He caught hold of the big coconut palm and shook it. Then he lay down beside the well to look at his reflection in the water. Finally, running towards the hut, he shouted while still some distance off: "Ah-pao! Ah-pao!"

No answer came from the hut.

Two young boobies perching on a tree gaped at him and flapped their wings.

Ah-hai ran past the trees, patting their supple trunks.

Wild flowers of every colour in the grass nodded and swayed as he passed, their petals clinging to his trousers.

Sunlight dappled the roof of the hut, making it seem like some fairy-tale feathered cape.

But when Ah-hai stepped into the hut, he swallowed back the greeting he was about to call.

There, on a bed inside a mosquito net, slept a chubby little girl with plaits.

Ah-hai tiptoed forward and poked his head under the net to examine her first from this side then from that. Was she like the Ah-pao he'd imagined?

Ah-pao, sound asleep, remained unaware of this searching scrutiny. She was lying on her side, one plump cheek pressed to the pillow, her moist lips parted. Having fallen asleep while playing, she had some wild flowers beside her and a piece of red coral in her hand.

Ah-hai thought: I like the look of her. Why doesn't she get up and play with me? That's what I've come for. Shall I wake her? Better not. When Uncle Firebrand finds other uncles sleeping he sits down quietly beside them to wait, and if I talk too loud he hushes me.

So Ah-hai sat down to wait. When Ah-pao still didn't wake he began to fidget. Rummaging among the treasures in his satchel, he produced two big tiger shells which he laid by Ah-pao's pillow, and a string of bright copper coins which he put beside her. Then, after fingering his wooden pistol, he drew the coral out of Ah-pao's hand and put his precious gun in its place. Last of all, he remembered the sweets in his pocket. He was reaching for them when Ah-pao stirred and woke up, blinking her black eyes.

She saw the shells by her pillow, the copper coins beside her and the pistol in her hand. She was wondering where they came from when an arm thrust through the net. It wasn't granddad, dad or any of the uncles. . . .

She sat up alertly to demand: "Who are you? What are you doing on our island?"

"Your island?" retorted Ah-hai. "I came here before you did."

"That's a lie. Were you here before my dad?"

Ah-hai rolled his eyes. "Was your dad here before Cheng Ho?"*

"Who's Cheng Ho?" she asked. "My granddad was here before he was. That well we use for cooking and washing was dug by my granddad. . . ."

"Don't talk so big," cut in Ah-hai. "Cheng Ho came to Hsisha from Peking over five hundred years ago. Is your granddad five hundred years old?"

Five hundred was more than Ah-pao could count. She blinked in silence.

"Don't you know the story of Cheng Ho's seven voyages to the west?" asked Ah-hai eagerly. "Uncle Firebrand told it me. Would you like to hear it?"

*Cheng Ho (1371-1435) was a noted navigator who on seven different occasions led a flotilla to the South China Sea and beyond. These voyages were described as expeditions to the western oceans.

Ah-pao clapped her hands over her ears. "No, I wouldn't."

But Ah-hai was determined she should hear it. "The ship Cheng Ho sailed on was very big for those times: four hundred and forty-four feet long, the size of a small island. It could carry over a thousand people too — that's more people than live in many a county town. They could ride horses, practise swordplay and put on operas on board. . . ."

Ah-pao, listening despite herself, was fascinated. She was not going to show this, though. As soon as the story ended, she picked up the string of coins and jumped off the bed. "Come and look at my coins," she cried. "I've lots more than you have."

Ah-hai overtook her. "Have a sweet, Ah-pao. Here's one Uncle Firebrand gave me."

They skirted the kalofilum trees, crossed the ram-horn grove and hurried to the clearing. In the middle of this was a sandpit overgrown with grass and covered with fallen leaves across which a bright beetle was crawling.

As Ah-pao squatted down, the beetle took wing. She parted the grass and leaves, cocked her head at Ah-hai and pointed. "See there! I've more coppers than you, haven't I?"

Ah-hai saw a whole heap of coins, green with verdigris, just like those he had found in the sand on Taiping Island in Nansha.

Ah-pao was stuffing these coins into her pocket.

"You can polish them to make them shine," he remarked.

"I've more than you, haven't I?" she reiterated.

Not wanting to own defeat, he changed the subject. "Let's hunt to see if there are any more." He stooped down to search around.

Ah-pao laughed. "I found these when I was digging a hole. How can you find any like that?"

Ah-hai squatted down to burrow in the sand. He hollowed out two holes, but discovered no coins. The sun was so hot that sweat trickled down his temples. His fingers ached.

"Let's go and find Granddad Wei," suggested Ah-pao.

"Wait for me under that tree. I'll come when I've made some more holes."

Ah-pao instead of doing this watched him scabbling.

Ah-hai kept it up till his fingers touched something hard. "Come and look, Ah-pao!" he cried. "It's a big bowl."

Ah-pao bent down to look. It was a large, shallow porcelain dish with a blue design, a really pretty sight.

Ah-hai gleefully brushed off the earth on the dish, announcing: "This belongs to both of us."

Behind them they heard Old Wei call: "You imps! What a dance you've led me."

"Quick, Grandad Wei!" called Ah-pao. "See the pretty bowl we've found."

"Lots of copper coins too," said Ah-hai.

Old Wei examined the dish and commented: "This isn't a bowl, it's an old dish with characters on it. It's nearly a thousand years old and comes from Chingtehchen in our province of Kiangsi."

"Who left it here then?" Ah-pao wanted to know.

"Our forefathers left it here for you two imps. Wash it clean and we can use it for rice."

Ah-hai took some coins from Ah-pao's pocket and showed them to the old man.

"These were minted in the time of Yunglo,* about five hundred years ago," he told them.

Ah-hai said: "Uncle Firebrand told me that these I brought from Nansha are Han-dynasty coins. Is that right?"

Old Wei nodded. "Right. When I was a kid, we found lots of Han coins on those dunes there."

Ah-pao had not yet forgotten their dispute. "Tell us, grandad," she urged, "who came first to Hsisha? Was it Cheng Ho or was it my grandad?"

Old Wei stroked the heads of both children in turn and chuckled. "Who were the first people to come to Hsisha's Treasure Island, eh? Well, this dish and these coins are evidence; the ancient well and the old trees remember; and there are stone tablets too on some of the islands with clear inscriptions on them. One thing's certain: the

*The reign of Yunglo (1403-1424) in the Ming Dynasty.

first people to come to Hsisha, Tungsha and Nansha were Chinese — our ancestors!"

The two children, exchanging glances, chuckled too.

21

Fine weather, with favourable winds and calm seas, came to the aid of our heroes. Their three small fishing-boats shot forward through the foam.

Cheng Liang strained his blood-shot eyes across the waves as he pulled hard on the oar.

The ammunition hidden in the hold spurred him on, as if eager to be fired at the Japanese invaders.

A fighter stepped over to take Cheng Liang's oar.

Cheng Liang kept tight hold of it. "No, you have a rest."

"But you haven't slept for two whole days and nights."

"I'm not tired, not in the least."

Another fighter came and took his arm.

Cheng Liang refused to move. "Go and have a rest."

"You've been rowing non-stop, man!"

"I tell you: I'm not tired."

After a whispered consultation, the two others tackled him together.

"It's not right, your hogging all the work," said one with a show of anger.

"Turn and turn about, that's our system."

Still rowing, Cheng Liang eyed them both. There was a tremor in his voice as he answered: "See here, comrades, you're both so young, yet you've been fighting for our revolution several years. I'm older and I've wasted years of my life. Now, for the revolution, I must do two days' work in one to make up for all that time wasted. Can't you see that?"

His words warmed their hearts and stirred them deeply. True, each fighter follows a tortuous path before finding the revolution. Each burns to make the best contribution he can. In this they were at one.

.....

The third day the wind veered and the weather changed. Clouds scudded across the sky. Mist shrouded the sea.

The three comrades-in-arms pulled together on the big oar, yet still found it heavy going.

In another ten hours or so they should reach their destination. Then the ammunition, their means of wreaking vengeance, would be delivered to the front, to the hands of the fighters in Hainan. Loaded into their guns it would wipe out the enemy!

Abruptly, ahead, they heard the faint chug of a motor.

"Damn!" exclaimed one seasoned fighter. "That's an enemy patrol boat."

The other youngster nipped into the cabin to make sure that the ammunition was well hidden.

Cheng Liang threw out his chest and swore: "No matter what patrol boats these are, if we can we'll fool them; if not, we'll fight it out."

"Let's try to give them the slip."

"We'll only fight it out as a last resort."

Cheng Liang glanced at each in turn and realized what they were thinking. "Quite right," he said. "Our job is to deliver this ammunition. They're waiting at the front for these bullets to wipe out more invaders."

"Bear straight on. See what happens and act accordingly."

"Yes. To tack would arouse their suspicions and make things worse. Keep straight on."

Cheng Liang stared intently ahead, rowing so hard that they outstripped the two other fishing-boats.

Here comes the test, he was thinking. I'm going all out for communism, ready to give my life to free all mankind. I'm not going to lose face for the Chinese people. I won't disgrace our revolutionary fighters!

As the sound of the motor drew closer, they could make out the colour of the enemy vessel and the figures of men aboard it.

Still Cheng Liang went on rowing with all his might.

The enemy motor-boat changed course to approach them.

Cheng Liang steered straight on, regardless.

At once the enemy vessel heaved to, frantically sounding its siren while the crew, like zombies in a floating coffin, trained their guns on the fishing-boat.

The two youngsters exchanged swift glances, ready to fight to the death.

Cheng Liang meanwhile rowed steadily on, outwardly unruffled.

A fat Japanese with a pasty face bellowed: "Stop!"

Cheng Liang calmly rowed up to the enemy boat.

The pasty Japanese drew his pistol and bawled: "You! What do?"

Cheng Liang answered promptly: "We're out fishing."

The Japanese signed to his men to search their boat.

Cheng Liang pointed to the hold. "Sure. Come on."

The Japanese glared at him. "You truly fishing?"

Boldly bluffing, Cheng Liang threw open the hatch cover. Staring back at the pasty Japanese he roared: "Come on! Come and see for yourselves!"

At once the other changed his tune. As if afraid to meet Cheng Liang's piercing eyes, he turned away and barked out some raucous orders to the Japanese crew crouched beside him manning the guns.

The motor revved up. The enemy vessel chugged off.

The two youngsters on the fishing-boat were beside themselves with joy at this victory. As soon as the patrol boat had left, one of them wrung Cheng Liang's hand.

"What nerve you have, Comrade Cheng Liang!"

"You're a cool customer all right. . . ."

The other two fishing-boats now caught up with them. Praise was showered on Cheng Liang from both sides.

All these encomiums made him uncomfortable. "Stop cracking me up," he protested. "The little I did falls far short of what the Party expects."

Waves sprang up then and the air was filled with spray as over a dozen fishing-boats converged swiftly on these three boats, surrounding them.

Cheng Liang was mystified until he saw a familiar face on the next boat.

It was a broad-shouldered, bronzed man in his thirties, a martial figure whose big eyes flashed under his thick black lashes.

Cheng Liang's face lit up. He cried: "You, Chief Firebrand!"

Firebrand raised one hand from rowing to sign to them to proceed full speed ahead.

At once the three fishing-boats took their place in the flotilla, their masts and awnings merging with those of the rest.

Cheng Liang had rarely known such jubilation. He thought: So these comrades came out to meet us, to escort us. Even if the Japanese had boarded us just now, we could have licked them. What a splendid struggle this is, what fighters these are!

22

The boats carrying ammunition ploughed on through mist and cloud, through wind and waves.

They won through all hazards, weathered every storm, until at last they reached their destination.

Fishermen welcomed them into the harbour. Peasants helped them up the cliffs.

The inn where they lodged was in a big transport junction. Many of the carters and waggoners who put up there, as well as some pedlars equipped with shoulder-poles, were fighters who delivered ammunition to the front or to the partisans up in the mountains.

These resistance fighters operated freely under the noses of the Japanese in their warships and their forts.

Like the surging billows of Hsisha, the Chinese people bogged the invaders down, making them completely helpless.

.....

A few days later the fishing-boats, their mission successfully carried out, started home.

The storm rack in the sky began to break up, the mist over the sea to clear. Sunshine filtered through the clouds and merged with the mist.

The clouds turned white and fleecy, the mist dispersed. Wisps of cloud were reflected in the sparkling water.

The prow threw up foam like snow. And something shaped like a triangular bird leapt up through the foam, skimming the water. No bird this, but the flying fish of the South China Sea.

A dozen or so yards away, where flying fish sported in the clear blue water, not a wave could be seen — it was absolutely calm.

Cheng Liang was very familiar with these waters. But never had the sight so stirred his heart. Never before had it seemed to him so lovely.

In the past he had sailed the seas and fished for a living. Today, he looked at the world through the new eyes of a fighter who had battled with the class enemy, the enemy of his country.

Only fighters ready to give their lives for their country can appreciate the true beauty of its every blade of grass, every drop of water.

As soon as the boats reached an area of relative safety, the convoy escorting them was to put back.

Firebrand brought his boat alongside and hailed Cheng Liang.

"Comrade Cheng Liang, you carried out your task brilliantly."

"I'm only a learner when it comes to fighting."

"That's the spirit. Here, come aboard my boat, will you?"

"Have you some instructions for me?"

"Yes."

Cheng Liang picked up his kit and vaulted on to Firebrand's boat.

In the cabin he met an old friend.

"So you're here, Old Chang!"

"Well, Cheng Liang, how goes it?"

"Fine! Never better. Where are you from?"

"Chiungya. And you?"

"From Hsisha. I'm going back there."

Firebrand who had followed Cheng Liang into the cabin smiled. "You should say we're all from the front, and all going back to the front."

"The struggle in Hsisha is really tough," said Chang.

"Not as tough as yours," replied Cheng Liang. "You're confronting the enemy."

"Very soon," put in Firebrand, "you comrades in Hsisha will probably have a chance to cross swords with the enemy too. Sit down while Comrade Chang puts you into the picture."

Cheng Liang sat down gravely and expectantly.

"That traitor Shark!" Chang gritted his teeth. "He wants to lead the Japanese into Hsisha."

Cheng Liang started, then pounded the gunwale with his fist. "Damn the swine! How does he propose to go about it?"

"According to intelligence reports, they'll go to Hsisha on the pretext of getting guano. In fact, because their convoys between Southeast Asia and Hainan often get attacked in Hsisha, they want to entrench themselves there to ensure safe shipment of supplies."

"I agree with that estimate," concurred Firebrand. "The invaders' designs on Hsisha are part of their overall military strategy. So our higher command has ordered us to do all in our power to upset their plan and not let them entrench themselves. The main task of your transport unit in Hsisha is to step up vigilance and protect the supplies you have there."

"You can count on us!" cried Cheng Liang. "We'll carry out orders."

Firebrand continued: "We're sending Old Chang back to Chiung-ya right away to find out more details of the enemy plan, so that we can work out counter-measures. You go back to Treasure Island, Comrade Cheng Liang, and tell Old Wei this new development. Make your preparations and wait. In a week or so someone will bring you further instructions."

Cheng Liang realized that a new test awaited him. He burned to temper himself in the flame of battle, to win honour for the Party and his people.

His heart turned to Hsisha, to Old Wei and the two children. He longed for wings to fly back to Treasure Island.

Having briefed them, Firebrand said: "I've some more important news for both of you."

Cheng Liang and Chang fixed their eyes eagerly on his bronzed face.



“The Party has discussed and approved your applications, you’ve been accepted. From today on the two of you are members of the Chinese Communist Party.”

The two people’s fighters, sons of fishermen and children of the ocean, stood shoulder to shoulder on the prow ploughing the waves, their hearts too full for words.

Before them leapt the waves of the mighty sea. In their breasts burned the fire of youth.

In that instant countless scenes flashed through Cheng Liang’s mind:

The whips of the fishing despots;
The volleys from the Japanese devils’ guns;
The strains of *The Internationale* in the ancestral temple;
The mighty hand charting their course across the ocean;
Heart-to-heart talks in the starlit night on Treasure Island;
The fierce battle in the flames at Antelope Reef.

.....

Hot tears sprang to his eyes. He grasped Firebrand’s hands and wrung them, his lips quivering. “I shall follow the Party as long as I live,” he promised. “And fight my hardest, till my dying day, to liberate all China and all mankind!”

Two intrepid seagulls soared up through the cloud-racked sky.

23

Ah-hai’s coming to Treasure Island made the place much livelier — and also meant another mouth to feed.

Ah-pao was happier than ever with her new playmate.

Old Wei was busier than ever with the boy to care for too.

He woke the children every day before the sun was up to take them out fishing. He would row the little sampan to wherever the wind was strongest, the waves highest.

He asked Ah-hai: “Are you scared?”

Ah-hai flung back his head. “Not I!”

“What about you, Ah-pao?”

The little girl imitated Ah-hai. “Not I!”

The old man beamed. "Good Hsisha youngsters, reared in wind and waves! You'll grow up to weather any storm."

.....

Every night when the stars were out, Old Wei drew the children from their absorbing games and made them sit on a boulder to listen to stories.

From his wide store of tales he chose those of the most daring adventures to tell them.

He asked Ah-hai: "Like my stories?"

Ah-hai blinked solemnly. "Sure."

"What about you, Ah-pao?"

Taking her cue from Ah-hai she answered: "Sure!"

The old man beamed. He was getting satisfactory results in carrying out the task entrusted to him by his comrade-in-arms Cheng Liang and by the revolution. "You're good Hsisha youngsters," he told them. "If you learn while you're small from these heroes who love their country and people, you'll grow up to be heroes yourselves."

.....

Noon is the hottest time of day in Hsisha. Fish plunge deep under the water; birds hide themselves deep in the woods; flowers and insects are still.

Yet at this time Old Wei led the children out of their cool hut down to the bay.

There, under the scorching sun, the coral sand dazzled their eyes, the heat was stifling. Silver ripples glinted on the sea.

"In you go, kiddies!" cried Old Wei. "Have a cool bathe." He plunged briskly into the sea.

Ah-hai followed him.

Ah-pao waded tentatively into the water.

As the days passed the children came to love the sea. Whenever they had a chance they would jump in.

Old Wei taught them to swim and dive, to race through the wind and waves.

By the time Cheng Liang returned victorious from Hainan, the two children could row a boat, tell stories, and swim like little ducklings.

On the grass outside their hut, Cheng Liang hugged Ah-pao. Then, turning he saw Ah-hai standing before him. He gave a start.

Who was this lad with such a familiar face? Standing there in the sunlight, biting his fingers and staring at Cheng Liang, he seemed to be cudgelling his memory too.

Was it something long past? No, it was something for ever engraved on his memory.

As the boy stepped forward, his movements and appearance carried Cheng Liang back to his own boyhood here when he and Mother Fu's second son had rowed and swum together in this bay, raced each other along the sandy beach, and chased each other through the ram-horn grove....

This boy was the image of young Fu. Cheng Liang knew that his old playmate had been killed by the Japanese devils. But he had had a wife and child. Could this little lad be his son?

Cheng Liang stepped forward to ask: "Are you Hai-lung?"

After a second's astonishment, Ah-hai rushed over in joyful recognition to fling his arms round Cheng Liang. "Uncle Ah-liang!"

His tears wet Cheng Liang's tunic.

Ah-pao ran over in dismay to pat him on the shoulder. "Don't cry, Brother Ah-hai," she urged. "Grandad Wei says the children of fisherfolk don't cry."

Old Wei, returning with water from the well, asked in surprise: "Do you know Ah-hai then, Liang?"

"He's the son of a good friend of mine. Last time I saw him he was only four. I thought he'd been killed. How did he come here?"

"He was rescued from drowning in the sea," said Old Wei.

"Who by? You?"

"No, by Firebrand."

"Ah, Firebrand."

"Actually, it would be truer to say that our Treasure Island saved the child's life."

What had happened was this:

That year Hai-lung had gone to sea with his parents. On their way to Hsisha they ran into a Japanese ship. Hai-lung's father rowed

hard to keep clear of it, but the devils gave chase and rammed their little boat, smashing it to pieces.

When fishermen take a child out to sea, they tie a big gourd to its belt in case it falls overboard. The gourd tied to Hai-lung had kept him afloat. He saw his father and mother killed while the Japanese devils on their ship laughed sadistically. Then the tide had borne him off and thrown him up on the beach of this coral island.

The sun was already setting that evening when Old Wei and Firebrand rowed homewards with their catch. Old Wei steered towards their accustomed landing place.

Firebrand had such keen eyes that, on a fine day, he could see the colour of the clothes of people on a boat ten *li* away. Now he spotted a red dot further down the coast and asked Old Wei to go and investigate.

A dead branch was sticking up on the coast. Hanging from it was a little red vest which had drawn the fighters' eyes like a flame. That was how they rescued little Hai-lung already at his last gasp.

.....

Old Wei commented: "The kid has a good head on his shoulders. If he hadn't hung up that red vest, even though the kind sea cast him up on the beach and the island welcomed him, nobody would have spotted him or rescued him!"

Cheng Liang rumbled Ah-hai's hair, then stroked Ah-pao's cheeks. "With fine kids like these," he declared, "we can take hardships and danger in our stride and go from strength to strength."

While Old Wei helped Cheng Liang unload the boat he asked for an account of their expedition.

First, Cheng Liang told him he had won the honour of being admitted to the Chinese Communist Party.

Old Wei gripped his hand. "Now you're a fighter in the vanguard of the proletariat. You must keep forging ahead. Never just mark time."

"Just wait. I'll show you in action."

The two children standing there blinked, struck by the passion in the voices of these two close comrades.

That was a gala evening on the little island.

Old Wei kneaded dough and made flap-jacks, while Cheng Liang cleaned a fish and cooked some dishes on the fire lit by Hai-lung with faggots brought by Ah-pao.

Living like one family on Treasure Island, caressed by the balmy Hsisha breeze, they sipped fine liquor from Hainan. It was a joyful family reunion!

24

Cheng Liang had brought back from Hainan three important items of news.

First, Shark, the traitor, had supplied more information to the Japanese who now meant to take over the Hsisha Archipelago. For a start, they intended to collect the guano on the islands and ship it to Japan.

Second, to frustrate this scheme, Firebrand had managed to get several of his fighters into the "labour corps" rounded up by the Japanese. These men's job was to sabotage the work and make it impossible for the enemy to keep a foothold in Hsisha.

Third, owing to this sudden change in the situation, the chests of ammunition still on Treasure Island would have to be shipped elsewhere. They must prepare for this and await fresh instructions.

Under the bright moonlight of the South China Sea Old Wei and Cheng Liang sat, smoking, on a log outside the hut. In low voices they discussed the situation.

Beside them the surf roared, the sea wind gusted.

From time to time birds roosting in the forest cheeped.

The tide shifted and stirred the flotsam on the beach.

Moved by the prospect of the coming struggle, Old Wei said: "For years the imperialists have looked on China as a juicy hunk of meat — their mouths water at the sight. And our money-bags want to win high position by selling out our country. But no traitor can sell China — we poor folk have guts and we won't stand for it! With fighters of the proletariat here, the Japanese won't be able to rob our land of a single clod of earth!"

"That's how I see it too," agreed Cheng Liang. "The longer a man lives in Hsisha, the more he loves our south sea, the better he appreciates its beauty. And now that we have a clear revolutionary goal my love for Hsisha has grown a hundredfold. I prize every drop of water in the sea, every grain of sand, every leaf and blade of grass. In Hainan I often heard say that our Hsisha guano's a first-rate fertilizer. And Chief Firebrand has helped me to take a long view. He says: Once we've driven out the Japanese and liberated all China, we must do away with oppression and exploitation and carry through the socialist revolution and socialist construction. Hsisha's guano must serve the revolution too. We'll collect it ourselves and fertilize our fields with it."

"By then," said Old Wei, "we'll be building big freighters in our own Chinese dockyards to ship our guano over to the mainland."

At this point Hai-lung slipped out of the hut and cried: "Grandad Wei, I'll captain one of those big freighters!"

Ah-pao who had followed him caught the old man's arm. "I'll captain a big freighter, grandad. I'll pilot it ever so safely!"

"Don't be silly," scoffed Hai-lung. "Girls can't captain steamboats."

"Yes, they can!" insisted Ah-pao.

"No, they can't."

"I shall, so there!"

"You won't."

"I will!"

The two children were on the verge of coming to blows.

Old Wei and Cheng Liang, laughing, pulled them apart and bundled them back into the hut to sleep, after which they continued with their conversation.

The disputes between Hai-lung and Ah-pao were like the South China Sea's sky in the rainy season: one minute overcast, the next clear again.

But this time Ah-pao's sense of grievance went deeper. She got up the next morning sulking and ignored Hai-lung.

Hai-lung, being the bigger, wanted to make it up. He gave Ah-pao a pearly shell as a peace-offering.

Ah-pao ignored it.

Hai-lung produced a string of coins he had polished till they shone. She ignored this too.

He groped in his pocket for a sweet, but found he had none left. He frowned. Then, looking up, his face brightened. Fetching Cheng Liang's chopper from the hut he dashed to the clearing, shinned up the palm and cut down two big coconuts.

He rushed back with these to Ah-pao, crying: "Here, eat this."

Ah-pao, her head lowered, stole a glance and then another at the coconuts. "Let's plant them," she suggested.

"Plant them?"

She nodded. "The way my grandad did. They'll sprout leaves and grow up in no time, then bear lots of coconuts. When we come here to ship out guano, we can drink coconut milk and eat coconuts."

"That's a good idea. But who'll command the freighter?"

Ah-pao frowned. "Who do you think?"

"You will!" said Hai-lung.

Ah-pao crowed with laughter.

Still laughing, they dug two big holes near the tall palm, poured in two dippers of water from the spring, then carefully placed the coconuts in this water.

Old Wei and Cheng Liang looked on approvingly.

"Put in some salt," advised Old Wei.

"And cover them with plenty of earth," said Cheng Liang.

"Sprinkle some rat poison on top."

"Yes, the rats here are a pest."

Ah-pao and Hai-lung did as they were told.

So the coconuts were planted in the fertile soil of Treasure Island. They embodied the desire of the sons and daughters of Hsisha to build up their islands, their determination to defend their islands.

25

It was now the dry season in Hsisha. By night the small island was buffeted by sea winds, by day it was scorched by the sun.

At noon the brown boobies and pheasants stopped searching for food and perched on the trees to sleep or cried softly in the shadow of massive rocks.

Ah-pao and Hai-lung, too, retreated to the coolness of their hut to play.

They pretended that Cheng Liang's bed was the sea, his big pillow Hainan Island, and their smaller pillows the Hsisha Archipelago. Sea-shells representing boats plied to and fro loaded with the make-believe treasures of Hsisha.

Suddenly Old Wei came running back from the beach. To Cheng Liang who was cooking he said urgently: "A sampan is heading this way, Liang, with three Japanese and two traitors in it."

"What can they be up to?" cried Cheng Liang, springing to his feet.

"I fancy they've occupied the nearby islands and now want to have a look at our Treasure Island."

"Kill the swine!"

"We can't, there are too many of them. Besides, we don't know if they're alone or if another enemy boat will be following. We'd better wait and see."

"Then we'll go into hiding."

"That won't do. They'll see our huts and things. If they didn't find anyone they'd search the island and might easily discover our ammunition. Then they'd arrest us all. I'll stay here and handle them."

"No, I'll stay. You take the children off to hide."

"I'm older and more experienced than you. You're young: there's more for you to do in the future. You must leave this to me. I'll find some way to cope. We'll decide what to do after I've sized them up."

"I can't let you do this."

"You must — for the sake of our children."

"Grandad Wei. . ."

"Don't argue. These are orders. Remember our discipline!"

Cheng Liang, always careful to observe revolutionary discipline, raised no further objection. Still he didn't leave right away. He would gladly have risked his own life but was loath to leave this task to the old man.

With a fond glance at the children who were peeping out from the hut, Old Wei urged Cheng Liang: "Your task today is to save

that ammunition to kill the enemy and to safeguard our younger generation. Do as I say — get started!"

The surf roared like the roll of battle-drums. Branches tossed in the wind like signal flags.

From the beach could be heard the wild yelps of the invaders.

Cheng Liang looked at Grandad Wei. Encouraged by the old man's resolute gaze he gritted his teeth and hurried into the hut. He took down his chopper, stuck it into his belt, and led the two children out.

"What are you going to do, dad?" asked Ah-pao.

"Where are we going?" asked Hai-lung.

"Quiet!" urged Cheng Liang softly. "Bad men, Japanese devils, have landed on our island."

Old Wei stroked Ah-pao's cheek and patted Hai-lung's head. "Do as you're told," he said. "Hurry!"

Without another word, the children started off with Cheng Liang to the forest.

Ah-pao turned back to call "Grandad!"

Hai-lung called: "Quick!"

Old Wei overtook them, taking from his pocket two splendid shells.

These were rare shells: white flecked with yellow and brown, with three scarlet lines on the back. Picked out of the sea off-shore a few days ago, they still smacked of the ocean, were still warm from contact with his body.

He thrust a shell into the hands of each child, then gave them a gentle shove. "Be good children and do as you're told," he said with a smile. "Keep forging ahead!"

The children and Cheng Liang vanished into the forest. Its dense foliage hid them from sight. But through gaps in the leaves they were able to see all that happened outside the hut.

Old Wei raised his head to look round, then sat down in the place vacated by Cheng Liang and calmly relit the stove, adding fresh twigs to the fire.

The leaping flames reddened his face and chest as well as his big callused hands.

The raucous yelling drew nearer.

"Search, search! Must be people. Was smoke."

"Here are footprints. Follow them."

Then came the tramp of booted feet — a rare sound on Treasure Island.

Ah-pao's heart was going pit-a-pat. She peered with eyes round as saucers through the leaves at the men tramping over the sand dune. This was the first time she had ever seen men like these — class enemies, and enemies of her country.

This was the first time, too, she had ever seen pistols and the black muzzles of rifles pointed so viciously — at Grandad Wei's heart!

A Japanese with a gun barked: "You, what do?"

Old Wei glanced at him, added a faggot to the fire and answered calmly: "I'm a fisherman."

"You come to fish here? Why?"

"Here in Hsisha the sea and the islands belong to us Chinese. Where else should we fish if not here?"

"How many of you?"

"I'm on my own today."

"Only you? No more?"

"There are plenty more of us: old folk, grown men and children. They're all out fishing now and won't be back yet awhile."

Some of the intruders were circling round the hut.

The Japanese who could speak Chinese kicked the bucket with his booted foot. "This what?"

With another level look at him, Old Wei shoved the bucket towards him and answered: "Water."

"Where from?"

"Our country, China."

"This island no have well?"

"What's that?"

"This island has a well?"

"A well? No, none."

The Japanese produced a cigarette and offered it with a smile. When the old man refused it, he lit up himself. "You tell truth," he said. "Find well-water, Imperial Army give you big reward."



Old Wei slowly added more fuel to his fire. With a thoughtful look he said loudly: "Now I get it. You've come here today just to find a well. This is a big thing for you. The sea stretches to the horizon. If you have no drinking water, you won't be able to stay in Hsisha or ship anything out. No wonder you're so set on finding a well!"

"You have well, old man?"

"I told you, no. Each drop of fresh water in Hsisha is precious as gold. The richest men in China can't get water here, not to say you foreigners — Hsisha won't give you any."

"The water you drink — where from?"

"It's shipped from the mainland."

"You lie!"

"That's all the answer you'll get from me."

The traitors covered Old Wei with their guns.

"Come on, take us to see the well!"

"Get moving, quick, or we'll shoot you."

Old Wei grunted and put down the twigs he was holding. He coolly stood up, brushed the sand and grass from his clothes, then turned towards the wood where Ah-pao and the others were hiding. "I tell you, there's no well," he declared loudly. "You're wasting your time trying to find one. Better give up hoping."

He stepped forward vigorously to make a deep imprint in the sand. With one foot he filled this with sand which he trampled level.

Ah-pao, lying beside Cheng Liang, felt her father quiver. Turning she saw that he was nodding his head towards Grandad Wei.

Slowly, Old Wei led the enemy off to the beach in the opposite direction from the spring.

The surf boomed and thundered like a mighty drum. The tree-tops swayed and thrashed like signal flags.

26

Cheng Liang's heart was beating in time with Old Wei's firm steps. He tightened his grip on his chopper and ground his teeth, burning to charge the enemy and fight them to the death.

60

But recalling his revolutionary task and glancing at the children, he checked himself.

The tramp of feet receded, then faded away.

Cheng Liang whispered: "Wait for me here. Don't move and don't talk!"

Ah-pao and Hai-lung nodded silently.

Cheng Liang stuck the chopper through the back of his belt and crawled off through the forest.

Ah-pao eyed Hai-lung and blinked.

Hai-lung eyed Ah-pao and clamped his lips together.

Cheng Liang crawled on, skirting the roots of the kalofflum trees, through the creepers and past the meadow dotted with flowers until he came to the well.

He picked up the leafy bough covering the well and looked down at the clear spring water. Mirror-bright, it reflected his face set in lines of deep feeling and fury. And he saw, as if in a mirror, the spade with which his great-grandad had dug this well, the bamboo dipper his grandad had used to draw water, the porcelain basin in which his dad had washed clothes, the cauldron in which his mother had boiled rice. . . .

Gazing into the water he swore beneath his breath: "Not a drop of our Hsisha spring water will the invaders get!"

With his chopper he loosened the soil beside the well. Then, with his hands, he shovelled this into the well.

Soon the spring was choked and buried.

Next he collected fallen leaves to scatter on the ground, planting some tufts of grass and flowers between them.

Last of all, squatting on his haunches he withdrew, wiping out with his hands all his footprints in the sand.

Far off, to his left, he could hear threats and curses.

"Out with it! Where is the well?"

"If you won't talk, we'll kill you!"

.

Cheng Liang had a vision of Old Wei's firm, powerful tread, his calm, serene face.

61

He wiped the mud off his chopper, straining his ears to catch every sound from the beach. After what seemed a long time, the voices moved far to the right.

"Leading us a dance, eh?"

"Play dumb and you're for it — no kidding!"

.....

Once again Cheng Liang had a vision of Old Wei's firm, powerful tread, his calm, serene face. Gripping his chopper hard, bent almost double, he loped off in the direction of the sound. After what seemed a long time, still more frenzied shouts rang out ahead of him:

"Speak, or I'll shoot!"

"Kill him, kill!"

Two shots rang out.

Old Wei boomed: "You can never kill all the Chinese people. China belongs to our people. So does Hsisha. You can't lord it over Hsisha or loot our treasures. You're heading for doom, you dogs. Our children are going to settle scores with you!"

Another shot. Then everything was still.

Chopper in hand, Cheng Liang rushed to the spot.

Branches and creepers made way for him. Birds and insects scattered to let him pass.

He raced to the edge of the clearing, where the reek of gunpowder hung heavy in the air.

The enemy had gone.

The only person left here was Old Wei.

In the utter stillness no cloud moved, no bird flew, no tree stirred.

Old Wei, his jaw set, had one hand on the ground and with the other was pulling on a sapling, trying to struggle to his feet.

Cheng Liang rushed over to him. "Grandad Wei!"

At sight of him Old Wei gasped: "The spring?"

With a sweep of his hands Cheng Liang answered: "I've buried it."

"And the children?"

"They're safely hidden."

The old man nodded. "Well done. You've brains as well as guts."

Then, with a cry of dismay, Cheng Liang caught sight of the blood on the grass beside him.

Old Wei smiled. "I've carried out one of the tasks entrusted to me by the Party. There are many others waiting to be done. You and your comrades, with the children, must take over from me now."

"Grandad Wei. . . ."

"You must have grit, Cheng Liang. This liaison post of our transport team is vital to the war of resistance on Hainan. We must hold out here at all costs. . . . Battle on bravely, comrade. Fight the invaders to the end, safeguard every inch of our country's soil."

This said, the old revolutionary quietly closed his eyes.

A wind sprang up, the tide rose. Seagulls winged through the scudding storm clouds. The forest trees thrashed and rocked.

The South China Sea and the thundering billows of Hsisha burst into a mighty dirge.

27

When the enemy, yelping like a pack of wolves, had reached the depth of the forest, Cheng Liang returned to the children anxiously awaiting him.

His face was like iron, his eyes suffused with blood.

Without a word, gritting his teeth, he took them both by the hand and led them quietly down towards the beach.

Ah-pao felt the sweat on the big hand clasping hers.

Hai-lung felt a tremor in the big hand gripping his.

When they reached the sand dunes baked hot by the sun, they halted and lay down in the ram-horn grove.

Cheng Liang patted their heads and said hoarsely: "Don't move. Whatever happens, don't move. Wait for me here." He sprang up and crossed the dunes.

Ah-pao nestled close to Hai-lung, staring with flashing black eyes through the dense foliage at her father's sturdy feet.

Like a fish skimming the waves, he raced down the golden sand dune.

Like a seagull soaring through the sky, he sped over the white coral beach.

Like the mast of a ship, he stood erect on a boulder shaped like a tiger.

Before him stretched the boundless sea.

In the evening sunlight it billowed like blue velvet, its roaring surf throwing up small silver ripples. . . .

Not far from the boulder a sampan bobbed up and down on the waves.

Cheng Liang leapt into the sea and crouched there, his body immersed, his head against the boulder. Unless you looked carefully he was invisible — he had blended into the island.

Slowly the sun sank. Where sky and ocean met appeared an orange band of light like a newly kindled flame.

A strong evening wind sprang up. Trees rustled, flowers and grasses swayed and danced.

The tide rose rapidly, flinging foam higher and higher up the beach. Spouts of water shot up by the boulder.

The island grew quieter and lonelier.

The intruders, their search fruitless, trudged back dejectedly, complaining loudly.

“A trip for nothing, damn it!”

“Tomorrow, send sappers dig here.”

“It won’t be easy to find a spring, Excellency.”

“Must dig, dig till find water. No water, no can stay in Hsisha. . . .”

While talking, they floundered down the sand dune and crossed the beach.

One of the traitors waded into the water and pulled the sampan forward. The rest jumped aboard.

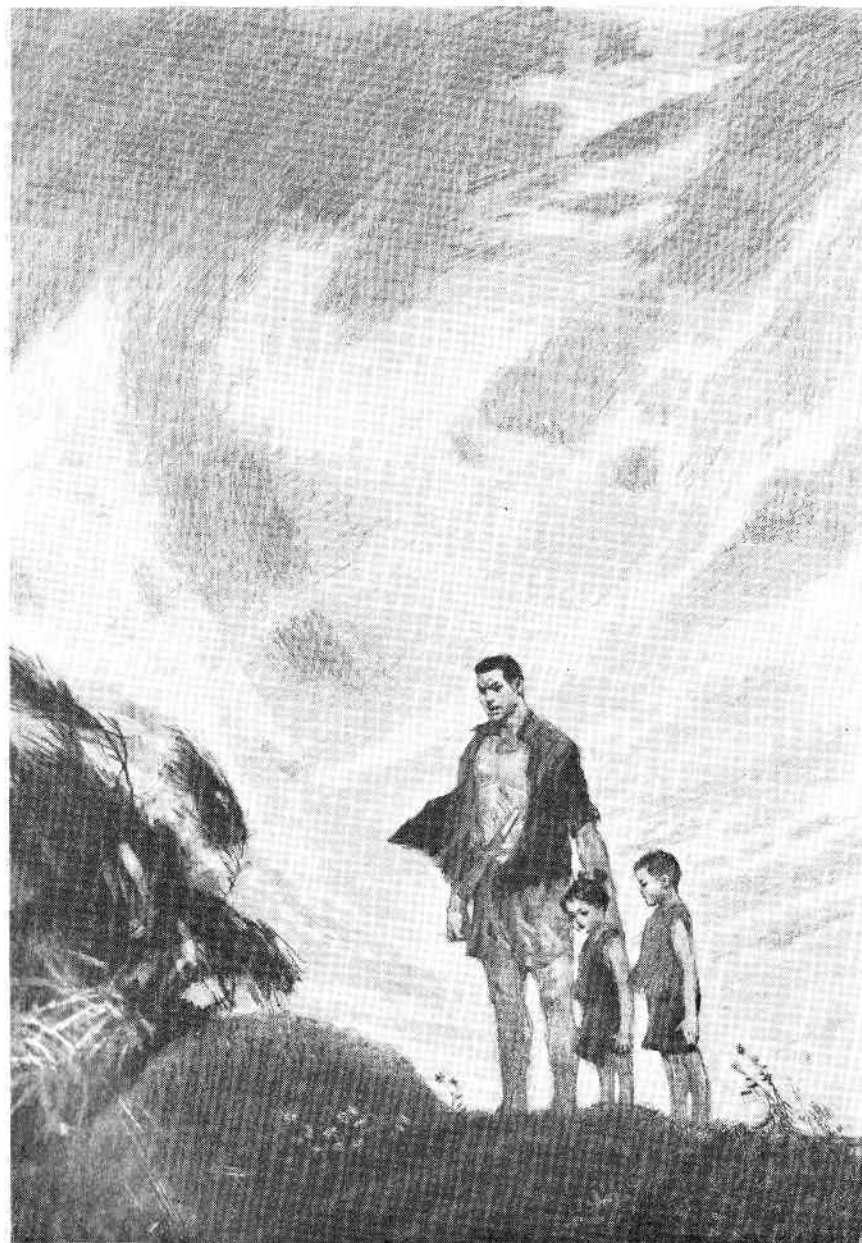
The most devilish Japanese brute was still holding a gun, the same gun with which he had threatened Grandad Wei.

The sampan moved off with a splash of oars.

Hai-lung and Ah-pao spat in its direction.

The sampan nosed out of the bay into deeper water. Once, twice, it was thrown up on the crest of a wave.

Then a man’s dripping head shot out of the foam. Before the Japanese and traitors knew what was happening, splash! — their boat overturned.



The five devils plummeted down to the bottom of the deep blue sea. They came up again, spluttering for breath, their hands clutching wildly.

Ah-pao saw that it was her father who had overturned the sampan. She let out a cry: "Well done, dad!"

Hai-lung had already streaked out of the grove to the beach.

Ah-pao followed him, her shining eyes on her father.

Her dad, his chopper raised, swam up to one of the devils and smashed in his head. He then finished off another. . . .

Dark blood stained the foam for a second before vanishing from sight.

Dad gazed around him, then started swimming back.

Ah-pao and Hai-lung were waiting for him on the beach. They held out their hands and, skipping, pulled him ashore.

A wave, rolling in, wet their clothes.

In silence Cheng Liang led them both to the upper part of the island.

By now the sky was suffused with bright clouds. The sea was a mass of huge billows. The trees thrashed in the wind as if singing in unison.

Cheng Liang led the children, Hsisha's younger generation, to the side of the old revolutionary who had laid down his life for the cause.

They saw kindly, warm-hearted Grandad Wei lying on the soil of their motherland, his face turned to the sky, resting in peace. The flowers at his side were stained red with his blood.

Cheng Liang hollowed out a grave with his chopper and buried the old man deep in the soil of Hsisha. He built a high grave-mound above him.

The children gazed at each other, their faces streaming with tears.

In a low voice Cheng Liang told them: "Stand up straight!"

They drew themselves erect.

"Say: Don't worry, grandad."

The children repeated these words.

"Say: We shall do as you taught us, follow Chairman Mao and the Party, and give our whole lives to the revolution. . . .

"We swear to safeguard Hsisha's transport line and the liaison post on Treasure Island. We won't let the Japanese get a foothold here. . . .

"We swear to fight bravely on against the invaders to the last drop of our blood. We will give our lives to defend Hsisha, defend the South China Sea, defend each inch of our country's territory."

The children repeated these oaths after him.

Cheng Liang kissed each in turn.

Her eyes flashing, Ah-pao asked: "What happened to grandad, dad?"

"He defended this rich and lovely island for us. He defended our sweet spring water."

"Will grandad get up again?"

"He will always be here with us. Remember, grandad lives on here in the place where you planted those two coconut palms."

The children nodded. . . .

Sunset flooded the west till the sky was a blaze of red. The seething ocean, splendid islands and raging forests — all creatures under the sea, on the land and in the air — took on a new glory then as if overspread by our motherland's mighty red flag.

Illustrated by Chen Yen-ning

Today's Main Task (woodcut)
by Li Chung-fa ▶



Poems by Peasants of Hsiao-chin-chuang

Wang Tso-shan

We'll Keep on Hauling Our Carts Uphill

Cartloads of wheat, cartloads of songs —
Fruit of our campaign
To expose Lin Piao and Confucius!
Things are going fine now; a new day has dawned;
Like flies knocking into brick walls
These pests are helpless.
A clear vision have we poor peasants

For further information on these poems see the article on p. 95.

And high resolve vaulting over hills and streams.
We have set our shoulders to the wheel
And, for the revolution,
We'll keep on hauling,
Hauling our carts uphill.



Chou Ke-chou

Our People's Commune Is Fine

New earth, new sky: this brave new world of ours
Has filled our commune members' hearts with pride
As singing revolutionary songs
Together to the threshing-field we stride.

Our people's commune is a splendid sight,
Tachai's red banner floating in the air;
Our fields and villages are filled with song,
Our countryside is fair beyond compare.

New earth, new sky: this brave new world of ours
Has filled our commune members with delight,
And striding to the singing contest now,
Brimming with energy, we're full of fight.

A competition this for the best song;
With hearts afire our commune members sing
Praise of the glorious Cultural Revolution
And this new spring which we are hastening!



Wang Tu

Our Ten-*li* Dyke

Our ten-*li* dyke lies splendid in the sunshine,
Ten *li* of willow saplings, ten of poplars;
Inside the dyke an ever-running stream,
Outside the dyke the heady scent of paddy.
Listen! Bells tinkling,
A convoy of carts streams past;
The drivers crack their whips, the horses gallop,
And the girls on the carts are laughing. . . .
In the old days this was a swamp
Where wolves ran wild,
Year after year it was flooded,
Till the Communist Party led us to Liberation
And we turned this swamp into a granary.

Today, carts bowl over our dyke,
Songs float above it.
In time of good harvest
Our thoughts turn to Chairman Mao
As, hearts singing,
We deliver our grain to the state.



Chen Hsiang

Our Bumper Harvest

Grasp revolution to speed up production!
Our swamps, once alkaline, put forth green shoots;
And watering these fields with our warm sweat
We fill the plain with a sea of golden wheat.

Waves of wheat lap our door-steps,
Their sweet smell gladdens our hearts
As flinging open all the village windows
We whet sickles dipped in moonlight.

“Start reaping!” A thousand sickles flash
And our harvesters’ songs float up into the sky,
While our sickles hot on the heels

Of our swift footsteps
Bring laughing sheaves to the ground,
And carts piled with grain
Start streaming out of our village,
Heading fast for Peking.



Wang Yu-hua

Sinking a Well

As the sprocket-wheel whirls on the derrick,
Whirling up, up to the sky,
All the clouds high above are astonished.
“Hey there! Don’t you bump us!” they cry.

But the sprocket-wheel answers them laughing:
“Scram, if you won’t give us rain.
Though you send us three whole years of drought now,
We’re still raising our output of grain.”

Wei Wen-chung

We'll Lick the Dragon King and Old Man Heaven

A shoulder-pole four foot long;
Two buckets, one on each end;
When the buckets are filled with water
How jubilantly our loads to the fields we send!

One load: one plot of green;
Ten thousand loads: green stretching to the sky-line. . . .
Beading the ground with sweat we're busy writing
New epics of the Old Fool Who Moved Mountains.

The worse the drought the harder we all work,
Strength and to spare by Mao Tsetung Thought is given;
With shoulders harder than iron
We'll lick the Dragon King and Old Man Heaven!

Wang Hsin-min

A Peck Measure at the Criticism Meeting

The meeting to debunk Lin Piao and Confucius
Seethes with rage, rings with accusations.
The old team leader gets in first,
A peck measure raised high in his hand.

See this measure, the landlord's peck measure,
Gaping like the bloody jaws of a ravening tiger!
One peck of grain, a thousand pecks of tears:
In the old days our tears flowed like rivers.
The landlords batted on our tears,
On the marrow of our bones.

This measure, this peck measure
Cannot measure all our wrongs and hatred.
The Confucians' "benevolence",
Lin Piao's "forbearance",
Were cannibals' canons —
They preyed on our flesh and blood.

The old team leader's fulmination
Fills the hearts of the villagers with blazing anger.
Lin Piao tried to put the clock back,
To bring this peck measure back into use again
And let the landlords trample over us —
We must fight, fight these pests to the end!

Wei Wen-chung

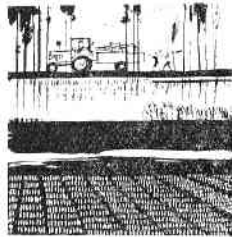
We're Taking the Socialist Road and That's for Sure

Our old team leader comes home from work
A deed of sale in his hands.
When I ask what it is
He is silent, then replies:
This is the deed that sold me into bondage,
It stands for foul injustice, bitter hatred;
I'm taking it to our criticism meeting
To expose the Confucianism of our exploiters.

In that old hell on earth
I slaved for the landlord,
A kid of eleven when he dragged me away
To his house to work off our debt.

How my mother wept over this bond!
But we had to swallow the hatred in our hearts.

Lin Piao and Confucius preached "benevolence",
Turning black into white, the lying hypocrites.
Today, Chairman Mao's revolutionary line
Is the light to guide our feet:
We're taking the socialist road and that's for sure.
Lin Piao, like Confucius, tried to restore the past;
We'll go all out to repudiate them both.



Wang Tan

Our Political Night-school Is Fine

Our political night-school is fine,
We poor peasants love it;
There we study Chairman Mao's works,
Dialectical materialism we're grasping.

Our political night-school is fine,
We poor peasants love it;
There we hit out hard at Lin Piao and Confucius,
Routing all ghosts and monsters.

Our political night-school is fine,
We poor peasants love it;

There we study politics, military tactics,
Scientific farming, literature as well.

Our political night-school is fine,
We poor peasants love it;
By steady hard work we've forged ahead
In revolution and production, both.



Chen Hsiang

Battle-drums Roll on the Banks of the Chienkan River

Battle-drums roll on the banks of the Chienkan River,
Cart after cart of good manure bowls by;
Urged by red-tasselled whips our horses race,
As if on wings they fly.

Leaving home before dawn by starlight,
Returning by moonlight long after the sun has set,
Braving fatigue and hardship we cart manure
To make our land lovelier yet.

Yu Fang

Now We Women Prop Up Half the Sky

Step on it, sisters! Who cares
If the sweat down our faces runs?
Through wind or flood we'll cart this mud
Till we've shifted a thousand more tons.
Shovel the mud in the carts,
Pull together to make them fly. . . .
Once men held sway; not so today,
Now we women prop up half the sky!

Wang Tu

The Man Who Grows Trees in the Swamp

Look at him where he comes now,
Treading the morning dew:
Ruddy face, grizzled hair,
Broad shoulders mantled with the early sunlight,
Striding firmly forward
A shovel in his hand.

Look at him. Remember
His proud boast ten years back:
"Who says trees won't grow in the swamp?
I'll make them grow there!"
Time after time he ranged the swamp in the snow,
Time after time asked the Party for this task.

Remember the day
When he took bedding-roll and pick
And with his old mates' help set up his headquarters
Right in the heart of the swamp.
By the light in his hut — it shone like the North Star —
He studied Chairman Mao's works and drew up his plan.

Remember the day
When with only the strength in his arms
He set out to conquer the swamp.
Crate after crate of rocks he carried off,
Pick after pick he wore out,
Load after load of fresh water he toted there. . . .
Who can count all the trips he made?

Remember, then,
How tirelessly he grew and transplanted saplings,
Willows by the river, locust trees by the bay;
On the big dyke he scattered elm-seeds,
On windy slopes planted green pines,
In the brackish swamp brambles.

In those days he never left
The swamp or the saplings;
In the light of the dawn he pruned the trees with care
And pollarded them by moonlight;
In pouring rain he shovelled earth round the roots,
In raging wind he roped the trees to stakes.

In those days
He ignored winter cold and summer heat;
When urged to rest
He just shook his head and said nothing.
Time after time he muttered in his sleep:
“Grow up quickly, little saplings!”

In those days
He kept class struggle ever in mind
And, alert for each new storm,
Axe in hand patrolled the swamp night after night;
On New Year's Eve with redoubled vigilance
He caught the landlord's wife at sabotage.

Now the wind and frost of ten years
Have whitened his hair,
But the Cultural Revolution has reddened his heart
Making him work with still greater energy.
The saplings he planted have grown into trees,
And he himself is like an old tree in full bloom.

Look at him where he comes now,
Lovingly fingering the trunks of his trees.
“Our motherland needs plenty of good timber
Strong enough to withstand wind and rain.
Go, my trees, to pave the long road of revolution,
Go to help build our great mansion of socialism.”

Illustrated by Ho Chen-chiang

Songs of Oil Workers

Wang Chiu-kuei

During a Storm

Thunder and lightning rend the sky,
Clouds black as ink bear down upon our derrick;
The wind howls like a tiger,
The rain pours like a flood through open sluice-gates.

Eagles are back in their eyries,
Wolves in their lairs and hares deep in the woods;
But what of the workers manning the drill?
Our motto is: "Work goes on."

One tightens the drill bit,
Another handles the swivel;
We work as if under clear skies,
Our drill boring deep,
Biting through the bowels of the earth.

Determination stronger than diamond drill bits,
Drive greater than a hundred pressure pumps,
In the teeth of the howling storm
Drenched to the skin at our posts
We soldier on.

Our drill is roaring songs of victory
As the storm dies down, leaving the skies aglow,
For we have drilled another first-rate well,
Our oilfield has taken another big step forward!



Han Liu

Spring Comes Early to Our Oilfield

At the crack of dawn, bright and early,
We throw open windows and doors to welcome Spring.
The north wind howls, swirling snowflakes,
Tossing the silver boughs of jade-white trees,
Hiding the roads under snow-drifts,
Draping the oilfield with a silver mantle.

Where is she?
Where is Spring?
Climb the derrick and take a look round:
See, here she is!
Spring is dancing in the wind,
Laughing in the snow....

Spring comes to our tents
As our prospectors set out,
Their lusty singing floating far and wide,
Their scarlet banners fluttering in the snow.
The roar of blasting shakes the wilderness
And with Spring's approach new oil reserves are found.

Spring comes to the drilling platform
Where our red-hot ardour melts the snow and ice;
The motor rumbles like thunder,
The rotary table whirls, the drill-pipe throbs.
We fighters for oil are going all out
When comes the good news of a fresh field opened up.

Spring comes to the wells
Where oil pours out like spring floods.
Our women workers have studied philosophy,
They are all set to drain this sea
And to wrest high yields from these wells
Gushing oil like a foaming tide.

Spring comes to our fields
Where our families, hard at work,
Are swinging picks and hoes to build canals,
Braving the wind and snow to cart fertilizer....
They are fighting for a bumper harvest,
To plant in Taching the red banner of Tachai.

Spring strides swiftly through the snow,
Gallops fast on the wind;
Though the ground is still white
She has picked up her pen to sign on;
And yet she blushes for shame,
For this year she is late again:
Early as she's come to Taching
Our men are earlier!



Yu Teng-ping

He'll Just Have to Announce the Good News

Late at night when stars are dim
Our reporter sits writing his report by lamplight:
We're advancing by leaps and bounds,
Things are going fine;
Tomorrow we'll hold a celebration rally.
He has just written up the achievements of Team One
When Team Two comes to report:
Their plan to lay a hundred *li* of pipes
Is already overfulfilled.
Fine! says the reporter. Fine!
He sets to work to write his report again.

The cock crows, dawn is breaking
As the new report is done.
Then the telephone rings:
Team Three has surpassed Team Two

And in a splendid month's work
Finished building their storage tanks — all top quality.
Fine! says the reporter. Fine!
At once he starts to rewrite his report again.

A glorious sunrise, sound of drumming and gonging
As marchers set out proclaiming their good news.
Halfway to the meeting place
They hear Team Four's set a new record:
By revolutionizing their equipment
They have saved material, speeded up the work
And stepped up quality too.
The reporter cries out with joy,
Then scratches his head.
Too late to write a new report,
He'll just have to announce the good news.



On the Production Front (woodcut)
by Kuan Lien-chu ►

NOTES ON LITERATURE AND ART

PIEN TSAI

Peasant Poets of Hsiochinchuang

Our ten-*li* dyke lies splendid in the sunshine,
Ten *li* of willow saplings, ten of poplars;
Inside the dyke an ever-running stream,
Outside the dyke the heady scent of paddy.

.....

Today, carts bowl over our dyke,
Songs float above it.
In time of good harvest
Our thoughts turn to Chairman Mao
As, hearts singing,
We deliver grain to the state.

These lines are the beginning and conclusion of a poem by Wang Tu, leader of Hsiochinchuang Brigade's militia. This poem sings the tremendous changes in this village, painting a vivid picture of its new prosperity.

Hsiao-chin-chuang is situated in Paoti County not far from Tientsin, on the banks of the Chienkan River, a tributary of the Chaopai. Formerly this was a barren swamp flooded nine years out of ten, its soil so alkaline that not even reeds would grow there. Before Liberation only fifty families lived here, all tenants of a big landlord in a neighbouring village; so their life was one of endless misery, of hunger and cold. In 1945 Hsiao-chin-chuang was liberated. Later, land reform was carried out, then a co-operative was set up and finally a people's commune, so that Hsiao-chin-chuang was well on the way to socialism. Then ten years ago Chairman Mao issued the call to tame the Haiho River, which ended the flooding of the Chaopai in the Haiho River Valley. However, owing to the obstruction caused by the counter-revolutionary revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi, stress was laid on subsidiary products in agriculture at the expense of grain production, with the result that farming here did not make rapid headway. After the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution started in 1966, the former poor and lower-middle peasants repudiated the revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi and subsequently that of Lin Piao as well. They carried out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and launched a movement to learn from Tachai. This was when the village underwent a radical change.

In the winter of 1971, the villagers started a drive to improve their soil. Their slogan was: Deepen the river-bed by three feet and add an inch of soil to the fields. During this campaign the peasants made up songs voicing their determination, and while dredging the river held a singing contest. They sang:

With sleeves rolled up
We make a flying start,
Ten hundredweight of mud
On every cart.

.....

One, two, three;
One, two, three:
There is strength
In unity.

Heave the pounder,
Let it crash;
Earth that's frozen
We can smash!
.....
Trench the land
And make it flat;
Alkaline soil,
Get moving! Scat!

These songs increased their drive and revolutionary optimism as they dredged mud from the river-bed to improve their alkaline soil. As a result the output of wheat jumped from little more than a hundred catties per *mu* to nearly five hundred catties. Wang Tu's poem about the long dyke tells of this big leap forward.

During the current mass movement to repudiate Lin Piao and Confucius, the villagers of Hsiao-chin-chuang have written many more verses expressing their love for our great leader Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, for Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and many new features of socialist society, besides forcefully repudiating Lin Piao and Confucius. These poems reflect the militant exuberance and heroism of our peasants.

Now everywhere in this village, wall-papers, blackboards, the school, fields, threshing-floors and peasants' courtyards are all used for poetry contests and song recitals. Nearly two hundred villagers write poems. For instance, all seven members of the family of Yu Fang the women's team leader write poems and discuss subjects for poems together. They often help revise each other's verses. All of them have written denunciations of Lin Piao and Confucius. Yu Fang herself has written:

The traitor Lin Piao was a follower of Confucius
Who schemed to turn the wheel of history back,
On his lips big talk of "benevolence" and "love".
But hidden in his heart a butcher's knife.



Yu Fang reciting poems at a poetry contest

We must smash the Confucian shop,
Uproot these vile weeds and turn them into compost.

Her father Yu Cheh-huai wrote:

Confucius tried to restore the rites
And Lin Piao capitalism;
Though separated by two thousand years
They played the selfsame tune.

This family is turning out new verses almost every day.

The poems by the Hsiao-chin-chuang villagers are closely linked with present-day tasks, serving the cause of proletarian politics and serving production too. Their themes are clear, their spirit is militant. These revolutionary poems operate **“as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy.”**

Since the beginning of the current movement, this brigade has held six poetry competitions at which more than 170 people have

recited over six hundred poems. The main target of these is the reactionary programme of Confucius and Lin Piao: “Exercise self-restraint and return to the rites.” Thus one poem says:

Our pens are rifles, our ink ammunition,
We fire our shots dead on target
Blasting the dream of Lin Piao and Confucius
Of a return to the past.
Smash the putrid corpse of Confucius
And riddle his filthy guts!
Don't let the Confucian school
Rear its ugly head again to stir up trouble.
We working people have had enough
Of the bitterness of the old society;
Lin Piao tried to raise the ghost of Confucius —
We scoff at this vain dream.

A poetry poster-stand in the village to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius



Wei Wen-chung, the former poor peasant who wrote *We're Taking the Socialist Road and That's for Sure*, is fifty-three this year. An illiterate in the old society, having started to work for a landlord when only eleven, he had first-hand experience of the life when one peck of wheat cost the peasants a thousand pecks of tears. In August 1971 when this village set up a political night-school, he was the first to enrol. For three years he has never missed a single class. He is studying Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, and has learned to read and write. During the present movement, he uses poems as his main weapon to debunk Lin Piao and Confucius. *We're Taking the Socialist Road and That's for Sure* describes another poor peasant who once worked with him as a hired hand after selling himself as a bond-slave to the landlord.

Another good poem *Repudiation Meeting in the Fields* by former poor peasant Wang Shu-ching also expresses the peasants' determination to go the socialist road. All the former poor and lower-middle peasants of this village, conscious that they are the masters of history today, repudiate the fatalistic doctrine of Lin Piao and Confucius. Thus Wang Shu-ching aptly criticizes the old proverb "Heaven grows the crops while men dream; the harvest depends on Heaven." He says:

Have the peasants been dreaming all these centuries?
Has Heaven ever tilled the land?
What is Heaven but Nature
With no will of its own;
Some classes are good, others bad;
Our happiness all comes from Chairman Mao.

With these simple words he refutes Confucian fatalism.

To hit back at Lin Piao's attacks on new socialist phenomena, the villagers of Hsiao-chin-chuang write in glowing terms of the Cultural Revolution, their new night-school for political study, the system of sending educated youth from cities to settle in the countryside, the co-operative medical service and other new developments in their village. The night-school is not only the place where the peasants learn political theory; it is also a centre for repudiating Lin

Piao and Confucius, as young Wang Tan shows in his poem *Our Political Night-school Is Fine*. The night-school is also the centre for poetry contests. Villagers bring drafts of their poems to recite here and this is followed by discussions of the merits of these verses. Summer and winter alike, the classrooms of the night-school are filled with people reciting new poems.

The current movement has brought about changes in old customs too. Villagers in their poems debunk the Confucian concept of male supremacy and Lin Piao's slander of working women, praising women who are men's equals. Women and men now receive the same pay for the same work; while in politics women are proving themselves brave vanguards in the fight against all that is reactionary and backward. In the night-school village women studied the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and decided to make a complete break with conservative traditions. In the past when girls in this district became engaged, they used to accept betrothal gifts from their fiancés. Now they have changed this old custom. When twelve girls led the way by returning the betrothal gifts sent to them, Huo Feng-ling wrote a poem to praise this new socialist fashion. In this she declared:

Betrothal gifts are devilish traps,
Barter-marriage is criminal;
Lin Piao and Confucius treasured this old custom
But we'll have none of it!
Today we women have won liberation,
We'll smash the old feudal traditions.

Everywhere in this village, in peasants' homes, in the fields, in the stock-yard, flour mill and on the dyke, from morning to night you can hear the villagers singing arias from revolutionary operas. In addition to this, they are trying to learn from the opera artistes' experience in portraying proletarian heroes, so as to praise exemplary villagers. The militia leader Wang Tu, for example, has written a poem about an old poor peasant who for ten years has planted trees in the swamp, describing with deep feeling the far-sighted vision and high ideals of this hero. Other poems reflect the villagers' political



Wang Hsin-min
(left) and Wei
Wen-chung
writing poems
together

ideals and nobility of spirit. Young Wang Hsin-min declaims loudly in the green fields:

We are the heroes who are making history,
We propelled history forward in the past,
And now that we are masters of our country
We vow to transform our motherland completely.

All these poems from Hsiao-chin-chuang express the outlook and heroic spirit of revolutionary peasants, but each has its own individual style. Old Wei Wen-chung and young Wang Hsin-min both write good lyrics on political themes, but Wei because of his knowledge

of the old society shows more depth of feeling while 37-year-old Wang is better at expressing the dash and drive of our new peasants today. Stirring narrative poems like *Our Ten-li Dyke* and *The Man Who Grows Trees in the Swamp* by Wang Tu, 22-year-old militia leader, or *Repudiation Meeting in the Fields* and *Broad Our Golden Road and Wide* by Wang Shu-ching are vigorous and fresh with a pleasing rhythm, but Wang Tu's poems express the joy of life in the new society with the light touch and exuberance of a young man, whereas Wang Shu-ching's seem weightier with the deep feeling of an old peasant.

Wang Shu-ching works every year on the threshing field. In his poem *Broad Our Golden Road and Wide* he contrasts two different worlds present and past during the wheat harvest. This is how he sees it:

Mid-summer day, the longest in the year,
Our commune members are busy harvesting wheat;
To and fro they race like shuttles,
Stacking up mountains of wheat on the threshing-floor. . . .

This sight today reminds me of the past
And flames of rage fill my heart.
On mid-summer day in years gone by
This threshing-floor was the landlord's torture chamber.

So with heartfelt thanksgiving he praises the new society:

Our Chienkan River dyke is linked with Peking —
Broad our golden road and wide.

Only peasants working on the land are so keenly aware that mid-summer day is the longest day of the year. Wang Shu-ching on this day, reminded of the past by the gladdening scene before him, uses simple peasant language to denounce the old society and praise the new.

Kang Chin-jung, a girl from a Tientsin school, after living and working in this village for some time was so impressed by the care

and training she received from the Party and the peasants that she wrote:

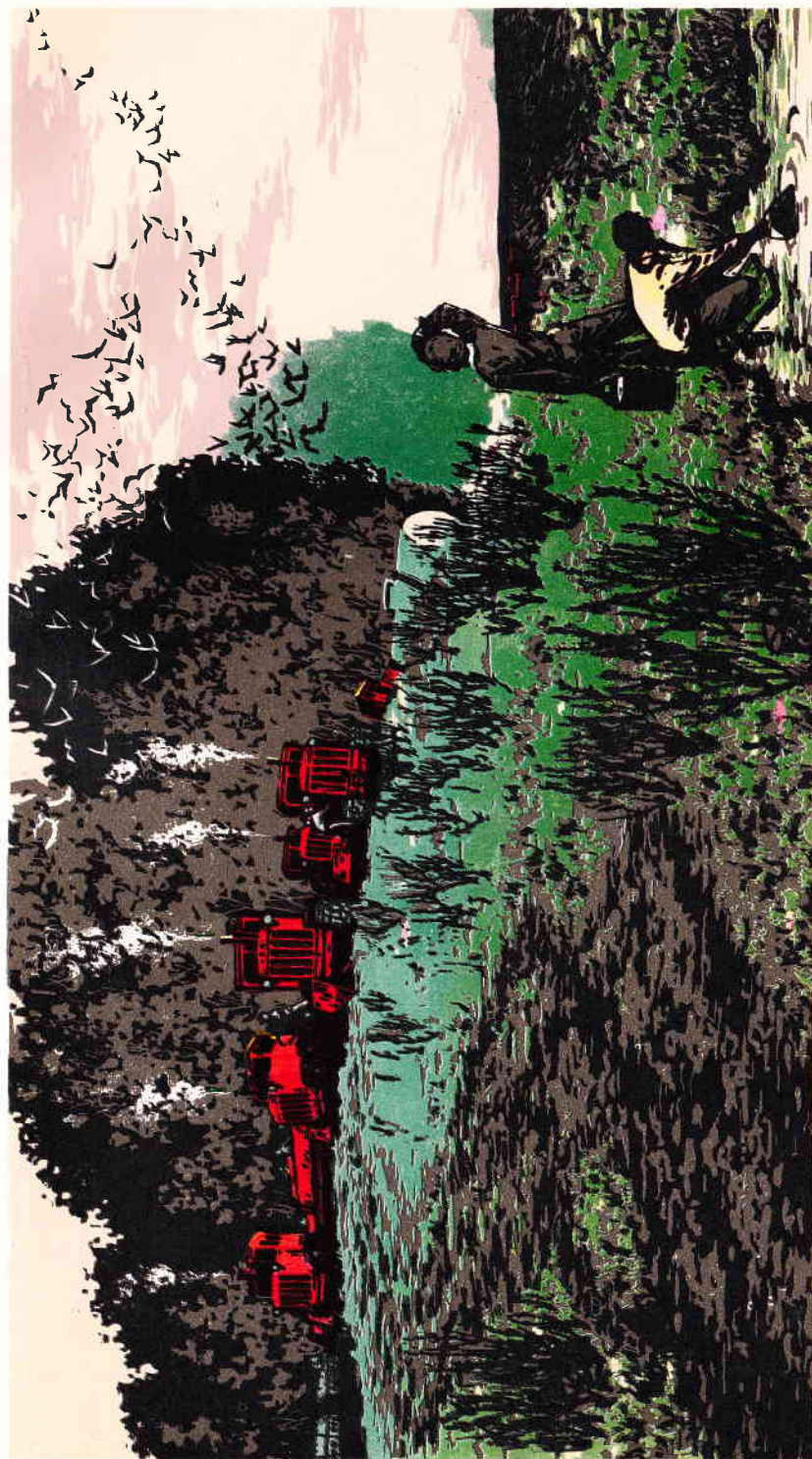
Our songs float afar on the spring breeze,
Our sweat will bring us in a bumper harvest;
Sunlight makes young shoots grow,
And we youngsters are growing up cared for by the Party.

These lines reflect the true feelings of the young people who have come from schools in town to settle down in this village.

These peasants' language is simple but spirited. They use vivid images and write concisely. Wang Hsin-min's poem about the peck measure is a good example of this. Such images as "Gaping like the bloody jaws of a ravening tiger", "One peck of grain, a thousand pecks of tears" and "In the old days our tears flowed like rivers" conjure up the misery of the past and summarise the history of these former poor and lower-middle peasants. Chen Hsiang describes the fine harvest in terse imaginative language: "Waves of wheat lap our door-steps"... "We whet sickles dipped in moonlight." In this way he conveys the joy of the reapers. These simple unaffected poems embody profound ideas, combining strong proletarian feeling with revolutionary romanticism.

Hsiao-chin-chuang today has "a new earth, new sky and new changes: Poor and lower-middle peasants are writing poetry". The song writing here has not only enriched the life of the peasants in this locality, it is adding to the record of achievements of the revolution in literature and art typified by the model revolutionary operas.

Spring Stirrings (woodcut)
by Hsu Hsueh-yen ►



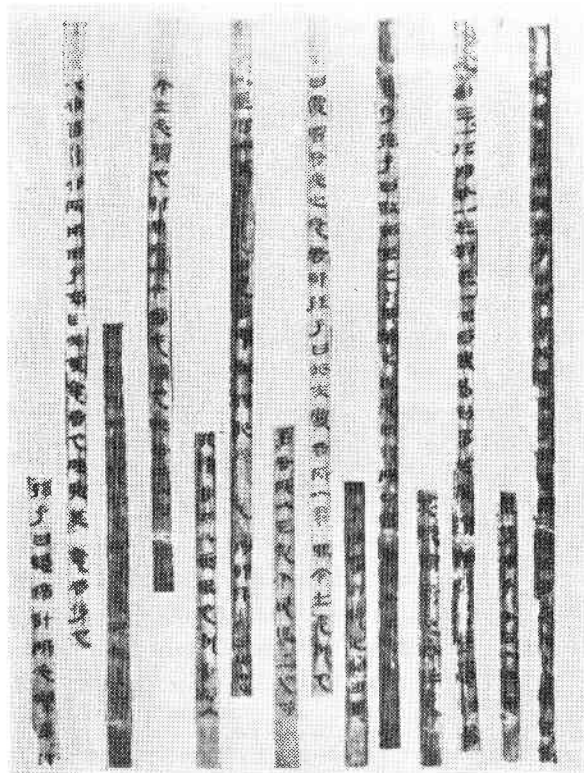
Discovery of a Long-lost Military Treatise

In April 1972, Chinese archaeologists excavating some Han-dynasty tombs of the second century B.C. in Silver Sparrow Mount, Linyi County, Shantung, found 4,942 bamboo slips covered with writing. Such bamboo slips were used for records before the invention of paper. These included, among other writings, *Master Sun's Art of War* and *Sun Pin's Art of War* which had been lost for more than a thousand years. This discovery is another outstanding achievement of Chinese archaeologists guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line since the Cultural Revolution.

Master Sun's Art of War by Sun Wu is well-known. Sun Wu served King Ho-lu of the state of Wu at the beginning of the fifth century B.C. According to Ssuma Chien, historian of the second century B.C., Sun Pin was a descendant of Sun Wu and both were famous strategists, Sun Pin serving as military adviser in the state of Chi in the fourth century B.C. The military treatises written by both men are mentioned in the bibliographical section of the Han-dynasty history by Pan Ku, but subsequent histories contain no reference

to *Sun Pin's Art of War*, so that it seems it was lost by the end of the Han Dynasty.

Ssuma Chien describes some of the celebrated campaigns planned by Sun Pin. One of these is the battle of Kueiling. In 353 B.C. the state of Wei besieged Hantan, the capital of Chao. King Wei of Chi sent an army under Tien Chi, with Sun Pin as military adviser, to help the state of Chao. Tien Chi wanted to march straight to Hantan to raise the siege, but Sun Pin advised him to attack Taliang the capital of Wei instead, for the best forces of Wei had all gone to Hantan, leaving their own capital poorly garrisoned; thus when Taliang was attacked the Wei troops would have to turn back to save their own capital. The king of Chi approved Sun Pin's plan. The



Bamboo slips recording the military treatise of Sun Pin

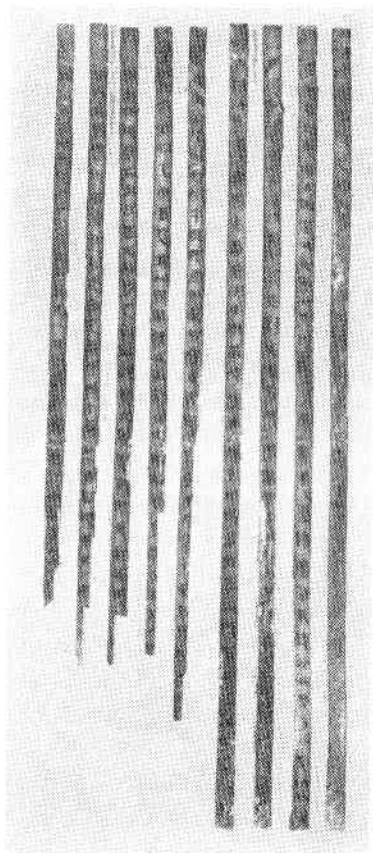
Wei army, exhausted by a forced march back, was routed by the Chi army at Kueiling.

Chairman Mao in his famous work *Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan* speaks of Sun Pin's strategy and points out that similar tactics can still be used today. **"Should the enemy stay put in our base area, we may reverse the tactics, namely, leave some of our forces in the base area to invest the enemy while employing the main force to attack the region whence he has come and to step up our activities there, in order to induce him to withdraw and attack our main force; this is the tactic of 'relieving the state of Chao by besieging the state of Wei.'"**

During past centuries since the disappearance of Sun Pin's military treatise, there have been various theories about Sun Wu and Sun Pin. Some scholars never believed that the extant *Master Sun's Art of War* was really the work of Sun Wu; others doubted whether such a person had ever existed. Most took the view, however, that the existing military treatise had originated with Sun Wu and later been completed by Sun Pin; in other words, that it summarized military tactics from the early fifth century to the fourth century B.C. and was not the work of any one individual. Now the discovery of both treatises by Sun Wu and Sun Pin has ended this long-standing controversy.

Linyi County lies in southern Shantung near the Yimeng Mountains. South of the county town are two small hills, Golden Sparrow Mount and Silver Sparrow Mount, and here many Han tombs have been found. The bamboo slips on which are recorded the military treatises of Sun Wu and Sun Pin were discovered in a tomb on Silver Sparrow Mount. Another nearby tomb has yielded 32 bamboo slips inscribed with the almanac of the first year of the Yuan-kuang Era (134 B.C.) of the Han Dynasty, also a find of great significance.

Some of these bamboo slips are mutilated. Their average length is 27.6 cm.; their width varies from 0.5 to 0.9 cm. and their thickness from 0.1 to 0.2 cm. During excavation traces were found of how these bamboo slips were originally bound together by cords; but after long immersion in water and mud the cords had rotted and the "books" had fallen apart. Careful reconstruction revealed that 105 bamboo slips comprise *Master Sun's Art of War* totalling more



Part of the bamboo slips unearthed

than one thousand characters. More than 240 slips contain the long-lost treatise by Sun Pin, totalling more than six thousand characters. This work is divided into various chapters dealing with ramparts, battle formations, the use of water and fire in war, the qualifications and functions of a commander, reasons for defeat, a study of the two opposing sides and so forth. These show the writer's views on the factors leading to victory or defeat, different plans of campaign and deployment of troops according to whether one's forces are superior or inferior numerically and in fighting capacity and under different topographical conditions. Some chapters were written in the form of questions and answers, such as the dialogue between Sun Pin and King Wei of Chi or between Sun Pin and General Tien Chi. Others were in the

style of a commentary or account of various successful campaigns.

Sun Wu and Sun Pin lived at times of great change in Chinese history when feudalism was replacing the slave system. On the political and ideological front, the Confucian school representing the declining slave-owning class and the Legalist school representing the rising landlord class waged a sharp struggle, a struggle between restoration and counter-restoration. The inevitable trend of social development during this period called for unification of the country by means of

war. And history entrusted this task to the statesmen and military strategists of the new emerging landlord class. Sun Pin's military treatise stands for waging war against the retrogressive forces of the declining slave-owners who wanted to preserve independent ducal regimes. Thus his military theory, strategy and tactics were based on those of the rising landlord class represented by his forerunner Sun Wu and further elaborated in certain respects.

These newly discovered bamboo slips contain, in addition to these treatises, sections of the *Six Tactics* attributed to Lu Shang at the beginning of the Chou Dynasty and works of the early philosophers Mo Tzu, Yen Tzu, Kuan Tzu and Wei Liao Tzu. The work of Yen Tzu has an account of how Confucius went to the state of Chi to promote his reactionary policy but met with a rebuff there. Yen Tzu points out that Confucius used elaborate costumes and music to deceive people. In his view, Confucius was nothing but a political swindler.

Not a single work of the Confucian school was found here. Since this tomb was built not long after the time when Confucian books were banned and destroyed, it shows how effectively Chin Shih Huang, the First Emperor of the Chin Dynasty, dealt with those reactionary retrogressive forces. It also shows that Chin Shih Huang exercised strict political discrimination when he burned books. In this sense these new finds are a forceful refutation of the renegade and traitor Lin Piao's wild attack on the First Emperor, and the slanderous allegation by Chinese and foreign reactionaries that our Cultural Revolution "destroyed culture" just as did Chin Shih Huang.

The discovery of these bamboo slips, particularly the long-lost *Sun Pin's Art of War*, provides fresh material for the study of the history of the struggle between the Confucian and the Legalist schools of that period and of military thinking in ancient China.

The characters on these bamboo slips were written with brushes dipped in ink, in different hands: some in regular and neat calligraphy, others in a more vigorous and freer style. All this writing is in the clerical script of that period. But since that was a time when the

style of writing was being simplified, this clerical script still displays certain features of the earlier minuscule script. The bamboo has yellowed with age, but the ink is still black and clear. These bamboo slips are thus of value too for the study of Chinese palaeography and calligraphy.



Comradeship (woodcut) by Hua Yi-lung
and Shen Chia-wei ►

CRITICISM OF LIN PIAO AND CONFUCIUS

WEN CHUN

Confucius' Reactionary Views on Literature and Art

By the end of the Spring-and-Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) in China, under the heavy blows of slave revolts the rule of the House of Chou was tottering, the slave system was disintegrating and the new landlord class was increasing in strength. The replacement of the slave system by the feudal system had become historically inevitable. In this time of momentous change Confucius (551-479 B.C.) represented the moribund slave-owning aristocrats. He lamented the "decay of rites and music". In the hope of restoring the old order and preserving the vicious rule of the slave-owners, he advocated the reactionary political programme: "Exercise self-restraint and return to the rites."

Chairman Mao has told us: **"In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines."** The ideas on literature and art of Confucius, revered by past rulers as the supreme sage and teacher, also served his political line: "Exercise self-restraint and return

to the rites.” In the *Analects* of Confucius compiled by his disciples to record his sayings and actions, he advocated the use of songs to arouse men, rites to regulate them and music to perfect them. This is one of the basic premises of his reactionary views on literature and art. The key concept here is rites, to which both songs and music were subservient.

What did Confucius mean by rites? He meant the hierarchical system of slave society with its corresponding political and moral rules, its etiquette and ceremonial. This was an important component of the superstructure of Western Chou (c. 11th century to 770 B.C.) slave society. To Confucius the ancient rules of propriety or ritual were sacrosanct. He said: “Without studying the rites, men cannot take the right stand.” Aiming at the restoration of the slave system, he considered the rites of the Chou Dynasty the highest criterion for all words and actions, and urged men not to “look at, listen to, speak of or touch anything not in accord with the rules of propriety.” He also said: “When the ruler pays attention to propriety, the people will not dare to treat him with disrespect,” and “When the ruler pays attention to propriety, the people will be easy to control.” This shows that propriety or rule by rites was the instrument used by the slave-owning aristocrats to consolidate their rule and enslave the masses.

Confucius urged men to make a careful study of the old rites and master the rules of propriety, so that their behaviour would conform completely to the demands of these rites. And he believed that the best way to achieve this was to start by studying the *Book of Songs*. The *Book of Songs*, China’s earliest collection of poetry, was compiled during the Spring-and-Autumn Period. Tradition has it that Confucius edited this book and cut out many songs. In his views, every song in the collection as it now exists embodied the spirit of propriety; hence studying these songs would give a man a more comprehensive, graphic picture of propriety, enabling him to conform to it in word and deed. This is what he meant by using the songs to arouse men. A similar idea is behind his statement: “Without studying the *Book of Songs*, a man will not know how to express himself.” However, this alone was not enough. Studying the *Book of Songs* could enable

a man to understand the spirit of the rites and to behave according to the rules of propriety, but could not permeate his heart with their spirit. To achieve this, he must also study ancient music. Confucius believed that music could civilize a man and transform his thinking. Studying the ancient music which embodied the spirit of slave society ritual would naturally make his behaviour more consistent with the ancient rites — this is what he meant by perfecting men with music.

To achieve his aim, Confucius was willing to distort and change the original songs and interpret them in an arbitrary fashion to bring them into line with his conception of the ancient rites. Once his disciple Tzu Hsia asked him the meaning of the lines in the *Book of Songs* “So sweet her dimpled smile, so alluring the glance of her lovely eyes, like colour added to white.”

Confucius replied: “Embellishments must have a white background first.”

“You mean,” said Tzu Hsia, “that the rites must come after benevolence?”

Confucius was delighted and responded: “You have opened my mind; now you can start studying the *Book of Songs*.”

Actually those lines in the *Book of Songs* simply described the physical beauty of some aristocratic lady; but Confucius and his disciple twisted their meaning to link them with their theory of benevolence and the rites. Many similar instances can be found in the *Analects*. Subjective and arbitrary explanations of these early songs were used by reactionaries throughout the centuries and had a deplorable influence on literary criticism.

The reactionary views on literature and art of the Confucian School were criticized in ancient times by thinkers of the Legalist School which represented the interests of the rising feudal landlord class. Thus Shang Yang (c. 390-338 B.C.) pointed out that the old rites and music were signs of decadence and of the state’s impending doom. He compared the Confucians to lice living on human blood and said that a state would only become powerful if it got rid of the parasitic officers in charge of music and rites. Another thinker of the Legalist School Han Fei (c. 280-233 B.C.) stated that Confucians used culture

to sabotage the law and compared these dichards and their doctrines with maggots undermining the foundations of society. So not only in politics but even in literature and art the Legalist School was directly opposed to the Confucians who represented the interests of the moribund slave-owning aristocracy.

Chairman Mao teaches us: **“Each class in every class society has its own political and artistic criteria. But all classes in all class societies invariably put the political criterion first and the artistic criterion second.”** In his attempt to make literature and art serve his reactionary political programme — “Exercise self-restraint and return to the rites” — Confucius declared that poetry must contain no heterodoxy but be gentle and forbearing. In other words Confucius, too, put the political criterion first. He said: “The three hundred songs can be summed up in one sentence: Think no improper thoughts.” By this he meant that they accorded with the essence of the ancient rites. Such an estimate of these early songs is clearly a gross distortion of the truth. Although many of the 300-odd songs in the present *Book of Songs* were composed by slave-owners, quite a number are folk songs which reflect the suffering of the wretched slaves and the sharp class contradictions of that time. From his retrogressive stand, Confucius deliberately misinterpreted these songs and preached propriety, benevolence and the Doctrine of the Mean in order to suppress rebellious slaves and oppose the newly emerging landlord class. He did this to strengthen the ideological control of the slave-owners in an attempt to preserve their collapsing system.

When Confucius explained the social function of poetry, he showed his reactionary views even more clearly. He said: Why don't you study the songs? Poetry can arouse you, help you to observe things, to unite, to voice your complaints, to serve your father and your sovereign, and to learn the names of birds, beasts, plants and trees. By “arouse” he meant that poetry could move and influence people, making them act in the spirit of the ancient rites. By “observe” he meant that students of these songs could observe the vicissitudes in the fortunes of the slave-owners and learn from them how to safeguard the slave system. They could also observe the prosperity

and decline of the social customs and morals of slave society, and learn to serve their fathers and their sovereign according to the Confucian principles of loyalty and forbearance, filial piety, brotherly obedience and the Doctrine of the Mean. By “unite” he meant that the slave-owning clans should join forces against the rising landlord class which was challenging their rule, and work out methods to keep down the masses.

When Confucius said that poetry could help men to voice their complaints, this was also in the context of averting the doom of the corrupt slave system; because its rites and music were by then in a state of decay, and mild criticism should be directed against this without impairing the dignity and prestige of the ruling class. Thus to strengthen the slave system Confucius proposed that poetry should voice dissatisfaction without rancour. His aim was to muzzle the rising landlord class and not allow it to go to the lengths of trying to overthrow the slave system. As for the slaves, in his view they had no right to complain.

In short, all the functions of poetry formulated by Confucius had a clear class content, being permeated with the political and ethical ideas of the slave-owning class. He summed these up by saying that poetry having these functions could teach men how to serve their parents and sovereign, with the ultimate aim of preserving the slave system. As for learning the names of birds, beasts, plants and trees, such knowledge was also a means to the same end. This is the real meaning of Confucius' contention that poetry must contain no evil thoughts.

The Doctrine of the Mean is another important component of Confucianism. On the basis of this, Confucius argued that poetry should be “gentle and forbearing”. This complements his exclusion of heterodox thoughts. Thus the Confucian criteria for literature, a negative and a positive requirement, are the embodiment in literature and art of the concept of “benevolence” and the Doctrine of the Mean. By advocating gentle and forbearing poetry, Confucius hoped to prevent the rising landlord class from sharply exposing and criticizing the slave system. He meant literature and art to help consolidate the slave-owning class.

Different classes and different political lines inevitably make different demands on literature and art. Confucius advocated a literature and art that contained no heterodox ideas but was gentle and forbearing because his aim was to defend the interests of the slave-owners, to restore the rule by rites and maintain the slave system. Thinkers of the Legalist School such as Shang Yang, Hsun Kuang (313-238 B.C.) and Han Fei, on the other hand, made quite different political demands on literature and art from the standpoint of the newly emerging landlord class, who desired reforms and progress and the rule of law. Thus Shang Yang attacked the Confucians' glib, empty talk and their sophistical arguments which had no practical value; while Hsun Kuang and Han Fei also stressed that literature should serve a practical purpose. The Legalists, in short, opposed the Confucians' rule by the rites and demanded that literature and art should suit the interests of the rising landlord class, the rule by law.

Confucius was a reactionary thinker representing the interests of the moribund slave-owners during the period of transition from the slave system to the feudal system in China; thus not only in politics but also in literature and art he was for retrogression, venerated everything ancient and opposed reform and progress. He boasted that he was a transmitter not an originator, that he loved and put his faith in the ancient way. This was why he consistently glorified the old literature and art of slave society and attacked the new literature and art representing the progressive ideas of the rising landlord class.

Confucius was loud in his praise of the Shao music attributed to the ancient "sage king" Shun, claiming that this music was most beautiful and also most beneficial. When he heard Shao music in the state of Chi, he even "forgot the taste of meat for three months". We happen to know that Confucius was very fond of meat. According to the *Analects*, he always insisted that his meat must be fresh and properly cut. If he really forgot the taste of meat for three months after listening to this ancient music, it shows what a mania he had for old things.

Once his disciple Yen Yuan asked him how he would govern a state. Confucius replied that he would use the almanac of the Hsia

Dynasty, ride in a carriage of the Shang Dynasty, wear a hat of the Chou Dynasty, and use the Shao music and the Wu music of the time of King Wu. Such statements make it apparent that Confucius was for everything ancient and against innovations in literature and art. To give the ancient music pride of place, he personally set the 305 songs in the *Book of Songs* to music, fitting them to the traditional tunes of Shao and Wu music and the ritual chants of the Shang and Chou Dynasties. Thus he took an active part in suppressing the new music and reviving the old.

At that time in the states of Chen, Cheng, Wei and Sung, there had appeared new literature and new folk music reflecting the progressive demands of the rising landlord class. Since the Cheng music was the most popular, Confucius attacked it most fiercely. He called it licentious and deplored the fact that it was disrupting the classical music; in other words, he was afraid this new folk music would oust the ancient music and come to predominate. According to historical records, at a conference between the states of Chi and Lu the ruler of Chi asked to hear some music from the border regions — probably some new folk music of a minority race. Confucius raised objections. Then the ruler of Chi asked to hear some palace music. Confucius, however, condemned this as frivolous and counter to the rites of Chou; he accused the musicians of plotting mischief and had them killed on the spot. This incident exposes him as an inveterate diehard.

The history of class struggle shows that when a society is passing through a period of great changes, all representatives of the moribund class advocate retrogression and oppose progress in a desperate attempt to preserve or restore the old order; and they always use literature and art to serve their reactionary political purpose. This was the case with Confucius, and also with Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and all advocates of opportunist lines in the Party. Lin Piao adopted Confucius' maxim: "Exercise self-restraint and return to the rites." He tried to use old and decadent literature and art to create counter-revolutionary opinion favouring his usurpation of power and the restoration of capitalism. He attacked Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art, sabotaged the revolutionary model theatrical

works fostered by Comrade Chiang Ching, and opposed the new literature and art of the proletariat. He advocated the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, claimed that the Doctrine of the Mean was "rational", and wrote a poem which he had set to music to create counter-revolutionary opinion for a capitalist restoration. He openly declared that the problem of orientation for literature and art had already been settled, and blatantly defended the revisionist line in literature and art. He tried to protect and revive feudal, bourgeois and revisionist literature and art so that he could use them as a weapon to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat. All these vicious attempts of his were doomed to failure.

Our movement to repudiate Lin Piao and Confucius is now developing in depth. It has spread throughout the country and will continue for some time to come. The thorough refutation of their reactionary views on literature and art is an important task today if we are to carry forward the revolution in the ideological sphere. Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"All decadent ideology and other incongruous parts of the superstructure are crumbling as the days go by. To clear away the rubbish completely will still take some time..."** We must therefore pay close attention to the revolution in the superstructure, the class struggle in the ideological realm and carry through to the end the movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius.

CHRONICLE

Theatrical Festival Opens in Peking

Sponsored by the Cultural Group under the State Council, a theatrical festival of performances from Shanghai, the Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region and the provinces of Hunan and Liaoning opened recently in Peking.

A follow-up of the North China Theatrical Festival held earlier this year, the current festival is another review of the new successes achieved in the revolution in literature and art. It is giving further impetus to the implementation of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in literature and art, the proletarian revolution in the Chinese theatre and the creation of better socialist literature and art.

Since the start of the movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius, professional and amateur writers and artists in China have analysed and denounced Lin Piao's criminal attempt to restore capitalism by preaching the Confucian precept "Exercise self-restraint and return to the rites", linking this with the revisionist line in literature and art and the pernicious influence on our old culture of the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. They are now, more consciously than ever before, carrying out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and, inspired by the model revolutionary theatrical works, have worked hard to produce new items. The 17 stage performances in the current festival are recent works including Peking opera, modern drama, local operas, music, dancing and *chuyi* (ballad-singing, story-

telling and cross-talk). The performance of local operas adapted from model revolutionary theatrical works shows the widespread popularization of the latter and the good results achieved in the reform of local operas.

Three Art Exhibitions Tour the Country

Sponsored by the Cultural Group under the State Council, the National Exhibition of Serial Pictures and Traditional Chinese Paintings of 1973, the Exhibition of Paintings by Huhsien Peasants, and the National Exhibition of Photographic Art of 1973 after concluding in Peking last October set out on a tour of the country last December. This tour has now been completed.

These three exhibitions show the new advances in China's pictorial and photographic art since the Cultural Revolution. While on tour they were given an unprecedentedly warm welcome from wide audiences of different nationalities. In order to satisfy the public demand, the hours of the exhibitions had to be lengthened: sometimes they even kept open late into the night. It is estimated that nearly two million people went to see the serial pictures and traditional paintings, about two million one hundred thousand to see the Huhsien peasant paintings, and over three million to see the exhibition of photographic art.

Peking Fine Art and Photographic Exhibition

The Peking Municipal Fine Art and Photographic Exhibition opened on August 1 at the China Art Gallery.

This exhibition is the third of its kind held since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. On display are more than 300 art works including traditional Chinese paintings, oil-paintings, woodcuts, gouache and serial pictures, as well as about 200 photos. Guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art, the artists and photographers have reflected the mass movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius, the people's love for Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, the victories of the Great Proletarian Cul-

tural Revolution, new socialist phenomena, the successes scored in all fields by grasping revolution and promoting production, and the heroic images of workers, peasants and soldiers. The exhibition marks the fresh headway made by Peking's spare-time and professional art workers who, following the example of the model revolutionary theatrical works, have immersed themselves in the three great revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment to convey the fiery militant life of the workers, peasants and soldiers.

More than seventy per cent of the exhibits are the work of worker-peasant-soldier amateurs. Those by commune members in the suburbs occupy a much larger place than in the two previous exhibitions, and show a big improvement in technique. Depicting the new scenes in the countryside during the movement to learn from Tachai, these militant, lively works by peasant artists display a great variety of styles.

Spare-time Songsters of Luta

Since the Cultural Revolution, a contingent of more than two hundred workers, peasants, PLA fighters, revolutionary cadres, educated young people and Red Guards of Luta in northeast China have composed an astounding number of new songs. These sing the praise of Chairman Mao, the Chinese Communist Party, the Cultural Revolution and our socialist motherland. From 1970 to the first half of this year, the songs they have composed total more than 4,200.

Theatrical Festival Held by Heilungkiang Young People

A theatrical festival was recently held at Harbin by 600 spare-time cultural activists among the educated young people who have gone to settle down in the Heilungkiang countryside. During the 8-day festival they presented 132 items including dances, songs, plays and local operas, most of which they had composed themselves. Their lively performances showed the young people's devotion to the Party and Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, and their deter-

mination to take root in the border area, to build up the border area and defend it. At the festival some arias and scenes from the model revolutionary theatrical works were also performed.

After several years of tempering in the countryside, these young people from Peking, Shanghai and Tientsin as well as from Heilungkiang Province itself have become not only a vital force in revolution and production but also activists in the cultural field. They have formed propaganda teams and often perform for the workers, peasants and soldiers in their holidays or spare time.



Spring's Early on Lake Sunghua (woodcut)

by Ko Sha



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