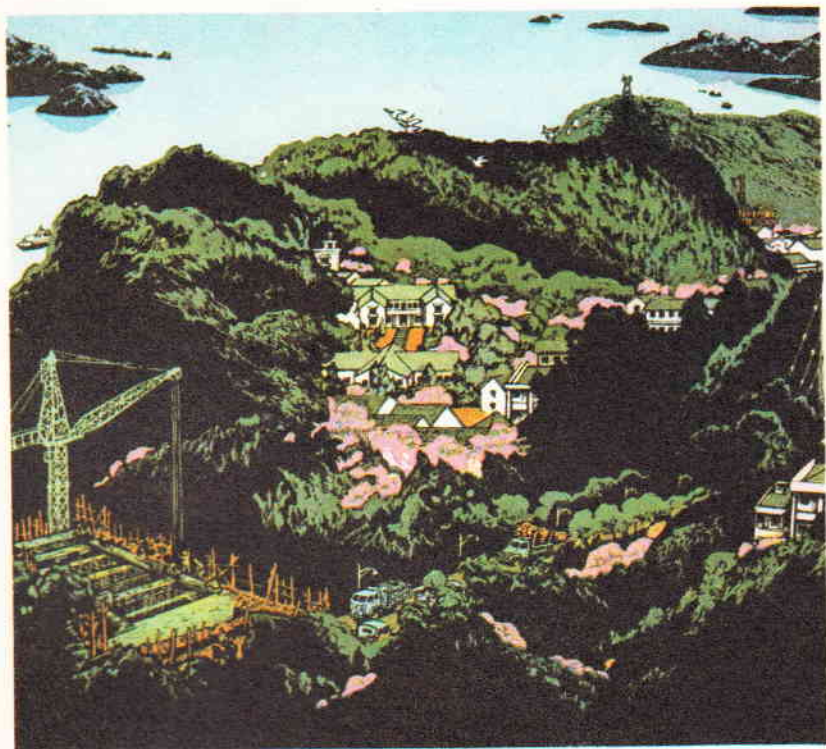


CHINESE LITERATURE



A New Dawn (a drama)

1977 **10**

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A New Dawn

*A play produced collectively by Taching workers and housewives
Script written by Sun Wei-shih*

CHARACTERS

Secretary Lo	<i>Party secretary of the drilling team, aged about forty</i>
Kuo Teh-ying	<i>Leader of the housewives' production team, in her thirties</i>
Director Wang	<i>Kuo's husband, director of the family management committee, aged about forty</i>
Hsin Yu-hung	<i>One of the housewives from a village, in her twenties</i>
Li	<i>A driller, Hsin's husband, in his thirties</i>
Lin Tsai-ying	<i>One of the housewives from a city, in her twenties</i>
Chao	<i>A driller in his thirties, Lin's husband</i>
Iron-Egg's Mother	<i>One of the housewives</i>
Young Liu, Young Chang and other housewives	
Young Fen, Young Huang, Young Chen, all students from the Petroleum Institute	
Train Attendant	
Old Woman	
Young Ox	

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Time: Early spring to October 1964

SCENE ONE

Early spring. It is still very cold. A train is speeding through the countryside. There is frost on the train windows. In one corner of a carriage there are two young women, an old lady, three college students and a worker wearing a padded overall.

(The curtain rises to the sound of the train whistling. Tree silhouettes flit past outside the train.)

(Over the loudspeaker system a voice is heard saying: "Attention, all passengers! We are approaching Taching Station! We are approaching Taching Station! Taching is China's biggest oilfield. From the very beginning, all the prospecting and opening-up of this oilfield, all the construction work and management have been accomplished by Chinese workers. We have relied on our own efforts. Taching is a fine example of development according to Mao Tsetung Thought, a model in following the General Line and learning from the PLA. Taching is like a splendid red banner on our industrial front! In another thirty kilometres we'll reach the station. Please have your luggage ready if you are leaving the train.")

(The man wearing the worker's overall is Party Secretary Lo of the drilling team. He starts cleaning the carriage.)

Fen: Taching! Taching! We're here at last!

Chen: Thirty kilometres! That means another half an hour still!

Huang: Today is 1st March 1964, a date I shall always remember — the day I came to Taching!

(Young Chen takes the broom from Secretary Lo's hand to sweep the floor. A train attendant enters carrying a kettle.)

Attendant: Comrade, I should be doing the sweeping. That's my job.

Chen: But we passengers have nothing to do, so we want to help you with the cleaning.

Huang: Now, comrade, don't worry! You have enough work to do.

Attendant: Very well then, thank you all very much.

(Secretary Lo then returns to his seat and starts reading a book.)

Fen: How the other students envied us coming to get some experience in Taching, because we'll see Comrade Wang Chin-hsi, the famous "Iron Man". Just think, we are only a few kilometres away from this great man!

Huang: That's a very striking description of him. He must be a very powerful fellow, otherwise why should they call him the "Iron Man"?

Chen: Why must all heroes be like supermen?

Lo (*putting down his book*): Comrades, who's like a superman?

Fen: You mean you don't know?

Lo: Well, all I know is that he must be a man and not a superman.

Fen: We are talking about Wang Chin-hsi, the "Iron Man".

Lo: Oh, him.

Fen: Yes. Do you know of him?

Lo: Of course. Everyone in China knows about him.

Fen: He is like a red banner on the petroleum front, a fine example of the proletariat!

Huang (*expressing admiration*): Such a man would never have any difficulties.

Chen: What? No difficulties at all? How can that be?

Huang: I think it's quite possible.

Fen (*to Secretary Lo*): What do you think? Could he have any problems?

Lo: Perhaps. In revolution there are many difficulties. The question is how one deals with them.

Chen, Fen and Huang: How should one treat them?

Lo: Like one deals with an enemy. Despise them strategically, but take them seriously tactically.

Chen, Fen and Huang: That's right.

Lo: Yet whoever the hero, he needs the Party's leadership and the support of the masses.

Huang: Since all of China is learning from Taching, we should speak with respect about a Taching hero.

Lo: But Taching is only acting according to Chairman Mao's instructions in carrying out the General Line and learning from the PLA. . . . We can all do that.

Huang: All do that? Have you done so well in your unit?

Lo: Our unit. . . . (*Mildly*) We are trying to see where we still fall short. We've a lot to learn from the PLA.

Huang: There you are. You'll have to learn to do better.

Lo: I know. (*Continues to read.*)

(*Sound of the train passing under a bridge.*)

Fen: We are going under a bridge.

Huang: Are we there?

(*The students look through the window.*)

Tsai-ying: It seems to be getting colder.

Old Woman: What a lovely baby! Is it a girl?

Tsai-ying: Yes, she is.

Old Woman: Are you both going to see her father? Where does he work?

Tsai-ying: He's always on the move; one day here, the next day somewhere else. But now I'm going to make him stay put.

Old Woman: So he moves around. . . . Does he work on the train?

Tsai-ying: No, he is an oil worker.

(*Secretary Lo gets interested in the conversation.*)

Old Woman: Why should an oil worker move around? Does he sell the oil?

Tsai-ying (*laughs*): No, he doesn't sell it. He's a driller. He goes wherever the oil is found. Before he was in the army. Then after he was demobbed, he became a driller. He went from Yumen in the northwest to Szechuan. He was also in Karamai in Sinkiang. Now he is in Taching.

Yu-hung: And are you also going to Taching?

Tsai-ying: Yes, I have to, otherwise I could only see him for a

few days each year. I had asked to join him before, but he always refused. So finally I told him that if he wouldn't let me join him, we'd get a divorce. Of course he quickly agreed. (*Laughs.*)

Old Woman (*seriously*): What a terrible thing to say! And you with a child! How can you speak so lightly about divorce? (*Plays with the baby.*) There, my precious one, your mother is only teasing you. (*The baby smiles.*) See how sweetly she smiles! (*Caressees the baby.*)

Yu-hung: I'm going to Taching too. I was hoping there would be some others for company.

Tsai-ying: Really? Are you going there to look for a husband?

Yu-hung (*laughing shyly*): Me look for a husband? I was married last year.

Tsai-ying: What does your husband do at Taching?

Yu-hung: He's also a driller.

Old Woman: What sort of well does he drill?

Yu-hung: I'm afraid I can't answer that. I only know that he is a driller, but I never found out exactly what sort of well he drills. When he came back to our village last year, we got married. Then after a couple of weeks he had to return. Now I shall find out what he does.

Tsai-ying: Why be so interested in these wells when we haven't seen our husbands for a whole year? Are you going to persuade him to leave?

Yu-hung: No, though his mother wanted him to come back and work in the brigade, so that we wouldn't be separated for such long periods. But he said that our country needs oil and so he refused. His work is very important so how can he leave his job?

Tsai-ying: You can put pressure on him.

Yu-hung (*smiles*): How can I?

Tsai-ying: Of course he may be right. There is nothing marvelous about living in a village. It's not like city life. Take Taching. As it's a big industrial centre, there must be a big city. People there work in big buildings, live in big houses, and do their shopping in big stores. There are big buildings

everywhere, with electric lights and telephones; all windows have curtains; there are rooms full of sofas. Every facility. Wide avenues, squares and parks, exhibition halls, theatres and cinemas. . . . When our husbands finish work, we'll stroll along the streets window-shopping, or go to the pictures and do anything we want. That's much more fun than living in a village. I hear that people in Taching live in *kantalei* houses,* which are far superior to ordinary big houses.

Old Woman: Did you say *kantalei* houses?

Tsai-ying: Yes.

Yu-hung: *Kantalei*?

Tsai-ying: That's right. *Kantalei*.

Old Woman: *Kantalei* houses are mud huts; the walls are rammed earth.

Tsai-ying: Really? My husband wrote in his letter that the houses are called *kantalei* and that they are warm in winter and cool in summer, ever so nice and better even than big houses. The leaders and workers all live in such houses. The Taching houses are very fine. (*Taking out some curtain material from her luggage*) Look, I bought this green curtain material to hang up in our house. Won't it look pretty?

Yu-hung: I'm used to life in the countryside and not to city life.

Old Woman: What do you want to do at Taching?

Yu-hung: My husband said in his letter that this year Taching will carry out some further construction. Something I don't quite understand. Anyway there will be work to do.

Tsai-ying: Did your husband say that he could find you work in Taching?

Yu-hung: He kept on urging me to come to take part in some construction work, and he said I could do any work I liked. I wouldn't have come if there was no work to do.

Tsai-ying: Yes. My husband also spoke about some construction work. But who cares about that? After all it's an oil-

*The *kantalei* houses of Taching are made from mud rammed between two wooden boards. A wall is thus constructed as a whole unit and not from separate bricks.

field. The men are working with oil pumps and oil cans, iron pipes and steel pipes. What can we housewives do? We'll just be dependants, idly sitting at home.

Yu-hung: We're young. How can we sit at home and do nothing?

I can't bear the thought of that. I hate to do nothing all day.

Tsai-ying: You hate to do nothing? Oh, you'll gradually get used to it. All country housewives coming to live in the cities feel unaccustomed to such a life at first, but they soon get used to it.

Chen (to Secretary Lo): Is Taching a big city?

Lo: Why should it be a big city?

Chen: Isn't it a big enterprise?

Lo: If for every big enterprise we built a big city with big, foreign-style mansions, how much money would that cost the country? Even just building the big mansions alone would take more than four or five years. And then we wouldn't be producing oil in Taching now. We'd remain short of oil. That's not the way we do things.

Fen: So . . . you are a Taching worker?

Lo: . . . Yes, I work there.

Chen: What do you do?

Lo: I help with oil production.

Huang: So you are a Taching worker! If I have been making some rude remarks, please excuse me.

Lo: Oh, that's all right.

Students: You must have seen our Taching hero.

Huang: What does Comrade Wang Chin-hsi, the "Iron Man", look like? Is he very big?

Lo (laughs): Not very. He's really rather ordinary-looking.

Fen: Tell us how he managed to overcome all his difficulties.

Lo: You'll find out for yourself when you get there.

Tsai-ying: Comrade, since you are from Taching, I'd like to ask you about someone.

Lo: What's his name?

Tsai-ying: Chao Ying-chieh.

Lo: Are you. . . ?

Tsai-ying (*points to the baby*): Yes, he's her father.
Lo: He's the chief driller in No. 2 Team, isn't he?
Tsai-ying (*takes out a letter from her pocket and reads the address*): "No. 2 Team". That's right. Do you know him?
Lo: Yes, we work together.
Yu-hung: Can I ask you about someone too?
Lo: If he is a driller, I may know him.
Yu-hung: Yes, he's a driller called Li Yung-fu.
Lo: Your husband?
Yu-hung (*smiles*): Yes.
Tsai-ying: That's a piece of luck!
Yu-hung: Is he a good worker?
Lo: Yes, he's good and serious about his job.
Chen: Comrade, what is your name?
Lo: I'm called Lo.
Yu-hung: Comrade Lo, is there any agricultural work to do in Taching?
Lo: Oh yes! And Taching housewives also help in the workshops, with various trades, sewing and mending clothes, in road-building, driving tractors.... They are a very capable crowd.
Tsai-ying: I don't believe it. They are just housewives so how could they do all that?
Lo: You think housewives just sit at home all the time?
Tsai-ying: It's not just me who thinks this. Go and ask some workers' wives. How many of them do any work?
Lo: Quite a lot. Take Taching for example: there the wives do a lot of revolutionary work. I can tell you a story about five young wives who worked with just spades in their hands.
Yu-hung: With just spades?
Lo: Yes. In 1960 when we came to Taching to take part in the campaign for oil, there were many difficulties. The imperialists and revisionists were trying to stop us, so we decided to rely on our own efforts and work hard. By 1961, many workers' wives had come to join their husbands. In such a wilderness, it was quite a problem to feed everyone and provide living quar-

ters for so many people. So what was to be done? Our leaders then asked us to start farming. Five young wives enthusiastically responded and they started digging up the land with only their five spades. The leader of this group was called Kuo Teh-ying.

All: Kuo Teh-ying!

Lo: When these five young wives went out to the wilderness, they set up tents and started working on the land. They worked at first with their spades and dug up five *mu* of land in three days. Then they saw that the leaders and workers were pulling the ploughs themselves and so they did the same. They got so exhausted that they couldn't stand up. Kuo Teh-ying's clothes were soaked with her sweat but she cheerfully hauled the longest rope. The other young wives helped her, tugging hard. It wasn't easy work at all. After the spring sowing and the weeding, the rainy season came. Their tents were flooded and even their sandals were swept away. But these five young wives never gave up and finally they got a good harvest. When their story became known throughout Taching, other wives joined in the work. Later people gave Kuo Teh-ying, the leader of these five young women, the nickname the "Iron Girl".

All: The Iron Girl!

(Voice from the loudspeaker system: "Attention, all passengers! The train has arrived at Taching Oilfield. Would passengers who are leaving please make sure they have all their luggage with them.")

(The passengers collect together their luggage, ready to leave.)

Yu-hung (*wipes the window and looks out*): What a wonderful place! We don't have such vast spaces in our village.

Tsai-ying: But what's the point of so much land?

Yu-hung: Why, think of all the grain we can produce!

Tsai-ying (*wipes the window and looks out*): This isn't a big city! I can't see a single big building. What shall I do if no one comes to meet me?

Chen: How far is the Education Department from here?

Lo: It's not far. Don't worry. You just come with me.

(Sound of the train stopping. Music. The inner curtain falls.)

The theme song:

The Taching housewives have started a revolution
With Chairman Mao's instructions in their hearts.
Their determination will remove mountains,
Working hard to serve the people.

The Taching housewives have started a revolution
With Chairman Mao's instructions in their hearts.
Like the blazing, rising sun,
Our people's commune will always be young.

The Taching housewives have started a revolution
With Chairman Mao's instructions in their hearts.
Storms are gathering around the world;
May communism soon be achieved!

(Kuo Teh-ying with other young wives including Young Liu and Young Chang cross in front of the inner curtain, carrying agricultural tools and a red banner with these words: "The Taching Housewives' Production Team".)

(Enter Secretary Lo, Yu-hung and Tsai-ying.)

Lo: Comrade Kuo Teh-ying!

Teh-ying: So you are back, Old Lo!

Lo: Two more young wives are coming to join your team. *(To Yu-hung and Tsai-ying)* This is your team's instructor. She's the "Iron Girl". I told you about her on the train. She started the revolution with only a spade in her hands.

Yu-hung: So you are the "Iron Girl"!

Teh-ying: It's quite cold in our place. I hope you won't mind it.

Lo: Now I'll leave them with you.

Teh-ying: Yes, I'll look after them.

Lo: I'm going to headquarters but I'll be back soon. Tell Old Wang that I want to see him about something. *(Exit.)*

Teh-ying: Well, let's all go to my home.

Tsai-ying: Who was that?

Liu: He's the Party secretary of our drilling team.

Tsai-ying *(gazes at the back of Secretary Lo):* So he's the Party secretary!

(Kuo Teh-ying and other young wives help Yu-hung and Tsai-ying with the luggage. They leave together.)

SCENE TWO

In Kuo Teh-ying's house. A portrait of Chairman Mao hangs on the mud wall. Also displayed are citations for being a model worker and for the good example set by a worker's wife. The room is very clean and tidy.

(Several women, all talking together, enter with Director Wang in their midst.)

All: Director Wang, you tell us who's right and who's wrong.

Woman A: You shouldn't hit a child.

Iron-Egg's Mother: But he hit my boy. If you people won't control him better, don't try to stop me from doing so.

Woman B: When children play together they sometimes get into a fight. But you're an adult. You shouldn't get mixed up in it and hit another child.

Iron-Egg's Mother: He hit my boy, so I hit him. Wang, you are the director of the management committee. Are you going to do something about Young Ox hitting other children or not?

Wang: Did you hit him, Young Ox?

Ox: Yes, I did.

Wang: Why did you do it?

Ox: He said his father earns good wages and his mother doesn't have to collect stinking manure. So I hit him. Then Iron-Egg hit me and then his mother joined in.

Wang: Well, you mustn't quarrel or fight again.

Ox: I only hit him because his mother won't take part in our revolutionary work.

Wang: But you've got to reason with her to make her a revolutionary. So don't fight any more now. D'you hear? Go on home all of you. There's no need to stand here and argue.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Revolution indeed! If anyone wants to be a revolutionary she can go and gather the stinking old manure herself.

Wang: What do you mean by that?

Iron-Egg's Mother: Don't you shout at me! You think just because you're a cadre you can threaten me? But you listen to me — I'm not the kind of woman you can easily bully. (*Plonks herself down on a chair.*) How dare you! Even though you're a cadre, what right have you to give me a lecture?

Woman A: You don't take part in any physical labour and so you're teaching your child all the wrong ideas. Yet you think you're right.

Iron-Egg's Mother: What's right and what isn't?

(*Young Liu enters carrying some bags.*)

Liu: Come on, stop all the squabbling. Our instructor's just arrived with two more housewives. You don't want them to see you behaving so childishly, do you?

Iron-Egg's Mother: What about our behaviour? It's none of your business!

(*Kuo Teh-ying, with the child in her arms, enters with Hsin Yu-hung and Lin Tsai-ying.*)

Teh-ying: Everybody's here. Well, now we've got two more comrades to join us — Li's wife, and Chao's wife. This is Young Liu, our bookkeeper. This is Iron-Egg's Mother. This is Young Chang and he's my husband. . . .

Liu: He's Director Wang of our management committee, in charge of agricultural work and other occupations.

Wang: Please sit down. (*He is about to go.*)

Teh-ying: Where are you going? Did you know that Secretary Lo is back?

Wang: Lo back? Then I'll go now and see him.

Teh-ying: Wait a bit. He's gone first to headquarters to report on his work. He'll be coming to see you later. Wait for him here.

All: So Secretary Lo's back.

Wang: I'll go and tell Chao and Li that their wives are here. (*Exit.*)

Iron-Egg's Mother: Teh-ying, Young Ox hit my son, yet the others tried to blame me. I'm not going to put up with such treatment.

Teh-ying: What's the matter? Calm down first and then tell me what the problem is.

Chang: Treating her badly? Why, she doesn't help us with the farming, yet she calls us stinking manure collectors.

Teh-ying: Well, that's nothing to get upset about, Young Chang. After all, we do collect stinking manure. Without the manure how would we get the fine grain? Think about that. Now run along home, Iron-Egg's Mother, and I'll come and see you later.

(*The others leave.*)

Teh-ying (to Yu-hung and Tsai-ying): Since you've just arrived you may find things a bit strange here, but you'll soon get used to it. Come and sit here by this heated wall. You'll find it warmer. I'll go and make you some noodles. I won't be a moment.

Yu-hung: Please don't go to all that trouble. Really, we're not hungry.

Teh-ying: Nonsense. Not hungry after that long trip on the train? (*To Tsai-ying*) Put the baby down on the bed. Don't worry about dirtying it. (*She goes off. Yu-hung examines the citations on the wall and looks excited and pleased.*)

Yu-hung: He's a model worker and she's a model housewife.

(*Tsai-ying looks glumly around the room. Teh-ying enters carrying bowls of noodles.*)

Teh-ying: There, have your noodles while they're hot. You must be starving.

Yu-hung: Thank you, but really we shouldn't be putting you to so much trouble.

Teh-ying: What do you mean trouble? Why, from now on we'll be working in the fields as comrades and doing our political studies together. We'll be one big family. *(To Tsai-ying)* Here, let me hold the baby while you eat your noodles. *(Tsai-ying shakes her head.)* No? Aren't they cooked the way you like them?

Yu-hung: Yes, come and eat! They smell very good.

Tsai-ying: I'm not hungry.

(Li rushes in. Wang, smiling, follows some way behind.)

Li: Director Wang! Where's Director Wang?

Teh-ying: What do you want him for?

Li: They told me Director Wang wants to see me urgently.

Wang: Who told you that?

Li: Ah, there you are, Wang. You've got something urgent for me to do. What is it?

Teh-ying: Nothing urgent really. I just want you to come and have some noodles.

Li: Noodles! We're run off our feet and all you want to talk about is noodles! Well, now that I'm here, perhaps you'd better bring me your. . . . *(Catches sight of Yu-hung.)* Yu-hung! *(He pushes the bowl aside and jumps to his feet, looking very happy.)* Is it really you? I can hardly believe it. *(He seems to have so much to say, he doesn't know where to start.)*

Yu-hung: Yes, it's me all right!

Teh-ying: Did you think you were dreaming for a moment, Li?

Wang: How was the drilling today?

Li: Very good. Old Lo said we are fighting for our revolutionary cause. We'll not only defeat U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism we'll also one day break all the world records. In the last few days leaders of the oilfield Party committee and leading comrades from various headquarters have been visiting the well-site. Things are really moving out there. Tomorrow we are holding a meeting to share the knowledge and experience of the leaders, technicians and workers. Everyone will be able to have his say. But that's enough about us. What's been happening here?

Wang: Oh, things are on the go here too.

Yu-hung: When can I come to the well-site to see your work?

Li: But there's nothing to see there. You just have a good rest.

Yu-hung: Rest! How can I rest before I've begun to work?

Teh-ying: Look. There's nothing much on today and we're not using this room for meetings, so you two can sit here and talk to your hearts' content. *(To Tsai-ying)* Don't worry, Chao will be along soon. *(To Wang)* Come on, let's go and sort out their rooms.

Wang *(lowering his voice):* Where on earth can we find them rooms?

Teh-ying *(lowering her voice):* We'll shift some families around to make do. *(She goes off with Wang.)*

Li: How are mum and dad?

Yu-hung: They're both fine.

Li: Good. You look fit too and much stronger.

Yu-hung: Well, this past year I've learned to do practically all the jobs in the fields.

Li: Good for you! And you, a middle-school graduate too.

Yu-hung: There's nothing remarkable about that. There are lots of middle-school students doing the same back home.

Li: I wrote to you so often asking you to come. Why did you take so long?

Yu-hung *(smiling):* Well, here I am now. You said in your letters that there was lots of work to do here. What do you think I will be doing?

Li: Well I never! Do you mean to say you didn't come here just for me?

Yu-hung: Well, I felt very bad about leaving our village after working for only one year since finishing school. But you kept on urging me to come, so I showed your letter to our old Party secretary. Taching's a red banner on the industrial front, he said. There, the workers' wives are doing a grand job in agriculture and in helping to build up the oilfield. He said that such a fine thing had never happened before and that we should give it all our support. So he told me to join you as quickly as possible. I couldn't help crying when I left, but our team

leader and Party secretary told me to work well here. Still, I really hated leaving home.

Li: You mean you cried although you knew you were coming to join me.

Yu-hung: Because you don't realize how much we've improved the village. We've opened up that waste stretch of land on the slope behind the western hill and now it's covered with green crops. Under the old secretary's guidance, we managed to divert the river up the slope. We, school-leavers, were all determined to stay and work in the countryside all our lives. Everything was going along so well just as I left to come here. That's why I felt so bad about leaving.

Li: Why keep going on about our village this and our home that? You mustn't feel sad about leaving home. After all, you're not a child.

Yu-hung: Of course I'm not. Anyway, I'm here now. When the whole nation's learning from Taching and striving to catch up with it, of course I'm glad to be able to work here. And besides, now we can be together. But I'll need a lot of help from you. I'm so new here and from the countryside too. I don't know anything.

Li: Taching isn't like a big city.

Yu-hung: Yes, I heard that Taching is an important industrial area but that it won't become a densely populated city. What kind of work do you think I can do here?

Li: Why the hurry? Try to be a little more patient.

(Kuo Teh-ying enters.)

Teh-ying: Li, we've managed to get you a room.

Li: Thank you so much. *(To Tsai-ying)* You rest here a bit. Let's go, Yu-hung.

Yu-hung: Coming. *(To Tsai-ying)* Excuse us, we'd better go now.

(Li takes the bags in Yu-hung's hands and the two leave happily.)

Teh-ying: Is the baby asleep? It won't be long before Chao comes. *(She goes off. Tsai-ying cuddles the baby.)*

Tsai-ying: There, there, go to sleep. Don't cry. Mummy will soon take you home and daddy will be with us. We won't have to stay here much longer in this miserable shack. Daddy doesn't care about us any more. He's become an old oil worker and doesn't want a nice home. He probably doesn't even remember you. . . .

(Chao dashes in flushed and panting.)

Chao: So you've come, Tsai-ying.

(The baby starts crying again.)

Tsai-ying: Trust you to frighten the baby. *(Talks to the child.)* Don't cry, darling, don't be afraid. He's not a bear, he's just your hard-hearted father. . . .

Chao: How pretty she's grown. Here, let me hold her. *(Takes the child in his arms.)* Isn't she sweet!

Tsai-ying *(wiping her eyes):* Year after year you stay away from us. Your heart's elsewhere, with no place in it for home and us. My poor little baby, she might as well have been without a father.

Chao: All right, but here I am now. *(Laughs.)* I'm needed here for my work. We oil workers can't think just about home.

Tsai-ying: Why did you want to bring us here to this dreadful dump, when you haven't even a place to live yourself?

Chao: Come off it — it wasn't me who wanted to bring you here. You're the one who insisted in all your letters that you must come. Our instructor read them, consulted our team leader and they decided that I could send for you.

Tsai-ying: Which instructor? You mean that woman who brought us?

Chao: No, no! Not her, the political instructor of our drilling team. The one who brought you is the political instructor of the housewives' production team.

Tsai-ying: You let a stranger read my private letters to you? How dare you?

Chao: There's nothing wrong with that. Our team leader and our political instructor are not strangers. They help us with everything. Now that you're here you can join in building the worker-peasant villages.

Tsai-ying: Worker-peasant villages? What are they?

Chao: You're the one who's always complaining that the drillers are here today and gone tomorrow, and never settled in one place. Our worker-peasant villages are community centres where the oil workers will settle permanently. No matter where we go to drill the new wells, we'll always return there. Our wives can run the collective farms, our children can go to school, and the old people can enjoy their old age. Every facility will be provided: family canteens, nurseries and kindergartens, hospitals, shops, post-offices. . . . In other words, everything you would want. And before I forget, I've got three presents for you.

Tsai-ying: Three presents for me?

Chao: Yes, three fine presents. You'll see them soon.

Tsai-ying (*beginning to get a little excited*): Since it's so good here, why didn't you say so in your letters?

Chao: I've only been describing the future. At the moment, life is still pretty tough and we don't have enough houses. We have to depend on our bare hands for everything.

Tsai-ying (*disappointed*): Have you gone mad?

Chao: Why, what's the matter?

Tsai-ying: If you won't support me, I'll go away. What's this thing called a worker-peasant village? How you can imagine such a life is beyond me.

(Chao looks at his wife and is silent.)

Tsai-ying: Do you think I've come here to do rough work?

Chao: Everyone should work. What's wrong with that? I'm working.

Tsai-ying: You're a man. It's your duty to support me. When a woman marries, she expects her husband to support her. Yet you want me to do farm work. You want me to suffer. . . .

Chao: You . . . you've come too late. It's my fault, I should have sent for you earlier.

Tsai-ying: Earlier, my foot! If I had known this was such a dismal hole, I wouldn't have come at all! Isn't this supposed to be a big oilfield, an important industrial area? Why can't you afford proper buildings? Why do you have to live in these squalid little mud hovels? Didn't you say your tamped earth houses were better than high-rise blocks? And just look at your horrid little hovels.

Chao: Of course, this is a big oilfield, an important industrial area. Though we demand the highest standards in production, we only want a simple way of life.

Tsai-ying: What rubbish! Do you think just because I don't know anything about oil you can talk me into believing all that nonsense? If your production was going so well, you'd have built big houses long ago. Instead, just look at your mud homes and these shabby old benches. Well, I'm not going to put up with all of this. . . .

(She slams things down on the table and bangs the benches about.)

(Wang enters with Teh-ying.)

Chao: What are you trying to do? . . .

Teh-ying: Chao, we've managed to get you a room.

Chao: Thank you. I'm afraid we've put you two to a lot of trouble.

Teh-ying: No, not at all.

Chao (*picking up the baby*): Tsai-ying, let's go.

(Tsai-ying ignores him.)

Teh-ying: Surely you two aren't quarrelling the moment you get together? Why not try to talk it over calmly? *(To Tsai-ying)* Take the baby now and be sure she doesn't catch cold. *(She goes off with Chao and his wife.)*

Wang (*to himself*): Women! At times they can be a real headache. If you ignore them they make a hell of a fuss. If you start to pay any attention to them, you land yourself in a pile of trouble. How they make my head spin! *(He takes out a notebook to jot*

down something. Suddenly he sees the bowl of noodles on the table, picks it up and begins to eat hungrily. Teh-ying enters. She clears the table, removing the bowls and chopsticks.)

Wang: When I was working as a driller, all I had to do was drill. Everything was simple and straightforward. But for that fall at the well-site when I was injured, the leadership wouldn't have given me this finicky job fit for a woman. My injury healed a long time ago so I could be doing heavier work now.

Teh-ying: Come on, you're just a bit tired and grumpy. Sit down and relax. Your jacket's torn again. Here, give it to me and I'll mend it.

Wang (*removes his padded overall*): Take for example those two newcomers. What a carry on! Women! You call ten of them to a meeting and they'll bring their twenty children all making a racket. What on earth can they ever hope to achieve?

Teh-ying (*laughs*): Being women, they can't help bringing along their children.

Wang: Between you and me, I think women have long hair but short sight. They don't know a thing. I'll be grateful if they'll just raise their families and stop quarrelling among themselves. We can develop our big oilfield perfectly well without their help.

Teh-ying: It's not fair to talk like that. Quite a lot of the housewives have joined in the hard, physical work. These past years wasn't it the women who did the agricultural work? If we had used regular workers for all of this, how many men would have been taken away from their work at the wells?

Wang: You think building up the oilfield only means farm work? There's more to it than that. Take the building of the worker-peasant villages for example, can you housewives do that?

Teh-ying: Why not?

Wang: Don't think it's just a question of spreading a bit of fertilizer or tossing about a few seeds. Oh no, it's building the houses, plank by plank, ramming the earth, putting up the beams, fitting in the doors and windows. . . . Which of you women here has ever done that before?

Teh-ying: We can always learn how to do it.

Wang: Easier said than done. Just wait till you all get together, you'll be squabbling before you even start work. Please spare me all that bother.

Teh-ying: When there's work to be done, you shouldn't care about a bit of trouble.

Wang: What a fine instructor you are, starting your political work at home. Then let me ask you a question.

Teh-ying: What?

Wang: What is a political instructor supposed to do?

Teh-ying: Do political and ideological work, of course!

Wang: And how do you do it?

Teh-ying: It's difficult to put it into so many words. Anyway I rely on the Party's leadership. If something needs to be done, I talk it over with the people. When the workers and their wives have problems, I try to help them to find solutions. Since you're a leader here, if you think something I've done isn't right, you should tell me.

Wang: It's not easy to say. I just feel that you're always so very busy . . . washing clothes for someone, sewing a quilt for another. Bringing in dry rations in the morning, going for the doctor at midnight, fetching soup or cooking meals, mending the stove or putting in flues, helping this one care for the baby or washing diapers . . . you're practically a servant.

Teh-ying: Didn't Chairman Mao tell us to be a servant to the people?

Wang: But don't forget, you're a political instructor.

Teh-ying: Isn't an instructor a servant of the people too?

Wang: Anyway, as a political instructor you are not like our drilling team's instructor.

Teh-ying: Of course I can't compare with him. He's a qualified cadre with more education and a higher political consciousness.

Wang: The most important thing is he's got drive.

Teh-ying: What's that?

Wang: Something to do with his personality. A person with drive has a lot of spirit and go.

Teh-ying: Have a go at whom?

Wang: You've got to have the drive to get whoever you're dealing with going.

Teh-ying (*laughs*): Everyone's got go. But when you deal with your class sisters you mustn't have a go at them.

Wang: Look, I'm trying to explain it to you but you don't seem to understand. What I mean is we must have drive in our work, work with as much energy as if we're swinging a sledge-hammer at the well-site. You don't know how much drive our political instructor's got. He's amazing in the game of tug-of-war with the less progressive wives.

Teh-ying: What do you mean?

Wang: Tug-of-war. It's like this. The workers are in the middle, with the instructor of our team on one side of them and the wives on the other side. Both sides are tugging at a rope. When the instructor pulls the workers over to his side, he wins and workers make progress. When the backward-thinking wives pull the workers over to their side, they win and the workers become less progressive.

Teh-ying: Why should they be in a tug-of-war?

Wang: It's only an illustration. If they don't tug, the workers may be helped along by the east wind during working hours, but as soon as they go home they'll be blown back by the west wind. Our instructor has a lot of work winning this tug-of-war with you women.

Teh-ying (*laughs*): Of course. The instructor is only one man while we are many wives. How can he beat us?

Wang: That's just an example. Basically, this tug-of-war is also a part of the instructor's ideological work.

Teh-ying: If all the housewives were progressive and joined in socialist construction, all the workers would be blown along by the east wind both at work and at home. Then would your instructor still have to play tug-of-war with the women?

Wang: Come off it! What are you talking about when you haven't understood a thing?

(*Enter Secretary Lo.*)

Lo: What are you two chatting about?

Wang: How good to see you back, Old Lo.

Teh-ying: Now that you've been to the PLA unit to learn from their experience, when are you going to tell us all about it?

Lo: We'll discuss that later at a meeting. What have you done with your two new arrivals?

Teh-ying: We managed to find them rooms, so Li and Chao have taken their wives home.

Lo (*to Teh-ying*): Well, what do you think of your new team members?

Wang: Don't ask me! Slamming things down and knocking the benches about on their very first day, calling our tamped earth houses "miserable shacks".

Lo: What, both of them?

Teh-ying: No. Li's wife comes from the countryside and is a worker. But Chao's wife has just left the city, so we can't expect her to adjust to life here all at once.

Lo: Yes, we'll have to go slowly with them. Ideological work is slow, meticulous work, not like hammering home a stake at the well. It can't be done with one blow. Wouldn't you agree, Wang? It's much more difficult for women to be revolutionary, for they've always been looked down on. It's a very ancient tradition which still survives today. Some people feel that a woman's place is in her home, keeping house and minding the baby.

Wang: Are you referring to me?

Lo: If that's your way of thinking, then yes I'm referring to you. Now you and I, we're leaders of a sort. If leaders look down on housewives, it'll make it even more difficult for them to make revolution by joining in the construction of the oilfield.

Wang: Who says I look down on them? But they are always bickering or making a fuss and causing a lot of bother.

Lo: The success of our work among the housewives depends on whether or not we can solve the problem in our own heads first.



Before you can remould other people's ideology, you must first remould your own thinking. We all have our faults. I've just been listening to the directive of the oilfield Party committee at headquarters. In 1964, we must go all out to find the gap between ourselves and the pacesetters and try to fill it. Only if we analyse both our faults and our merits will we be able to make progress. When we compare ourselves with the PLA, we find there is a tremendous gap.

Wang: Don't worry, Lo, whatever task you want done you just tell me. I guarantee it'll be done.

Lo: Good. The Party committee's directive says that we must carry out in a thorough and comprehensive way our policy of building a new-style oilfield. The headquarters of every unit

is organizing its housewives to build up new worker-peasant villages. Our oilfield is starting something that has never been attempted before.

Wang: Building the worker-peasant villages won't be any problem. Give me a couple more workers and I guarantee you'll have enough homes for all the new arrivals. All right?

Lo (to Teh-ying): What do you think?

Teh-ying: But we can't sit around waiting for the houses to be built by the men.

Lo: That's the spirit. When we came here at the beginning in 1960, Wang, none of us brought his family along, but the following year the women began to arrive in batches. I remember saying then that our team must live up to our record as a model team without our wives or families. You remember how you backed me up completely.

Wang: Of course. It wasn't me who wanted her to come, but she kept on insisting.

Lo: She did the right thing. One time when we'd finished a well and moved on to a new site, I went back to check up on something at the old place. I was surprised to see some smoke coming from a nearby makeshift shelter. Then a woman emerged, a baby in her arms, followed by a little boy. I was puzzled as none of our workers had sent for his family. As I got nearer I recognized your wife. She just opened her mouth and gave me a piece of her mind right there and then. (To Teh-ying) Can you remember what you said, Teh-ying?

Teh-ying (laughing): Why bring up all that again?

Lo: I've got to. Your criticism was justified. I'm afraid my skull was a bit too thick in those days and I just didn't see the light. "You need workers to build up this place," you said. "Where you have workers, you must have their families. It's wrong to stop their families from coming." Her criticisms got to me. I protested that I didn't like keeping them apart but that things were too difficult at that time. And what was her answer? "If there are difficulties we'll overcome them. We won't be put off so easily. The more difficulties there are, the

more we want to make revolution." I tell you those women had more sense than we.

Teh-ying: Women have their faults. With babies and a home to attend to, their time is limited even though they are very eager to do revolutionary work.

Lo: These aren't faults, only difficulties! And we should help you to solve your problems. I've got some good news for you. The oilfield Party committee has asked that this year three major difficulties should be tackled in our area.

Teh-ying: What are they?

Lo: We're to set up proper nurseries, family canteens and sewing and repair services. The housewives will be freed from heavy household chores so that they can devote themselves to revolutionary work.

Teh-ying: That's wonderful. Who'll arrange that?

Lo: Why don't you women organize it yourselves? Liberate yourselves. How about it?

Wang (hesitantly): But that's easier said than done.

Teh-ying: Umm. It's no use our relying on the men to take care of the babies, cook meals and make clothes. . . . So we'll just have to rely on ourselves. *(Resolutely)* Yes, of course we can do it.

Lo: Good for you! Our women are more determined than our men. She's not afraid of responsibilities.

Teh-ying: With the leadership backing us and the masses giving us courage and support, why should we be afraid?

Lo: Fine! Now you lot can start thinking about it while we gather together those who are really interested at headquarters first for some study. We'll just follow the policy outlined for us by Premier Chou: "Combine industry with agriculture, integrate town and countryside, facilitate production and make daily life better." We'll try to study and understand thoroughly exactly what this directive means and see that it is carried out.

Teh-ying (nodding): Good.

(The inner curtain drops. Against a background music of the theme song, four women begin to rehearse the propaganda material on the construction of the Tachang Oilfield, to the accompaniment of bamboo clappers.)

Liu: It's time for our rehearsal, let's begin.

Chang: Oh dear, in front of so many people? I feel very embarrassed. I really do. They'll laugh at us.

Liu: What is there to laugh about? We are trying to spread the idea of us women making revolution, and the more people who hear it the better. Don't be nervous. Come on, get our clappers going. *(Starts working the clapper.)*

Come along, sisters, lend an ear.

And our oil construction plan you'll hear.

Industry and agriculture we'll combine

To carry out the Party's line.

City and countryside we'll integrate.

Construction increases the production rate.

A working life is a better way,

So out in the fields we toil all day.

Not just consumers but producers we'll be.

Six hundred and fifty million Chinese will see

That we women hold up half the skies.

To make revolution we must organize.

When we women show our strength and might,

The foreign imperialists will tremble with fright.

Revisionists too with fear will shake,

When women of the world their revolution make.

The U.S. imperialists will be squashed,

And all revisionists will be crushed.

(Someone offstage cries: "The meeting is going to start now. Come on, Young Liu; come on, Young Chang.")

Liu: All right. Let's go now. Come on, there's nothing to be shy about.

(They leave.)

SCENE THREE

Inside a shabby mud house. A wall of matting and mud divides the house into two rooms, each with a door opening on to the outside. These are the temporary quarters of the Hsin Yu-hung and the Lin Tsai-ying families.

(The curtain rises. Yu-hung brings in her washing from outside and folds it, while Lin Tsai-ying is reclining on her bed, knitting. After twenty days of studying the construction policy of the oilfield, the two of them are ready to join in the work of building the worker-peasant villages, but they are in entirely different moods: one happy, the other dejected.)

(Lin Tsai-ying, knitting, walks over to Yu-hung's door and leans against it.)

Tsai-ying: What are you busy doing, Yu-hung?

Yu-hung: As we are going to help in the field work, I've washed the clothes and quilts for Old Li. They were very dirty. Have you finished your preparations?

Tsai-ying: I've nothing to prepare.

Yu-hung: What about Chao's things?

Tsai-ying: I'm not going to do anything for him. He can manage perfectly well without me.

Yu-hung (*laughs*): You're just saying that, but you don't believe it. You've probably got everything ready for him. Tsai-ying, I'm really glad you've decided to join us. When we first began our study sessions, you always sat in a corner without saying a word, and I was very worried about it.

Tsai-ying: Well, with so many different study sessions and Old Chao talking a lot to me and the instructor and the others helping me, it was impossible not to become interested.

Yu-hung: Through your studies, you've made a lot of progress, Tsai-ying. Can I help you with anything?

Tsai-ying: No thanks. I've almost finished now. (*She turns to leave.*)

Yu-hung: Won't you stay a bit longer?

Tsai-ying: No, thank you. (*She returns to her room feeling rather moody.*)

(*Iron-Egg's Mother enters to pay a visit to Yu-hung.*)

Iron-Egg's Mother: Are you getting ready for the work in the fields, Yu-hung?

Yu-hung: Yes. What about you?

Iron-Egg's Mother (*patronizingly*): Don't forget that I came here one month earlier than you. Once the leadership gave the call, I knew better than you what to do. I got everything ready ages ago. You've been washing the quilts for Li. That's just a waste of energy. He'll dirty them again in no time at all. I must dash off now. Bye. (*She leaves Yu-hung and goes to see Tsai-ying.*)

Iron-Egg's Mother: Tsai-ying, why haven't you got your things ready yet? Don't you know the meeting will be held very soon.

Tsai-ying: I've nothing to prepare.

Iron-Egg's Mother: But you said at the study sessions that you wanted to take part in the construction of the worker-peasant villages. The meeting is being held today. All the workers will have big red rosettes pinned on them. You'd better get ready quickly.

Tsai-ying: I only expressed my feelings — that doesn't need any preparation.

Iron-Egg's Mother: You've got a point there. Once all the others had expressed their determination, we could hardly have kept silent, could we?

Tsai-ying: We've been organized to attend seven or eight meetings and the instructor's come to my house about a dozen times, sending me rice and wheat-flour, helping me with the stove and repairing the heated wall. When I was short of firewood, she gave me some; when my baby was ill, she called the doctor and washed the nappies for me too.

Iron-Egg's Mother: What does Chao think about it?

Tsai-ying: Him! Don't talk about him. Whenever he speaks to me, he goes on about not forgetting our past sufferings. But I'm not the one who is doing the forgetting. It's he who's completely forgotten me and my child.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Is he going to allow you to take part in the work?

Tsai-ying: Oh yes, he's crazy about the worker-peasant villages. He's always going on about how marvellous they are. And take a look at these fine presents he's given me — a pole for carrying things, a spade and a basket. How can women like us build a village?

Iron-Egg's Mother: My husband's wild about them too. All the oil workers are the same here. My husband's arguing with me all the time, criticizing me for being backward, or unwilling to take part in the hard work or forgetting my origins. The truth is I only put down my name on the list this time just to show him. Otherwise I wouldn't be going.

Tsai-ying: I never dreamed the place would be like this. At first I thought it must be a big city.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Same as me! When I came it was much colder. I almost froze to death. Once I heard the wolves howling, just like this. (*She imitates the howling of wolves.*) That scared me stiff. Your baby is very young. You must be very careful with her.

Tsai-ying: Really?

Iron-Egg's Mother: Of course, I wouldn't lie to you.

Tsai-ying: Why didn't the instructor tell me about it?

Iron-Egg's Mother: If she had told you that, how could she encourage you to go out to do hard work?

Tsai-ying: Will she go herself?

Iron-Egg's Mother: She's the political instructor, a cadre, how can she go?

Tsai-ying: What? She doesn't do any hard physical work?

Iron-Egg's Mother: She's neither family nor friend, yet she keeps on sending us rice and wheat-flour. And even though we did nothing special she kept on praising us at the meetings. To

begin with I couldn't understand why, then it clicked. She praises us hoping we'll go and take part in the work, because if we go, she's got what she wants and the leadership will praise her for having done a good job.

Tsai-ying: Really? I'd never have guessed she was like that. Suppose I don't go?

Iron-Egg's Mother: It won't matter in the least. I lay on my bed for several days when I first arrived, pretending I had a headache, because with a headache the pain is inside while there is no fever outside and no one can tell whether you are really ill or not. (*Looking at her watch*) It's time for the meeting. I must be going.

(*After Iron-Egg's Mother leaves, Tsai-ying becomes more disgruntled. She pulls up the quilt and lies down on the bed to sleep.*)

(*Li rushes into Yu-hung's room.*)

Yu-hung: What are you doing here at this time?

Li: I've got some business to do. (*Starts to look for something.*)

Yu-hung: What are you looking for?

Li: You wouldn't know even if I told you. (*Anxiously*) Where is the blueprint I made the other day?

Yu-hung: A blueprint? Look, how anxious you are. (*She pulls a piece of paper from the edge of the bed and hands it to him.*) Is this it?

Li (takes it): Yes. It is essential for our drilling team's scientific experiment and is of far-reaching importance to our whole enterprise. Just you wait till you hear the good news. I must be off. (*Seeing that the room is tidy and clean, he is very pleased.*) What a grand job you've done cleaning the room. It looks lovely. It's really good to have you here. I promise you I'll do my best at the well.

Yu-hung: And I promise you that I'll do my best in the fields and in building our worker-peasant village as quickly as possible.

Li: What! You still don't want to stay at home?

Yu-hung: Is it right to sit at home all day doing nothing? Today we'll have a meeting to mark the start of the construction of

the worker-peasant village, and all of us will have red rosettes pinned on us. Old Lo will give us a talk.

Li: What about all the talks I've given you? You haven't listened to them?

Yu-hung: What about all the things I've said to you? You haven't listened to them either!

Li: Yu-hung, you're not a child. Why are you being so inconsiderate?

Yu-hung: Me inconsiderate? I've considered everything very carefully. How about you?

Li: Of course I have and I still think you shouldn't go.

Yu-hung: Why not? You're the one in the first place who asked me in your letters to come here to work. So what made you change your mind?

Li: Because working in the fields isn't the only way of making revolution. Isn't it also making revolution if you stay at home to manage things well so that I can work at the drilling ground with an easy mind? But with you worrying me like this, how can I feel at peace and devote my mind to my scientific experiment? Then our oil production won't increase. Doesn't that affect the revolution?

Yu-hung: Didn't you make revolution when I wasn't here? I've prepared everything for you: the clothes have been washed and the quilts made. I did all these for one purpose only — to let you work for the revolution without any distractions.

Li: It's not even a month since you came, and we still haven't had the time for a heart-to-heart talk, and yet you want to go off and join in the labour. . . .

Yu-hung: But I'll go to the fields after you've left for work. When you come home again I'll be back here. So why do you want me to stay at home alone all day long?

Li: What does it matter if you sit around at home? I'm able to support you.

Yu-hung: What's got into you? I won't be dependent on you. We housewives must get organized and take part in collective

labour. Our political instructor started to make revolution with only five spades!

Li: You can't compare with her!

Yu-hung: I agree. She's the mother of two children. If she can respond to the Party's call, how can a young woman like me sit doing nothing at home? I want to learn from her. And that's all about it!

Li: That's what you think — I won't let you!

Yu-hung: Won't let me? You can't stop me!

(Teh-ying shouts offstage: "Yu-hung!")

Yu-hung: There you are! *(To Li)* Here's our instructor.

(Teh-ying enters.)

Teh-ying: Are you ready?

Yu-hung: Yes.

Teh-ying: The meeting will start soon.

Yu-hung: I know.

Teh-ying *(noticing Li):* Oh, you're here, Li.

(Li ignores her. He turns his back on her and begins to smoke.)

Teh-ying *(assessing the situation):* What's the matter? Why are you so upset?

Li *(to Yu-hung):* O.K. You win! Go and do whatever you like!

Yu-hung: Who are you angry with?

Li: You should know whom I'm angry with.

Yu-hung: If you won't listen to reason then you'd better keep your mouth shut.

Li: I'll talk if I want to!

Yu-hung: I won't let you!

Teh-ying: That's not the way, Yu-hung. If Li has something to say you should let him speak.

Yu-hung: You don't know him. He's just talking rubbish!

Li: Talking rubbish!

Teh-ying: You must let him say whatever he wants to, listen to him patiently and then discuss it with him. Otherwise, how



can the problem be solved? And Li, you must calm down and not get so angry.

Li (*half-muttering to himself*): It's none of your damn business. If no one had interfered with us, we wouldn't have had this trouble.

Yu-hung (*anxiously*): That's no way to talk!

Teh-ying (*stops Yu-hung, and says to Li*): Let me ask you this, Li. Why did you oil workers come to Taching?

Li: To make revolution, of course, and to build up socialism.

Teh-ying: Exactly. These past years you've been full of enthusiasm about your revolutionary work. When you first came here, you had no house to live in. The sky was your quilt and the ground your bed. You weren't afraid of hardships or exhaustion but you worked all out for the revolution. The result is this big oilfield. Inspired by your spirit, we housewives also

want to make revolution. You're such a fine worker, Li, you don't want people to laugh at you because of your attitude towards women making revolution.

Li: Who's stopping her from making revolution?

Yu-hung: You! All you want is for me to be stuck in the house and not take part in the labour.

(*Li falls silent. Fiddling with his jacket he rips his pocket.*)

Teh-ying: Sew it up for him, Yu-hung.

Li: I'm off to work.

Yu-hung: Then change it first.

(*Li changes his jacket.*)

Teh-ying: You're still young, Li. Yes, you were born in the old society, but you grew up in the new. Never forget the bitter past. Without Liberation, we wouldn't be here building the worker-peasant village. With your high political consciousness, you workers should be giving us every encouragement.

Li (*half-talking to himself*): They are waiting for me at the drilling ground. (*He hurries off.*)

Yu-hung: You've got a lot of patience. I quickly lost my temper.

Teh-ying: You must have patience to work well. The leadership always tell us that we must put politics first. As I see it, you must have politics too in your marriage. Now I must go to take these clothes to Tsai-ying. You'll be leaving for the meeting? Is Tsai-ying ready to go?

Yu-hung: Yes, she is.

Teh-ying: Good. (*She enters Tsai-ying's room.*)

Teh-ying: Is anything the matter, Tsai-ying? Why are you in bed at this time of day? The meeting will start very soon. Come on, get up.

Tsai-ying: I'm ill.

Teh-ying: Oh dear! Ill?

Tsai-ying: Yes, I have a headache.

(*Teh-ying feels her forehead with her hand.*)

Tsai-ying: There's no point in doing that. The ache is inside my head and I haven't got a fever.

Teh-ying: When did it start?

Tsai-ying: Yesterday evening.

Teh-ying: Oh no — you fell ill yesterday evening, and we didn't know about it. Have you caught a cold?... I've been too late in sending over these clothes, some woollen underwear for you people coming from the south. Put them on. Hurry up. Have you eaten anything?

Tsai-ying: Yes.

Teh-ying (*picking up a thermos flask and shaking it*): I'll fetch some boiled water for you. (*She walks out of the door.*)

Tsai-ying (*to Teh-ying's back*): So she's trying to make me do what she wants again!

(*Teh-ying goes to fetch water from Yu-hung's room.*)

Teh-ying: Yu-hung, Tsai-ying is ill. Why don't you come over and see her?

Yu-hung: She's ill! Since when?

Teh-ying: Since yesterday evening.

Yu-hung: Since yesterday evening? But she was here chatting with me just a few minutes ago. That's odd. I'll go and see her.

Teh-ying: Wait a minute. What did she say to you?

Yu-hung: She said she wanted to follow the Party's call as she had deepened her political understanding.

Teh-ying: And then what happened?

Yu-hung: Then... then she went home. Oh yes. After that Iron-Egg's Mother went to see her.

Teh-ying: What did they talk about?

Yu-hung: I don't know what they talked about but it seemed quite lively as Iron-Egg's Mother made a howling noise.

Teh-ying (*meditatively*): ... Well, there's something fishy going on. Yu-hung, go and telephone Chao and ask him to come here as quickly as possible.

Yu-hung: I....

Teh-ying: Go on. Hurry! And then tell me what you want to say.

(*Yu-hung goes off. Teh-ying returns to Tsai-ying's room and pours out a cup of water for her.*)

Teh-ying: Shall I send for a doctor, Tsai-ying?

Tsai-ying: Oh no, don't bother. I'm feeling much better now but not well enough to get up yet.

(*The baby starts crying. Teh-ying changes her nappy.*)

Teh-ying: You've made a lot of progress in the past twenty days, Tsai-ying. Everyone was very pleased to hear you say that you'd take part in the construction of the worker-peasant villages at the meetings.

Tsai-ying: Progress? Not me — it's all thanks to you as our political instructor!

Teh-ying (*having finished changing the nappy for the baby, begins to talk to her*): Once your mother starts to work, you'll go to the nursery. The nurses will look after you very well and you won't wear wet pants any more. They'll look after you even better than your mother. There, there!

Tsai-ying: It would save me a lot of work if she was dead!

Teh-ying: What! How can you say that?

Tsai-ying: Oh, how my head aches!

Teh-ying: Listen. The leadership says a medical clinic will be set up here. In the future, if you have a headache or a fever, you will be treated on the spot. When you come to the fields in the morning, you must bring more clothes with you. At present the conditions here aren't very good. But they'll be fine when our worker-peasant village is built.

Tsai-ying (*impatiently*): That'll take ages. Whoever wants to do that can just carry on.

Teh-ying (*thinking*): Taking part in the construction of the worker-peasant villages is voluntary, Tsai-ying. No one is forced to go. Since you aren't feeling well, you can stay at home and rest. I've asked Yu-hung to phone Chao and tell him to come here

to help you. Yu-hung will be back very soon. She'll do your house work for you. I've something urgent to do so I've got to go now. (*As she walks out of Tsai-ying's room, she meets Yu-hung and the two of them walk to Yu-hung's room.*)

Teh-ying: Did you get through to him?

Yu-hung: Yes. Chao says he will be back very soon. Is she still feeling bad?

Teh-ying: Yes.

Yu-hung: If she has any problems bothering her, she can tell us. Why pretend to be ill? I'll go and ask her.

Teh-ying (*stopping her*): No, it takes time. You must be patient. We all have our own ideas. To help people, you must help them ideologically, know what their problem really is and be honest with them. Go and have a heart-to-heart talk with her and see what she is really thinking. But don't be impatient with her. The meeting will start very soon, so I'll be off there now. (*Exit.*)

(*Yu-hung thinks about what Teh-ying has said to her for a while. Then she goes over to Tsai-ying's room with a bucket of water.*)

Yu-hung: Sorry you're not feeling well, Tsai-ying. I've brought some water for you.

Tsai-ying: I'm sorry to have given you such a lot of trouble.

Yu-hung: Not at all. How are you feeling now?

Tsai-ying: It's nothing serious. I'm feeling better already.

Yu-hung: The meeting will start soon. Are you able to go?

Tsai-ying: I don't think so.

Yu-hung: This morning you were telling me about your new political awareness. What made you change your mind so quickly? Tsai-ying, if there's something bothering you, please tell me.

Tsai-ying: Anyhow, I . . . I don't want to join in the work now.

Yu-hung: But why not?

Tsai-ying: It's too cold. How can we southerners stand it? I was told that people would be frozen like ice-lollies!

Yu-hung: Who told you that?

Tsai-ying: Those who came here earlier know better than us. They say there are wolves around here. What if they attack my baby?

Yu-hung: So that's why I overheard Iron-Egg's Mother's hoarse voice—she was imitating wolves howling. And that scared you? So if she says there is a tiger loose you'll run off home, I suppose?

Tsai-ying: Do you really think it's possible to build the worker-peasant villages with only us women?

Yu-hung: Why not? When our instructor first came here this place was just a vast grassland without any houses in the area. With only five spades they started the work. But now we have many production teams and many households, so why can't we build the worker-peasant villages? As long as we follow the Party's instructions, we won't go wrong.

(*Chao dashes in and hears Yu-hung's last sentence.*)

Chao: Well said!

Yu-hung: Ah, Chao's back!

Chao: You're here, Yu-hung.

Yu-hung: Yes, sit down please, Chao.

Chao: Why so formal with me? (*To Tsai-ying*) What's wrong with you? Are you feeling unwell again?

Tsai-ying: Feeling unwell? Not a bit of it, I'm fine. (*She sits up.*)

Chao: That's good. Your instructor told me that there is a big meeting today. Off you go to the meeting then. Work's busy at the drilling ground, so I'll go back now.

Tsai-ying: But I want to say something to you.

Chao: What about? What is it? (*Tsai-ying is hesitant.*) Yu-hung isn't a stranger. You can say what you want to me in front of her. (*Noticing Yu-hung is leaving.*) No, do stay. (*To Tsai-ying*) Come on, Tsai-ying, what's the matter?

Tsai-ying:

Chao: Just look at you. You've just made some progress and your instructor praised you in front of others. And now you are lying down again. Teh-ying has racked her brains trying to help you and she's done a lot of work.

Tsai-ying: She just wants to make a good impression.

Chao: What on earth are you saying?

Yu-hung: Yes, what do you mean by that? You'd better explain.

Tsai-ying: O.K. then, I will. *(To Yu-hung)* You still don't know.

As a cadre, Teh-ying has lots of tricks up her sleeve. She encourages all of us to go to do the work but doesn't go herself.

Yu-hung: How do you know that?

Tsai-ying: She isn't our friend or our relative, so why has she been so kind to us? Not long after we came here, she began praising us. If we join in the work, she'll be praised by the leadership.

Chao: That's utter nonsense!

Yu-hung: Why do you go around believing everything you hear?

I tell you, our instructor is the one who began the revolution with only five spades. So why wouldn't she work with us?

Tsai-ying: Because now she is a political instructor, a cadre.

Yu-hung: You think that gives you some privileges? Not at all.

A cadre has to take the lead in doing things.

Tsai-ying: Is that true?

Yu-hung *(takes a piece of paper from her pocket)*: Look! This is what Teh-ying asked me to write for her. *(Reads.)* "I promise to follow the Party's call. I guarantee that I'll not miss a single day's labour. I'll fear neither hardships nor fatigue. I'll try to do all my work well. This is my challenge to all you younger housewives!"

(Tsai-ying gazes at Yu-hung, not knowing what to say.)

Chao *(to Tsai-ying)*: You can't blindly believe what some people tell you. Better listen to the Party. Who are we? Can we forget our bitter past after several years of soft-living in the city? No. No matter where we are, we must always remember we are workers. A person will lose his awareness if he doesn't take part in labour. Think about it.

Yu-hung: Tsai-ying, what Chao says is quite true. Think it over carefully.

(A bell rings. Someone shouts: "Time for the meeting!")



Yu-hung: *Aiya*, the meeting's about to begin. I must go. *(She turns to leave.)*

Chao *(to Tsai-ying)*: Why are you still here? Go on and catch up with the others. Wait a minute, Yu-hung. Tsai-ying will join you.

Yu-hung: Tsai-ying, are you coming? *(Pulling Tsai-ying)* Then let's go!

Chao *(pushing Tsai-ying)*: Go on! Don't be left behind!

(The inner curtain falls to the music of the theme song. The members of the housewives' production team are working hard scattering manure in the wind and snow. They are enthusiastic, militant and determined.)

SCENE FOUR

Another dilapidated mud house. Snow is blowing in through the cracks in the windows and the door. This is where the housewives have their temporary lodging.

(The wind is howling outside. The housewives, back from their work, enter the house with spades, pickaxes, crates and shoulder-poles. As each of them enters, a gust of snow blows in. Some of them are rubbing their hands or stamping their feet; others are warming themselves by the heated wall. Tsai-ying stands alone and quiet in a corner.)

Liu: Isn't the wind strong?

Iron-Egg's Mother: Yes, I'm chilled to the bone. As I was spreading the manure in the fields, the wind just blew it back in my face so I was covered in the stuff. *(She spits several times.)* This hard work isn't worth it for just a few work-points. I'd rather be repairing roads and earning more money.

Yu-hung: But we're working for the revolution not money. Anyway it's all the same, whether we're doing this job or another. If you were a navvy you'd still have to hand in your earnings to the family management committee and then the committee would decide the wage according to work-points. Our instructor is older than both of us, yet look how she dashes off with her pile of manure to the fields. I can never catch up with her.

Iron-Egg's Mother: If our new team leader can't, how can the rest of us? There's not a soul who can compete with her. Isn't she a pacesetter, a model worker? . . .

Yu-hung *(glancing at her and then turning to the others):* Hurry up and eat now and then have a little rest. We are going to do some political study this evening.

(The women file out of the outer room one by one. Tsai-ying is still sitting alone.)

Yu-hung *(to Tsai-ying):* Come on, Tsai-ying. *(She enters the inner room on the left.)*

Iron-Egg's Mother: Just look at her. Only a couple of days since she's been team leader and already she's throwing her weight about.

Tsai-ying: But she's capable, isn't she?

Iron-Egg's Mother: If we'd had no young children we'd have got on better too. So what's there to be proud of? Why pick her as team leader? In my opinion, you'd be a better one.

Tsai-ying: Oh shut up! You're just talking rubbish.

Iron-Egg's Mother: It doesn't matter to me whether you listen or not. I'm not just saying this for your benefit. *(Muttering to herself as she walks out.)* She's just a good talker. So our instructor picked her. Now she's a cadre, she's changed. *(She enters the inner room on the right.)*

(After the women have left, Tsai-ying sighs and then slowly begins to wash herself. Yu-hung enters.)

Yu-hung: Still busy, Tsai-ying? Get a move on! Let's go for our meal.

Tsai-ying: We can't all be clever like you. Certainly not me.

Yu-hung: Oh, come off it! Wash your hands and face and then have a rest after you've eaten. It'll soon be time to study.

Tsai-ying: If I were as bright as you, I'd have been a team leader long ago.

Yu-hung: What on earth's got into you? A team leader's just like everyone else.

Tsai-ying: Nonsense! You're a cadre now.

Yu-hung: But I was elected team leader because people trust me. What is a cadre after all? I work and get work-points just like everyone else. *(In a friendly way)* O.K. Enough for now. Hurry up.

Tsai-ying: You go ahead. *(Combing her hair)* How can I possibly eat smelling like this? What a stink!

Iron-Egg's Mother *(appearing from the inner room, on her way to supper):* Stink? Didn't our instructor say: "How can we get the fragrance of rice without spreading stinking manure?" Just think of that and you'll have a good appetite.

Tsai-ying: Ugh! Like eating the manure! From tomorrow, I won't come to work any more! *(She angrily enters the inner room on the left.)*

Yu-hung: Iron-Egg's Mother, you should think twice before you open your big mouth, and not just rattle on.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Just because she doesn't listen to you, you're trying to blame me. What's wrong with what I said? Just because you're a team leader, you think you can shut people up. I was only repeating what the instructor had said. You're getting too big for your boots. Don't forget you're just a housewife too. Even though you've been a cadre for a few days, you're still a housewife too. Yet you're throwing your weight about, not letting people speak. What do you mean by "rattling on"? You tell me!

Yu-hung: I don't mean that. . . .

Iron-Egg's Mother: What do you mean then? Eh? O.K. If you don't explain yourself, I won't come tomorrow either. *(Turns to go to the inner room.)*

(Yu-hung makes an effort to control her emotions. Director Wang and Teh-ying enter talking to each other.)

Wang: . . . You women didn't spread the manure evenly. Just look at the mess! How can you compete with the workers? Yet you say you want to. If you don't do the spring sowing properly, you'll pay for it later. Anyway we are going to build some houses. . . .

Teh-ying *(seeing Yu-hung wiping her tears):* Yu-hung, what's wrong? Why are you crying?

Yu-hung: Instructor. . . .

Wang: Good grief! The only thing you women are good at is crying. Always tears! Tell us what the matter is this time.

Teh-ying: Yes, what's happened, Yu-hung?

Yu-hung: Both Iron-Egg's Mother and Tsai-ying refuse to work tomorrow.

Wang: What? Won't work? You're their team leader. What have you done to them?

(Yu-hung weeps.)

Wang: Crying won't solve the problem. Where are they?

Yu-hung: In their rooms.

Wang: Iron-Egg's Mother and Tsai-ying, come out! Both of you!

(Iron-Egg's Mother and Tsai-ying come out of their rooms.)

Wang: Tell me why you refuse to work tomorrow? Come on, Iron-Egg's Mother, you speak first.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Who says so? I'm going to have my supper. Then we have political study. *(She goes off in a huff.)*

Wang *(to Tsai-ying):* Well then, what about you? Why won't you come tomorrow?

Tsai-ying: Whether I work or not, it's got nothing to do with you.

Wang: You're free to go any time! If you refuse to work, you'd better go home. There's no housewife here who won't work.

Tsai-ying: That suits me! Nobody likes this damned place anyway!

Wang: Do what you like. Don't think we can't manage without you!

Tsai-ying: Fine. *(She turns back resentfully to the inner room.)*

Teh-ying *(to Wang):* How could you speak to her like that?

Wang: What's wrong with that? We can't let them do whatever they like. I told you long ago that you must be decisive and tough in your work and must have drive. But what've you done? Always talking about unimportant things like asking whether they are warm enough or attending to trivial matters. And look at your team leader! All she can do is cry. What good does that do?

Teh-ying: Don't be so impatient, Wang. Things are still a bit muddled.

Wang: Things are quite clear! One wants to live in a good flat in town, doing nothing; the other is only good at picking quarrels for nothing.

Teh-ying: But it takes time to help them to change.

Wang: Fine! Then you help them. Since you're their political instructor, you take over. And you must make a good job of it. *(He turns to leave.)*

Teh-ying: Where are you going?

Wang: To the shed to have a look at the seeds.

Teh-ying: But you haven't had your supper yet.

Wang: We've got sowing to do tomorrow, and time is pressing. I can't afford to eat at the moment. *(He hurries off.)*

Teh-ying: Yu-hung, what's the matter with you?

Yu-hung: It's because I didn't do my work well.

Teh-ying: What is it? Tell me.

Yu-hung: I'm going to give up.

Teh-ying: But what's the problem? You must tell us. We can help you.

Yu-hung: I asked Tsai-ying to hurry up and go for her supper and she became very cross. And then Iron-Egg's Mother came in and made a few nasty remarks. So I gave her a piece of my mind. Then she called me names saying that after I became the team leader I... Finally both of them said that they wouldn't work tomorrow. *(Wiping her eyes.)*

Teh-ying: Well, there's no use in crying over spilt milk. They are both very new here, so we can't expect them to think exactly like us. There are bound to be difficulties in your kind of work, but you must stick it out. The more difficult the situation, the more determined you must be. Let's think over if there's anything we didn't do well....

Yu-hung: Is there anything?

Teh-ying: One thing that occurred to me was that young mothers like Tsai-ying ought to finish their work earlier so as to nurse their babies. What do you think?

Yu-hung: I never gave it a thought.

Teh-ying: You're not to blame since you don't have much experience. I'm the one who is responsible.

(Tsai-ying comes out of the inner room, carrying some bags.)

Teh-ying: Do you really want to leave, Tsai-ying?

Tsai-ying: I certainly do. To hell with this dump! I'm not going to stay here and be insulted.

Yu-hung: Please don't be cross with me, Tsai-ying. If you've got any complaints just say so.

Teh-ying: Tsai-ying, please tell us where we went wrong and what our faults were. It will help us to do a better job. *(Helps Tsai-ying to sit at the table.)* You must be feeling very tired these days.

Tsai-ying: Of course I am! My back aches, my legs ache!

Teh-ying: That's natural at first. You'll soon get over it.

Tsai-ying: But that's not important. The main thing is that I won't be insulted.

Yu-hung: Don't hold that against us. We're very inexperienced.

Tsai-ying: Inexperienced my foot! He's been a cadre for years.

Yu-hung *(understands her meaning):* Yes, Wang is hot-tempered, and he's certainly not very considerate when he's criticizing somebody. But he means well.

Tsai-ying: Not very considerate! We've all got feelings, haven't we? Why should people have to put up with his sharp tongue.

Teh-ying: I agree. We'll tell Wang what you've said.

(The women enter one by one.)

Liu: You're here, instructor. Team leader and Tsai-ying, you haven't eaten anything, so I've brought you your supper.

Tsai-ying: Who on earth would want to eat corn gruel and sorghum?

Woman A: Tsai-ying, here's your child. Her pants are not a bit wet. The little rascal had a whale of a time in the nursery.

(Tsai-ying, making for the door carrying the child and bags, is stopped by the others.)

All: Where are you going, Tsai-ying?

Tsai-ying: Back home.

Women *(stopping her from leaving):* But why do you want to leave? You've only just come. What's the matter?

Tsai-ying: What's the matter with all of you? Let me go.

Teh-ying: Very well, if you insist. We'll come and see you off

tomorrow. As Chao is still on his shift, ask him to buy you a train ticket tomorrow. But you'd better stay here for now, O.K.?

Tsai-ying: What a rotten place! I can't stand another minute of it.

(The women talk together, upset by Tsai-ying's attitude and words.)

Liu: Why does she talk like that? There were no houses in 1960 when the workers arrived. Just a vast grassland. And when Teh-ying and her comrades started to work on the land they had nothing but five spades. It was far more difficult then, but they managed to overcome all their problems.

Teh-ying: Yes, our situation now isn't that difficult. Before, a cowshed served as our headquarters.

Yu-hung *(immediately)*: Tsai-ying, when our worker-peasant villages are built we'll have everything. Then everybody will work and study for the revolution. Think how marvellous it will be!

Tsai-ying: It still won't be a patch on city life. I lived in a flat where there were all the facilities, and it was very easy to get around.

Women *(talking loudly)*: We've been studying for more than twenty days, but it's had no effect on her. What's the idea? Still afraid of a bit of hard work and tiredness! She loves comfort and hates hard work. Her ideas are all wrong...

Yu-hung *(irritated)*: How can you speak like that, Tsai-ying?

Tsai-ying: What have I said wrong? Life in a town is much better than it is here. You're quite right, I don't like a hard life any more. So why do you want to keep me here instead of letting me leave and go and live comfortably in town?

Chang *(angrily)*: That's nonsense! People in town work just like us. I'm from a town too. School-leavers in our town also go and settle in the countryside.

All *(continuing their comments)*: She's running away after only a few days here. Let her go then. We can build our worker-peasant villages very well without the likes of her. She's just no good.

Teh-ying: It's true the building you lived in was a nice one. But do you still remember how you lived before Liberation? Old Chao told me that your parents were very poor then.

Yu-hung: Tsai-ying told me herself that she didn't have enough to eat and wear when she was a child.

Teh-ying: Yes, all the poor were the same. *(With sadness)* My father was a hired hand. He slaved away day and night for a landlord, but still he didn't have enough food or clothes. When I was a young girl I didn't even have a pair of shoes. When I was tending cattle in the middle of winter, I'd feel so cold that I'd stick my feet into the cow dung for warmth. Once I was so hungry that I ate some dog food. As a punishment, the landlord beat me until I became unconscious. Carrying me away in her arms, my mother wept bitterly but she didn't dare to complain. My parents-in-law were also very poor. When my husband worked as a driller at the Yumen Oilfield, the workers were treated worse than animals. The whole oilfield was fenced off by wire mesh like a prison. Once employed, you could never leave. Wearing sacking for clothing, the workers didn't look like men. Mothers and wives wept to see their sons or husbands separated from them by the wire fencing. And if you fell ill, that was a disaster. Whatever your illness you'd be shoved into a big room where all the patients drank the same herbal medicine from the same pot. Many workers died. And they'd be thrown into a large pit, some of them still breathing. Once when my husband was injured at work, instead of sending him to hospital the boss simply sacked him. His work-mates carried him home. Seeing him covered in blood, his face ashen, I felt sick. It was just seven days after I'd had my baby. So carrying the baby through a snowstorm I went to see the boss, to ask for mercy for my husband. Because if he lost his job, we'd all starve to death. But the boss didn't give a damn. He just ordered his men to throw us out of his house. We fell down in the snow. I was too weak to stand up...

(The women are moved. A sound of weeping can be heard.)

Liu: A landlord worked my father to death. My mother took me with her to beg in the streets till she died too a few years later. . . . *(She weeps.)*

Yu-hung: I was only six when my father died. That year, my village was flooded. With nothing to eat or drink, the whole family faced dying of starvation. In desperation, my mother put a straw mark on my back, meaning to sell me. She said to me: "Don't think I'm cruel. But how else are we to live?" I pleaded with her not to sell me and told her how I would support her when I grew up. We both wept so much that my mother took me home again. . . . Tsai-ying, your past sufferings were just like ours. We must avenge our past.

Teh-ying: Right. Tsai-ying, Iron-Egg's Mother, you must realize that though we're from different parts of the country, we're all birds of a feather. Although we are liberated, we must never forget our sufferings in the old days. To forget the past means to stop making revolution. Then the landlords and bosses will be only too pleased, and it's exactly what the imperialists and revisionists long for. Young people should have high ideals, revolutionary ideals! We work only for the revolution. How can it be right if we refuse to work?

(Tsai-ying can't control herself any longer and starts to cry. Iron-Egg's Mother is downcast and ashamed.)

(The stage becomes dark. It is night. All is quiet. The women are studying Chairman Mao's works by lamplight. The music of "The East Is Red" grows louder.)

Yu-hung: "... These battalions of ours are wholly dedicated to the liberation of the people and work entirely in the people's interests. Comrade Chang Szu-teh was in the ranks of these battalions." *(She looks up and gazes ahead. As the stirring music sounds, she seems to see the image of Chang Szu-teh fighting during the Long March.)* Following Chairman Mao, Chang Szu-teh fought countless battles. He was a dauntless fighter on the Long March. After arriving in northern Shensi, he worked



as a charcoal burner, deep in the mountains, for the people and revolution. There he died as the result of an accident. Still a young man. . . . *(In her mind's eye, she sees the image of Chang Szu-teh again, burning charcoal.)* What do men live for? What is significant in life? Teh-ying, I've learned a great deal today. Why did Chang Szu-teh fear neither hardships nor fatigue? Why did he dedicate his life to the Party? I understand now what men live for.

Tsai-ying: I was wrong, Teh-ying. I will try to learn from your spirit of "making revolution with five spades". From now on, I promise to work hard and be a good revolutionary.

Teh-ying: Very well, now you've seen the truth. We should try to follow Chang Szu-teh's example. Whatever we do should

be for the revolution. For the revolution, we should be prepared to confront any dangers or difficulties.

(The music of "The East Is Red" reaches its climax.)

SCENE FIVE

Same setting as in the previous scene.

(It is summer and hoeing has begun.)

(Having finished their day's work, the members of the housewives' production team enter singing happily, carrying straw hats, hoes and a red flag. Their gaiety fills the room.)

Liu: Wow! We worked really hard today.

Woman B: I don't feel the least bit tired.

Woman C: Some of the men in the construction team still look down upon us, but they can't say anything now that we've taken the red flag for hard work from them. Where shall we put it?

Tsai-ying: Right in the middle of the room so that the moment Wang comes in, he can't miss it.

Woman A: Remember how he boasted when the competition started? He challenged his men in a loud voice: "Do you think we can work faster than those women and win the red flag?" "Of course we can."

(All laugh.)

Woman B: They worked like devils at the beginning. When we caught up, wasn't Wang frantic? "What's the matter with you?" he asked them. "How ridiculous to lag behind a bunch of women? Ouch!"

Liu: That's Director Wang! He worked so hard that his back ached. *(She imitates Wang holding his back with his hand. All laugh.)*

Tsai-ying: Some of them pay no attention to the quality of their work. They don't even bother to hoe the weeds which stick out like the bushy beard of Chang Fei, the Big Beard.

(All laugh.)

Woman A: If our team leader was here they'd be in an even worse position.

Liu: Quite right, they'd have an awful time if she was here.

Woman B: We mustn't gloat.

Liu: No, but we couldn't have worked like this if we hadn't trained so hard. Take Tsai-ying for example. She practised hoeing as she walked and as she ate. Even in her dreams she was swinging her arms.

Woman C: Yes, she worked very well today. Two of the men tried very hard to beat her but never managed. And despite her speed, the quality of her work never suffers.

Liu: Really, Tsai-ying, you've changed a lot. You're much more politically aware than when you first came.

Tsai-ying: I wouldn't have been if we hadn't talked about our miserable lives in the old society and of our happiness today in the new, or if we hadn't studied Chairman Mao's works. I was thinking while I hoed: this is like fighting the enemy.

Liu: The weeds are our enemies, so by hoeing them we are making revolution.

(Enter Wang. The chatter and laughter stop at once.)

Wang: Where are your instructor and team leader? Well, why doesn't somebody answer?

(Someone laughs.)

Wang: What's so funny?

Tsai-ying: Isn't anyone allowed to laugh?

Wang: I see, you're proud of your red flag, aren't you? Don't get too conceited. You still have to continue making revolution.

Tsai-ying: Of course. We must be aware of our weaknesses in order to maintain our high standards.

Wang: Fine. Then I'll expect to hear more good news from you.

Woman A: The construction team worked like beavers at the beginning, Wang.

Wang: Well, men have stronger arms.

Woman C: Then how come they're like us women in the end?

(All laugh.)

Wang: Hoeing is work for women whose backs are more pliable. The construction team has been asked to help out with the hoeing for the time being and they are simply not used to it. Besides, men have stiffer backbones. They don't bend so easily. Ouch!
(He holds his back. All burst out laughing. Wang laughs too.)

Wang: I have to admit you've worked very well with the spring sowing and now with the summer hoeing. There's no denying it—good work is good work. *(Sticking up his thumb)* You deserve all the praise you can get. Soon we'll be building the houses. I'll show you how to do that so that next year you may be able to build them yourselves.

Liu: Why next year? What's wrong with this year? We'll compete with the men there too.

(Clustering around Wang, they plead to be allowed to do it.)

Wang: It's supper time now. Please ask Teh-ying to come over at once when you see her.

Woman B: She has gone to learn from your workers.

(Laughing, all go off. Wang looks at the red flag. Enter Teh-ying.)

Wang: Where have you been?

Teh-ying: I went to the fields hoed by the construction team to see what I could learn from the men.

Wang: But you got the red flag from them. What is there for you to learn?

Teh-ying: The plot the men hoed was fine after they had gone over it again. You should pay more attention to quality, Old Wang. Hasn't the Party committee told us to "nurture the seedlings

as sons and hoe the weeds like enemies"? So you shouldn't press them to work so fast.

Wang: Who urged them?

Teh-ying: You standing at the edge of the field shouting, "Get a move on. We've got to beat those women."

Wang *(laughs)*: I was only giving them some encouragement.

Teh-ying: Still you shouldn't think only of the red flag.

Wang: Well, well. Let's change the subject. The command post rang me just now to say that more wives are arriving. It'll mean cramming together to accommodate them. Can you manage?

Teh-ying: I think I can. . . . But with more wives coming, accommodation is becoming quite a problem. And the number of children is increasing too. We ought to build a school for them. When are you going to start building the houses for the worker-peasant village?

Wang: I've been thinking about that. With so many wives coming, this housing business is a serious problem.

Teh-ying: Well then. What do you suggest?

Wang: When the third hoeing is done, I'll withdraw the construction team from the land to start building the houses.

Teh-ying: Our construction team is very small. If they are the only ones building the houses, it'll be ages before they are finished.

Wang: They can't be built this year. You'll just have to cram together as best you can.

Teh-ying: So after the hoeing is over, what shall we women do?

Wang: You can help out at the construction site—mixing mud, carrying water, things like that. This year you can learn and maybe next year you can do the building yourselves. *(Confidently)* Don't you think so?

Teh-ying: No.

Wang: Why not?

Teh-ying: Why wait till next year? They can start now. We're learning already. Yu-hung has just been to get some experience.

Wang *(warmly and sincerely)*: Look, Teh-ying, building houses is not

like farming where the grain grows once the seeds have been sown. It takes skill which you learn bit by bit.

(Yu-hung rushes on.)

Yu-hung: Teh-ying. Oh, Director Wang, you're here too.

Teh-ying: You're back, Yu-hung. Tell us what you've learned.

Yu-hung: The tamped earth houses are just right. All you need is some damp earth and there's plenty of that here. Just dig up the earth and then tamp it. *(Drinks water.)* Oh, I've learned so much today. They explained everything to me as they worked. How long and thick each wall should be; how to mix mud and straw, how to oil the planks and move them, and how to ram the earth. Look, I've jotted it all down in my notebook. I was calculating as I came home that a team of twelve people could make enough walls for a row of houses in two days. If our whole team works on it, we'll soon have enough houses.

Teh-ying (excitedly): That's marvellous news, Yu-hung!

Yu-hung: Yes, but this time we'll have to work very hard.

Wang (persuasively): Don't underestimate the difficulties. Houses are constructed with labour, not words.

Yu-hung (bewildered, asks Teh-ying): Why does he say that?

Teh-ying: Wang, do you always have to pour cold water on everything?

Wang: Pour cold water! Do you really think you can perform wonders after one day's study?

Yu-hung: Why not? The Party says we should aim high.

Wang: Be careful you don't go too far, Yu-hung. How can you possibly build houses for our whole team after only one day's study?

Teh-ying: You're just an old stick-in-the-mud.

Wang: Look, who's talking! You women think you are really with it!

Teh-ying: You've no confidence in us.

Wang: That was true, but not any more. Still, building houses isn't like farming. It needs a lot of technical know-how.

Yu-hung: I'm going to have to criticize you, Wang.

Wang: All you ever do is criticize. Why don't you write some big-character posters? If I spend all my time here cackling with you, I won't get any work done.

Yu-hung: So you don't want to hear our criticisms?

Wang: Carry on! It's nothing new.

Teh-ying: And have you agreed with any of them?

Wang: I must first analyse them. I can't just accept everything you say. I have my principles.

Yu-hung: Just listen to him . . . please, Teh-ying. . . .

Teh-ying (soothingly): Yu-hung . . . Old Wang. I think Yu-hung has a point when she says that we women can build the houses. You must think it over more carefully.

Wang: Stop it, Teh-ying. You're just talking nonsense. If you can build all the houses this year, pigs will fly! *(Exit.)*

Teh-ying: That's no way to talk.

(Black clouds fill the sky. A rumble of thunder is heard.)

Yu-hung: He's always looking down on us.

Teh-ying: Don't worry. I'll call up Secretary Lo. Old Wang needs a good talking-to.

(Exit Teh-ying. Yu-hung is thoughtful. The storm begins. A few women run in.)

All: Oh, what heavy rain!

Tsai-ying: Good! Yu-hung is back. When did you get back?

Yu-hung: Just a minute ago.

Liu: Well, what did you learn?

Yu-hung: A lot. Those mud houses are really good.

All: Can we build them?

Yu-hung: If we learn hard. . . .

(Thunder crashes down. Rain pours.)

Woman A: Oh, the roof is leaking.

Woman B: Get a basin, quick.

Liu: There's a leak here too.

(They use pots and pans to catch rain water.)

Yu-hung: This won't do. We must repair the roof.

(They go out with spades.)

Yu-hung: You stay here, Iron-Egg's Mother. You've only just got over your cold. You mustn't catch another one.

Iron-Egg's Mother: What a shack! It's like a sieve when it rains. It's uninhabitable. *(Standing at the door she shouts to the women outside.)* It's leaking here, and there. Over there too, near the north wall.

(The rain lets up. The leaking stops. Iron-Egg's Mother mops up the table and tidies the room.)

(Yu-hung and the other women enter talking. They are soaking wet.)

Woman A: Twelve people can make walls for a row of houses in two days?

Woman B: So quick?

Yu-hung: If we start right after the hoeing is done, we can finish building our houses before the autumn harvest.

All: That's wonderful.

Liu: We'll challenge the men this time, and we won't lag behind them in this either.

Woman A: Didn't Wang say that our backs are weak?

Tsai-ying: Weak backs? He just looks down on us.

Yu-hung: But if we really achieve something, nobody will dare to sneer at us any more.

Liu: Exactly, so we must do all we can to show them. Let's write a letter expressing our determination.

Yu-hung: Good idea!

(They get paper and a writing brush.)

Yu-hung (holding the brush): What shall I write? Tell me.

Liu: I want to say: We women work with all our strength. We do not fear any difficulties.

All: Good. Put that down.

Woman A: At the spring sowing and in the summer hoeing we did our work so well...



Tsai-ying (following immediately): That we were awarded the red flag.

All: Marvellous. Put that down.

Yu-hung: Anything else? Is that all?

All: No, no. Let's think of something more.

Liu: I know. Who says that women's backs are weak?

All: Very good. That's very good.

Yu-hung (adds immediately): We'll build all our tamped earth houses.

All: That's right. All of them. Every one of them.

Woman B: ... We are determined to...

Yu-hung: Determined to struggle till we achieve our aims.

All: Fine.

Liu: The leaders should listen to the words of the masses.

All: Jolly good!

Tsai-ying: Wang will have to pay attention to our criticisms. Add this: It's wrong to look down on women. We'll challenge anyone who shouts at us.

All (laugh): Write it down.

Yu-hung (*thinking*): We'll criticize him all right but I don't think we should mention his shouting at us. (*Thinks again.*) ... We are making revolution. ...

Tsai-ying: That's it. We Taching housewives are making revolution.

Liu: We'll overcome anyone who tries to stop us.

Yu-hung: (*Thinks for a moment then puts it down.*)

All: Read it out to us, Yu-hung.

Yu-hung (*reads*): We women work with all our strength,
We do not fear any difficulties.
At the spring sowing and in the summer hoeing, we did our work so well
That we were awarded the red flag.
Who says that women's backs are weak?
We'll build all our tamped earth houses.
We are determined to struggle till we achieve our aims,
The leaders should listen to the words of the masses.
We Taching housewives are making revolution.
We'll overcome anyone who tries to stop us.

(*The women are very excited. Enter Wang and Teh-ying.*)

All: Excellent! Marvellous!

Wang: What's going on here?

Yu-hung: Wang, Teh-ying, we've made our pledge.

Wang (*takes it*): ... Very good. You're afraid of nothing. ... And you're very proud of yourselves for getting the red flag? Who says that women's backs are weak? (*Looks around and coughs.*) We'll build all our tamped earth houses. ... So you're going to build all of them? ... And we should pay attention to what you say, eh? Well, well. You Taching housewives are making revolution, and you'll overcome anyone who tries to stop you! Who ... tries to ... stop ... you?

Yu-hung: What do you think of it, Wang?

Liu: When will you let us start to build our houses?

Tsai-ying: We'll compete with the men this time.

Wang (*controlling his temper*): Who wrote this?

Yu-hung: I did.

Wang: I knew it.

All: But we all chipped in with our ideas.

Wang (*trying hard to control himself*): And you call this a pledge? It's more like a big-character poster! Just shows what an unruly mob you all are.

Yu-hung: Why unruly mob?

Teh-ying: The women's spirit is good.

Wang: As their instructor, you always side with them. Don't be too sure of yourselves, that's all!

(*Everyone is stunned.*)

Iron-Egg's Mother: It's got nothing to do with me, Wang. I didn't open my mouth. ...

Wang: Don't interrupt.

Teh-ying: The Taching housewives are making revolution. They want to help build socialism. What's wrong with that?

All (*to Teh-ying*): Yes, we want to do our bit. And the leadership didn't send Yu-hung to learn house-building for nothing. Our houses are leaking and more wives are coming. If we wait for the men to build our houses it will take too long.

Wang (*unable to contain himself any longer*): Then, who is stopping you? What are you going on about?

(*The women are stunned. Enter Secretary Lo.*)

Lo: Well, you sound as if you are having a lively meeting.

All: Hello, Old Lo.

Wang (*handing him the letter*): Look at this, Old Lo.

Teh-ying: It's our pledge, and we were just discussing it. But there are some differences of opinion about it.

Lo: Do all of you think the same?

Iron-Egg's Mother: It's got nothing to do with me, Old Lo. I didn't say a word.

Lo: Why not?

Iron-Egg's Mother: I. ...

Lo (*to everybody*): This is very good. Very good indeed. You've

got my whole-hearted support for your plan to build your own houses.

All: So Lo agrees with us and accepts our plan. Hurrah!

Lo (*to Yu-hung*): Did you write this?

Yu-hung: Only what the others said.

Lo (*to Teh-ying*): She and I were on the same train to Taching last spring and she claimed then that she wanted to join in the construction work. (*To Yu-hung*) Wasn't that so?

Yu-hung: Yes, I came to work.

Lo: Does Li still have any objections?

Yu-hung: No. He changed ages ago. He said the leadership helped him a lot. (*To Teh-ying*) You know, Old Lo spent a whole night talking to him. He was almost crying when he came home and said he would never again try to stop me from going to work.

Tsai-ying: I heard that Li works very hard at the drilling-ground.

Lo: Yes, he's made a lot of progress politically. (*To Tsai-ying*) Where is your baby?

Tsai-ying: She's in the nursery.

Lo: How is she?

Tsai-ying: Very well — rosy cheeks and much fatter.

Lo: What do you think of the women in charge of the nursery?

Tsai-ying: I'm very grateful to them.

Lo: Why?

Tsai-ying: They are wonderful, Old Lo. For example, once I was late fetching my little girl. I heard a child crying when I arrived and dashed in, thinking she must be hungry. What I saw nearly made me cry.

Lo: Why, what was wrong? Was she hungry?

Tsai-ying: Not at all! Chang was holding my baby while her own was crying beside her. So I picked up her child and told her she was neglecting hers looking after mine. You know what she said? She replied that as we had to leave our children when we went to work, she must look after them well to free us for our work. I can't tell you how touched I was. "Oh Chang," I cried. "What a fine example you are of absolute

selflessness."* But she protested that she fell far short of Dr. Bethune — she couldn't compare with him.

Lo (*laughs*): And do you still want to live in high apartment blocks?

Tsai-ying: Who's got time to think of that!

Yu-hung: She has really changed. Chao has helped her a great deal, and he's also helped us in our political and ideological work in the housewives' production team.

Tsai-ying: He told us that drilling oil wells was fighting a battle against U.S. imperialism and revisionism and that every victory of the drillers was a blow to them and a contribution to world revolution. It's the same with us. By taking part in collective production we women are helping the proletariat in the East.

(*Lo and everybody laugh.*)

Lo (*to Woman A*): Is your mother feeling better?

Woman A: Yes. Teh-ying sent her some money without my knowing it.

Lo: With such a good instructor guiding you, you can't go wrong. Tell me, do you have any problems?

Yu-hung (*getting Teh-ying's consent first*): Yes. Our biggest problem at present is that we don't have enough accommodation for the families who are arriving.

Lo: Well then, let's discuss it. Have you any ideas?

(*Teh-ying encourages Yu-hung to speak.*)

Yu-hung: We think that a team of twelve can make walls for a row of houses in two days. If all the housewives in our team take part, we'll have enough accommodation for the whole team built before harvest time.

Lo: I know that. Wang and Teh-ying called me up a little while ago to tell me that. But have you made any definite plans?

Yu-hung: Once the leadership gives its consent, we'll draw up

*Chairman Mao in his article *In Memory of Norman Bethune* said: "We must all learn the spirit of absolute selflessness from him."

a plan immediately. We've got a lot of determination and confidence.

Lo: My feeling is that your aims aren't high enough. If all the housewives' production teams in our oilfield did the same, the construction of the worker-peasant villages would be finished way ahead of time. Don't you agree?

All (*excitedly, as his meaning dawns on them*): Yes, of course!

Lo: The men are working very hard now. The drilling teams are making great progress trying to reach world levels. They are a challenge to U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism. What about you lot?

All: We are too!

Lo: Then do you dare to compete with the men?

All: Yes, we do!

Lo: Good. What are you going to name your worker-peasant village? Let me see, how about the Pioneers' Village? (*To Teh-ying*) Being a pioneer is very hard. What do you think of the Pioneers' Village?

All (*excitedly*): Just right.

Lo: Talk it over and then make a definite plan. Then we'll consider it. Agreed?

All: Yes.

(*The women leave.*)

Lo: The three of us can talk it over now. (*Silence.*) Have I been too arbitrary today, making decisions without consulting you first?

Teh-ying: No, you said what we were thinking. You could tell that from the reaction of all of us.

Lo: And you, Wang?

Wang: It's all right by me.

Lo: That settles it then.

Teh-ying: If it is O.K. by you, why were you making such a fuss in front of the women? Why don't you tell Lo what's eating you?

Lo (*as Wang keeps silent*): Yes, what's your opinion, Old Wang?

We've been workmates for so many years now. Why not tell me what's on your mind?

Teh-ying: You seem to have lost your tongue. And where's your temper gone? If you can blow up in front of the women, why be silent in front of Secretary Lo?

Wang: Oh, shut up, you, you . . . woman!

Lo: You mustn't talk like that.

Wang: We can never discuss anything.

Teh-ying: That's true. You're becoming more and more against us housewives. Always losing your temper, always lecturing us. We came here to build socialism, not to see your sour face and be called "you women" all the time. At first you claimed that women couldn't do farm work, until we showed you. Now, you say we can't build our houses and that you want us to go slowly. As I see it, your ideology is all wrong.

Wang: Wrong? Then tell me where I'm wrong. Just my luck to be stuck with you women. I can never discuss anything properly.

Lo: Your luck?

Wang: If you hadn't kept on at me persuading me to come here, I would never have left my drilling team in the first place. Now they are making enormous progress trying to reach world levels and fighting against imperialism and revisionism every day. But, here am I landed with a bunch of women who, hopeless as they are, think they can do everything including building mud houses. Think that's going to be easy? If they are not well built, they'll just collapse or leak and have to be repaired every year. I'm fed up to the teeth with women. Squabbling and yacking from morning to night. Come and see for yourself if you don't believe me.

Teh-ying: There you are, Old Lo! Just listen to how Wang talks.

Lo: It's good to get it all out. What other difficulties or opinions do you have? Better to say them all now.

Wang: No more.

Lo: You mean it?

Wang: Yes. I've got everything off my chest. You can criticize me if I'm wrong.

Teh-ying: Yes, Old Lo. Give him a good talking-to. That'll teach him. He gets in a muddle after a while without a bit of criticism.

Wang: You shut up. Lo, criticize me if I'm wrong.

Lo: But I've no criticisms, Wang. You work very hard. You're always there sorting out any difficulties, whether you are tired or hungry. You never think of yourself. You're a staunch fighter against class enemies. Building this oilfield hasn't been easy. We've had to overcome many difficulties and you have worked very hard. . . .

Wang: Come off it, Lo. You're making me embarrassed.

Teh-ying: Why don't you criticize him severely, Lo? After all, working hard is only doing our duty. Forget about that. He won't be too upset if you criticize him. It gives him something to think about.

Wang: Why should I get upset over criticism? The leadership criticizes you because it cares for you. I'm not one of you women who cries the minute I criticize her.

Lo: "You women" is your problem. You never complain however hard the work is. But the women really annoy you, don't they? You look down on them and think they are a nuisance. Your attitude is the result of old habits and one which we should fight against. Didn't our leaders tell us that there were two ways of running our affairs? One is for us to build high blocks and houses for the young wives, who'll do no work and depend on others. The other is our present way, which breaks with old ideas and foreign habits. We'll build worker-peasant villages and organize the young women to take part in collective labour. They'll farm, build houses, take part in the construction work and provide all the services. The example of the women making revolution will help to change everybody's thinking. But you've heard all this before. Didn't you listen to the reports made by the leaders of the Party committee? (*To Wang*) You heard them, Wang?

Wang: Umm. . . .

Teh-ying: Yes, he was there but he didn't really listen to them. He's very alert when he's working but he dozes off during a report.

Lo: That's a fair comment. How can we possibly work well without proper study, Wang? How do you think we built this big oilfield and made such progress in science and technology? It was because we studied Mao Tsetung Thought. Whether or not you have confidence in the women and support them in making revolution is a serious question. You must understand this.

Teh-ying: Looking down on women is firmly fixed in your mind, isn't it, Wang?

(*Silence.*)

Lo: Why don't you say something?

Teh-ying: Every woman helping in the construction of socialism is an added strength. We would be even stronger if all the housewives worked to build socialism.

Lo: Wang, Chairman Mao teaches us: "**China's women are a vast reserve of labour power. This reserve should be tapped in the struggle to build a great socialist country.**" We are making world revolution. How can we liberate all the people in the world, if we can't even liberate our women? (*Wang, understanding his meaning, stands up and then sits down again uneasily.*) It is true that mud houses will collapse and leak if they are not built properly. But there are developments. To improve the houses the leaders of our Party committee have consulted Old Li in the village and learned many things from him. The houses built by his method are cool in summer and warm in winter. Sturdy, economical and easily built, they can last at least fifty years. The leadership has sent me here to discuss it with you. We'll learn and work together. It's most important that we do this work well.

Teh-ying: So you've come to work in our team, Old Lo!

Lo: Yes. We must catch up with our leaders. (*To Wang*) The

housewives are getting more and more enthusiastic in making revolution. The day they can manage on their own, they won't let us join them even if we want to.

Wang: I couldn't care less if they don't want me. But I'm determined to correct my mistakes.

Teh-ying: If you know you're wrong, don't grumble.

Wang: Leave me alone. Old Lo knows how to persuade me, not like you....

Teh-ying: Women — isn't that the word you're looking for?

(They laugh. Enter Yu-hung and others.)

Lo: Have you talked it over?

Yu-hung: Yes. We have all agreed to build the mud houses this way. We promise to work well. Here is our plan. *(She gives it to Lo who reads it with Wang and Teh-ying.)*

Lo: That's very good. Any other suggestions?

All: No. Let's start as soon as possible.

Lo *(to Iron-Egg's Mother):* What about you?

Iron-Egg's Mother *(awkwardly):* I... I...

Lo: This is a good plan. Do you still disagree with it?

Iron-Egg's Mother *(beginning to understand):* I... I... I got all muddled. I... I... can work like the others now and I'm not worried about the work being difficult or tiring. But *(pointing to her head)* it'll take time for this to catch up.

Lo: Working hard is good. But you haven't fully realized for whom you are working. Once you are aware of that, you'll be all right ideologically.

Teh-ying: She's already made a lot of progress.

Lo: Well then, it doesn't matter if a person has faults so long as she can correct them. You must follow the Party and work together with the others. *(To the women)* And I've come here to work with you too. Is that all right?

Yu-hung: Do you mean it, Old Lo? Have you really come to join us?

Teh-ying: Yes, he's going to be with our team for a while.

All *(overjoyed):* That's wonderful news.

Lo: I've talked it over with Wang and Teh-ying. You'll have our full support in building your houses.

(The housewives then look at Wang.)

Wang: I've had no confidence in you in the past and my attitude has been bad. I was wrong, and I'll try to correct myself. Please continue to point out my faults to me.

Teh-ying: Sisters, with the leadership's backing, do you think we can make a good job of building the houses?

All: Of course we can.

Lo: Good. Now don't turn up your noses at our mud houses. To me they are better than any high buildings. All our leaders live in them. Though we set high standards in production, we keep up the tradition of hard work and plain living. Now you women are taking part in production: you tackle farm work, industry and will start building mud houses too. In this way a contingent of housewives strong in ideology, good style of work and technical know-how will be formed. It will be a contingent with high aspirations who will set a new example in arduous struggle and self-reliance and who will blaze new trails in building the oilfield with Mao Tsetung Thought. *(Pause.)* Do you know you've started a tempest?

(Rumbling thunder in the distance.)

All *(puzzled):* A tempest? Can we start a tempest?

Lo: Yes, you can. You've started the tempest of housewives making revolution.

(Crashes of thunder.)

(The inner curtain drops. Singing a work chant the women are seen in high spirits building mud houses.)

The work chant:

We Taching housewives work with a will
Striving to be model workers.
Taking part in collective labour,
We are building our homeland.

Why can't we move the mountains
Like the Foolish Old Man?
Guided by Mao Tsetung Thought
We advance and press on.
Difficulties, problems,
We defy them all.
With our red flag we march on,
No burden can weigh us down.
U.S. imperialists tremble before us,
The revisionists become helpless.
We'll help to build our country,
In the spirit of our mud houses.
Our revolutionary spirit will be handed down,
The Taching housewives are making revolution,
Holding up half the sky.
If everyone makes revolution
Communism will be achieved sooner.

SCENE SIX

A brand-new mud house. This is the office of the family management committee of the Pioneers Community Centre, a newly built worker-peasant village.

(The curtain rises. A voice is heard over the loudspeaker: "Hello! Hello! The meeting to celebrate the bumper harvest of the Pioneers Community Centre is about to start. Will those who are attending the meeting please take seats in the following order. The comrades from the nursery, the canteen and the sewing group please come up to the front. The tractor-driver trainees, please leave the seats on your left vacant for the comrades of the road-maintenance team. They are still busy working at the end of the village and will come to the meeting as soon as they have finished.")

(The women enter in twos and threes. Some go off again, others come in, all with something in their hands. They all appear happy, excited and a little nervous. The telephone rings. Yu-hung answers it.)

Yu-hung: Hello, this is the management committee of the Pioneers Community Centre. Hsin Yu-hung speaking... Ah, Old Lo, how did you reach headquarters so quickly?... You want the instructor? All right. (*To Teh-ying*) Old Lo wants to speak to you.

Teh-ying: Hello, it's me... So you're there already. When are you coming back? Hmm... No, I'm not worried. No need to be nervous... of course not, but I can't help feeling a bit jittery... I've never been to such a big meeting before! Pardon? Oh yes, everything's been done as you said. The comrades from the nursery, the canteen and the sewing group are sitting right in front of the platform. What's that? The citations?

Yu-hung (*cutting in softly*): Tell him I've nearly finished copying them out.

Teh-ying (*continues*): They're nearly finished. Please come back as soon as you can. What did you say? The leading cadres in the Petroleum Ministry and the provincial Party committee and our oilfield are all coming? Oh! And representatives from Yumen, Sinkiang and Szechuan as well. What? There are model workers coming, too? Goodness, we must try to learn from them. They want to see our housewives' militia company at target practice? And attend our harvest feast? But what shall we give them to eat? Nothing special? Then that's all right. We've got plenty of potatoes, pumpkins, turnips and cabbages. Old Wang? Yes, we are looking for him too. I haven't a clue where he is. No, I'm not worried. But please come back quickly. All right. See you. Bye!

(*The housewives working near by gradually gather round Teh-ying. As she puts down the receiver, the others go up to her.*)

All: So many people are coming. What shall we do?

Yu-hung: I certainly won't get up and speak in front of them all.

Teh-ying: Now don't be nervous. Old Lo asked us to keep calm. *(She cannot help taking a deep breath.)*

Yu-hung: Well, let's hurry and get everything ready.

Chang: Teh-ying, all the tractors belonging to our Housewives' Ploughing Team have been brought here.

Teh-ying: Then take them to the open ground at the east end. Follow the white markers and see that the red flags on the tractors are in line. Tell the commander of the militia company to get ready for target practice and to be very careful.

Chang: All right. *(She goes off.)*

Teh-ying: Tsai-ying, will you go to the broadcasting unit and tell them to put out a call for Wang asking him to come to the management committee at once?

(Tsai-ying goes off. Iron-Egg's Mother rushes in, bumping into Yu-hung who drops the pile of straw hats she is carrying. They both squat down to pick up the hats.)

Iron-Egg's Mother: I was looking for you, instructor.

Liu (corrects her): You mean director.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Oh dear, I'm so used to calling her instructor. I want to see you, instructor, I mean, director... um... director, instructor... The more hurry, the more muddled I get.

Teh-ying: Then take your time! What are you trying to say?

Iron-Egg's Mother: Well... now... what was it I wanted to say? Let me see... Oh yes. How many people will be eating here today? We'll serve dinner immediately after the meeting, and it'll look bad if we don't have the food ready on time.

Teh-ying: Well, I've got more work for you. The leaders of our oilfield have invited here top cadres from the Petroleum Ministry and the provincial Party committee and model workers from Yumen, Sinkiang and Szechuan. They're coming to visit our worker-peasant village, and then they'll join us for our harvest feast.

Iron-Egg's Mother: That's wonderful! But what shall we give them to eat?

Teh-ying: Our usual food. They'll eat what we eat. That means you've got to prepare food for six hundred people. Can you manage it?

Iron-Egg's Mother (thinks a moment, then answers firmly): That's no problem. Don't worry. I won't let you down.

All: Ah, you're a wonder! You're so clever and capable.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Everything we eat today will be our own produce except for the salt, of course. We grew the grain ourselves; the vegetables are from our garden; we reared the pigs; the bread is from our bakery; we made the noodles and bean curd; and we laid the eggs. *(All burst out laughing.)* No, no, I mean we raised the hens that laid the eggs.

Woman A: Iron-Egg's Mother has really changed a lot.

Iron-Egg's Mother: Could I stay the same after all the education the leaders gave me and the help you people gave me? I used to sulk all the time and bicker with people. Now I'm going the right way, I can't tell you how happy I am.

(While the others murmur their praises of her, Iron-Egg's Mother goes off cheerfully singing "I Am a Cook".)

(Voice from the loudspeaker: "Director Wang, Director Wang, please return to the management committee. You are wanted there. You are wanted there.")

Teh-ying: Oh dear, wherever has he gone? I wonder if the road at the entrance of the village has been repaired? Yu-hung, I'd better go and have a look. *(She turns round, takes a spade and goes away hurriedly.)*

(Voice from the loudspeaker: "Attention, all school pupils, please leave a few rows of seats at the front for the model housewives and their model teams. Now listen: Stand up. About turn. Ten steps forward." Sound of footsteps. "Halt. About turn. Sit down. Representatives from the sewing and mending factory and the asphalt sheet factory, please come and sit in the front rows. Sit at the front, please.")

(Chao and Li enter carrying a big crate of pumpkins, maize, potatoes and turnips. Tsai-ying and others follow them.)

Chao *(to Yu-hung)*: These are to be put on display. Please see if they are all right.

Li *(to Tsai-ying)*: Please inspect them.

Yu-hung: Chao, that's very kind of you. Every time you come back, you help us with work. Please have a rest now. Later you and Tsai-ying, both of you, will be going on to the platform.

Chao: Are you speaking about me or your own husband, Yu-hung? Won't you both be going on to the platform as well to accept your citations?

Li: Listen, Chao, people like us are fine at tackling the toughest jobs, but when it comes to standing on the platform in pairs, it's just too embarrassing. If I go up on the platform, people will say: That's the man who tried to stop his wife from going out to work.

Chang: But now that you've made such progress, who's going to say that?

Liu: You are a model worker now. That's a wonderful title.

(All murmur their agreement.)

Chao: If we'd all been like him in the past, wanting our wives to stay at home, we'd have turned producers into consumers. Instead, housework has been transformed into socialized community work. The men work, the women farm and together we'll build socialism, study and make progress. Isn't all this wonderful? Don't you agree, Tsai-ying?

Tsai-ying: Yes. Sometimes I wonder what kind of a person I was and why I had such backward ideas. Just thinking about it makes me feel ashamed and I want to laugh at the old me. Now I just don't think only of all of China but also of the whole world. You could say my outlook has broadened. Whatever the Party wants me to do I feel I can do it now.

Yu-hung: Yes. And we women will carry the revolution through to the end. We'll not be satisfied with building just a new oilfield, we'll build a new world as well.

Li: We're really proud to have wives like you to support.

Yu-hung: And we're proud to support husbands like you.

(All laugh.)

Liu: I say, you two men dependants, will you carry these to the display for us?

Chao: Men dependants! Do you hear that, Old Li? It's no cushy job being their dependants. *(To the women)* Look, this ear of maize is about a foot long and that potato there must weigh about three and a half catties. I reckon this pumpkin alone weighs about sixty-eight catties and that turnip is almost three feet long. Without such strong dependants like us, who would carry these whopping great vegetables you've grown?

Liu: You can have a good rest once you've delivered the crate.

Li: Rest when everybody is so busy?

Yu-hung: All right. I'll give you some more work. After you've finished, go and look for Director Wang.

(Chao and Li go off carrying the crate.)

(Singing is heard coming from a distance. Voice offstage: "Comrades attending the bumper harvest meeting of the Pioneers Community Centre, your attention please! The meeting is about to start. Everybody please take his seat.")

(Young Fen, Young Chen and Young Huang enter.)

Fen: Hello, comrade, is this the family management committee of the Pioneers Community Centre?

Tsai-ying: Yes. Who are you looking for?

Chen: Old Lo.

Tsai-ying: He'll be here soon. Where are you from?

Fen: We're students of the Petroleum Institute. Haven't we met somewhere before?

(The students whisper to each other.)

Fen: Isn't she the person who had the green curtains?

Tsai-ying: What are you talking about?

Huang: Didn't we arrive on the same train?

Tsai-ying: Of course! You sat with Old Lo and talked about heroes. . . .

Chen: At that time we didn't know Old Lo and that while we were talking about heroes there was one right in front of our eyes.

Yu-hung: Have a seat. Old Lo will be here soon. So what have you been doing?

Fen: We did some practical work with the drilling team led by Old Lo. And you?

Yu-hung: We did some hard physical work.

Liu (*introducing them to the students*): This is the political instructor of our team, Hsin Yu-hung. This is our team leader.

Students: Oh! . . .

Tsai-ying: This is our scientist. She's in charge of the agricultural research station of our Pioneers Community Centre.

Students: A scientist.

Liu: Do sit down.

Huang: Isn't your political instructor the "Iron Girl" who started making revolution with only five spades? She's known throughout China.

Tsai-ying: She's now the director of our village's management committee.

Chen: Wow! It's amazing the number of changes that have taken place here.

Yu-hung: Have you seen "Iron Man" Wang?

Chen: Of course! What a man he is! We've met many other heroic workers. Old Lo is one of them.

(Voice over the loudspeaker: "Attention, all comrades! The meeting will soon begin. Please don't walk about. Please take your seats.")
(The women look out of the window.)

Tsai-ying: They're coming! They're coming!

All: Who? Who's coming?

Tsai-ying: Lots of people. Looks like all the leading cadres.

Yu-hung: Old Lo and Teh-ying are with them. Yes, here they come.

Liu: They've gone to see the display. What? Old Lo and Teh-ying are coming here. . . .

(Lo and Teh-ying enter, talking.)

Lo: . . . What a fine director you are! It's almost time for the meeting, and you are still fiddling about building the road.

Fen: Old Lo.

Lo: Why, you here too! *(To Tsai-ying and Yu-hung)* Do you know them?

Yu-hung: Yes, I remember them.

Lo *(to the students)*: Do you remember how eager you were to meet the "Iron Girl", who started making revolution with only five spades? Well, here she is. *(To Teh-ying)* These are some college students who came here in the spring. We were on the same train. They worked in our drilling team and did very well. They're going back to college soon, so I asked them to come here and see how the women of Taching make revolution. *(To the students)* Have you changed your mind about heroes? The ones you've met aren't supermen who have three heads and six arms, are they?

Chen: No. They're just ordinary people, except that they're not afraid of hardship or death. They are willing to sacrifice everything for the revolution.

Fen: In the past I thought that heroes were beyond our reach. But this past year we've been living and working with them. All of them are people who make a serious study of Mao Tse-tung Thought, who dare to think, to act and use their initiative. Yet they are also very ordinary and easy to get along with. Take Comrade Kuo Teh-ying for instance, she's a heroic worker.

Lo: Well, she's not the only one among the housewives. Many of the women you see working in the fields, building houses along the highway, providing various services etc. are heroines. Just doing ordinary jobs, they are nevertheless like soldiers fighting against imperialism and revisionism, giving everything to the revolution. And many of them are really outstanding exam-

ples for us to learn from. Take her. She's now a director of the management committee, she still does farm work with the others and is allotted work-points on that basis just like everyone else.

Teh-ying: All cadres among us housewives are like this.

Lo: Tell me, what do you think we should call this policy of combining industry and agriculture, city and countryside that we are practising? You're college students, so you tell us.

(The students look at each other.)

Lo *(to the housewives)*: Then you tell us.

Yu-hung: It seems to me we are like the morning sun rising in the east.

Lo: Very good! Do you know what the Taching housewives are? They are pioneers in getting rid of the "three big differences",* for they are showing us how everyone takes part in physical labour, other work, study and revolution. *(There is singing in the distance.)* Listen, that's the children singing. Every one of us is a worker and we've got revolutionary families. Our children will be workers and revolutionaries too. The imperialists and revisionists hope to see the peaceful emergence of capitalism in China. But that'll never be the case!

(Voice over the loudspeaker: "Attention, all comrades! Quiet please. The meeting is about to begin.")

Lo: It's time for the meeting. Where is Old Wang?

Teh-ying *(asking Yu-hung)*: Did Wang come?

Yu-hung: The announcer called for him several times, but he didn't show up. *(At that moment, Wang enters hurriedly. Chao and Li are with him.)* Well, speak of the devil! Where on earth have you been? We're busy celebrating the bumper harvest and also sending off you men back to the rigs. And you've got to make a speech at the meeting.

*The differences between town and country, between worker and peasant and between mental and manual work.

Chao and Li: If we hadn't dragged him here, he'd still have been where he was.

All: And where was that?

Wang: I was busy being a midwife.

All: What? You a midwife?

Wang: Yes, I went to help our Whitey farrow. You know what? She had fourteen of them.

All: Fourteen?

Chao: Yes, fourteen fine piglets.

(All laugh.)

Tsai-ying: Why didn't you tell us earlier?

Wang: There wasn't time. Everyone else had gone to the meeting. The pig-breeder was worried stiff, so I had to help him. Am I very late?

Yu-hung: Come on, sisters, we're happy to send Director Wang back to the drilling ground. Here's a red ribbon and rosette for you!

(The women gather around and put a big rosette on Wang.)

Yu-hung: Wang, you've helped us a lot with the building of our worker-peasant village.

Wang: Not at all. We owe it to the leadership of the Party and everyone's hard work.

Teh-ying: The village wasn't easy to build. Whenever we had a problem we studied Chairman Mao's article *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*. We studied it again and again. With Old Lo, we studied it seven times before we succeeded.

Lo: Yes. Like the Foolish Old Man we kept on ramming the earth so hard that it became as hard as rock. You could say our sweat is mixed with the earth of every single house. That's why the houses are so solid and fine.

Yu-hung: You know, Wang, we really hate to see you go.

Wang: I don't want to go either.

Lo: Well, didn't I tell you, Wang, that the day the housewives



could manage things by themselves, they wouldn't need us anymore?

(All laugh.)

Wang *(to Teh-ying and the others)*: I tell you truthfully, I really take my hat off to you now. I must say you women aren't a burden to us. You're a great force in building socialism. I'll take on anyone who looks down upon you women. You certainly do hold up half the sky now, and though I'm leaving I'm not in the least worried about you. You just carry on working hard and perhaps another day we'll challenge each other to a friendly contest.

All: Yes, let's do that.

Teh-ying: Right! We must all continue to work hard.

(Voice over the loudspeaker: "Will the representatives of the Pioneers Community Centre please come on to the platform. The meeting is about to begin.")

(Someone cries out suddenly: "The rosettes!" The students eagerly put rosettes on Teh-ying, Tsai-ying, Yu-hung and their husbands.)
(The inner curtain falls.)

Teh-ying: Oh, I feel so nervous, Old Lo!

Lo: Now just calm down because you'll be the first speaker at today's meeting.

Teh-ying: What shall I say?

Lo: Say what you want.

Teh-ying: Well, I think that just as the day is dark without the sun, we women making revolution would lose our way without Mao Tsetung Thought. We must always study Chairman Mao's works, listen to the Party's instructions and continue the revolution with one heart and one mind. We still hope to achieve much more than we have. We want to make a brand-new world of communism. . . .

Lo: Say it just like that. Let's go to the meeting now.

(Voice over the loudspeaker: "The meeting to celebrate the bumper harvest of the Pioneers Community Centre is beginning now." The theme song is heard.)

(All go to attend the meeting.)

(The inner curtain rises. In the background is the Pioneers Community Centre with grain fields ready for harvest. A red sun rises from the east, radiant and splendid. The housewives headed by Teh-ying enter wearing big red rosettes, holding red banners and singing the theme song. The curtain falls slowly in the midst of singing. The theme song resounds through the hall.)

(Final curtain)

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

POEMS

Chairman Mao Brings Spring Sunshine to Our Hearts

— *A Yi folk-song*

Azaleas in bloom
Bring spring sunshine to our hills.
Cuckoos in song
Bring spring sunshine to our ears.
Chairman Mao's great works
Bring spring sunshine to our hearts.

Stars in the sky
Will sparkle for ever.
The Golden Sand River*
Will flow on for ever.
Chairman Mao's great deeds
Will live in our hearts for ever.

*The upper reaches of the Yangtse which flow into Szechuan and Yunnan Provinces.

The Liberated Serfs Love Chairman Hua

— *A Tibetan folk-song*

In our mountain land are many snowy peaks;
Crown Prince Peak is the most magnificent,
Carved as if from purest crystal.
In our mountain land when the sun shines brightly,
All the other peaks also sparkle splendidly
Like Crown Prince Peak.

On our grassland are many lovely flowers;
Banjinmito is the most exquisite,
Strewn like golden, silver dust.
On our grassland when the spring breeze blows,
All the other flowers also blossom brilliantly
Like Banjinmito.

Mao Tsetung Thought is like the golden sun,
Chairman Hua's call like the warm spring breeze.
We liberated serfs are staunch revolutionaries.
Our wise leader is Chairman Hua.
Like Chairman Mao, he cares for our welfare;
Like Chairman Mao, we shall love Chairman Hua.



Wang Yao-tung

The Old Company Commander and the New Battalion Commander

Ripples on the water's surface
Urge each other forward.
Mountain eagles
Are tried by storms.
The vice-company commander is promoted
Head of the whole battalion;
While his former company commander
Sees him off on his way.

“To make a sword sharp
Add steel to the blade.
Southward flying swans

Require wise leadership.
So press forward,
Gallop into battle.
The road is wide.
Be bold!"

"Let me ask you this:
Can a carrying-pole of young bamboo
Bear heavy loads?
Can a young eagle's wings
Brave fierce storms?
Rather I remain here, gaining more experience
And learning from your leadership."

"But by bearing heavy burdens,
Shoulders grow like iron.
By braving many storms,
Young eagles grow courageous.
Encountering class struggles
Will heighten your awareness.

As vice-company commander
You have shown that you are capable.
So press onward.
A great ocean lies ahead,
Where the dragon roams at will;
High mountains lie ahead,
Where the tiger scales the heights. . . ."

Ripples on the water's surface
Urge each other forward.

Mountain eagles
Are tried by storms.
The vice-company commander is promoted
Head of the whole battalion;
While his former company commander
Sees him off on his way.



The Scattered Beans

One day I went to see a friend of mine, a primary school teacher in a small town close to a railway.

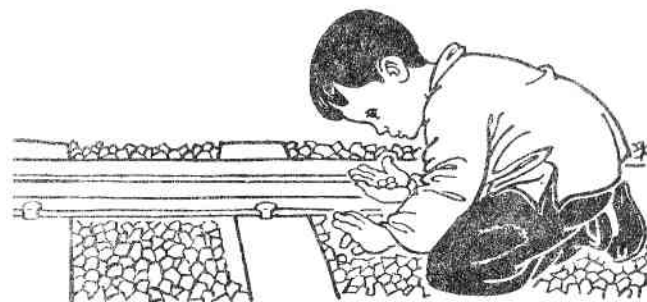
Walking beside a line of donkey carts laden with sand, I felt rather uneasy. As the carts slowly passed me, the donkeys breathed noisily right behind me and almost bumped into my back. I could not bear it and decided to take a path on the other side of the track. As I was crossing the track, a train came into view, puffing and chugging along. At that moment I caught sight of a boy some seven metres away on the track, rummaging among the stones. He was so engrossed in this that he did not hear the train approaching.

"Get off the line!" I shouted, rushing towards him. The cart drivers yelled too.

The boy lifted his head and glanced at the train nonchalantly. Just as he stepped clear of the rails, the train hurtled past, and it seemed as if he had been thrown to the ground by the train.

Hung Hsia was a school graduate who went to settle down in the countryside after middle school.

Hung Hsia



People gathered round the boy, loudly scolding him. He was about eleven or twelve years old, wearing a newish blue jacket which was unbuttoned. His eyes shone under a broad forehead and his brows were thin and arched like a girl's. Putting both his hands into his pockets, he muttered, "But I'm all right, aren't I?"

He had hardly finished speaking when he was slapped on the face. "Why on earth did you come here?" a middle-aged woman bawled furiously. "Do you want to die, eh?" She thrust her hand into his pocket, took out a handful of beans and threw them on to the track. The boy, flushed crimson with indignation, shouted, "What right have you got to throw away my beans?"

"What right?" the woman said sternly. "I'm your mother!"

He fixed his black eyes on his mother for a moment and then turned on his heel, going in the direction of a village near the Sandy River, while his mother returned to her cart and shouted at the donkeys, "Giddyap!"

As people went away, I picked up a bean. I had never seen such a lovely bean. It was round like a pea and as fat as a peanut, yet it looked a bit darker than peas and more tender than soya beans. Where had the boy got it? Who had left those beans lying on the track in the first place?

Time passed. Ten years flashed by.

In late October this year I found myself again in the same area at a commune, in order to check some statistics for a county Youth League conference. The secretary of the commune's Youth League hap-

pened to be busy, so she suggested that I see a comrade called Chang Suo-chu. She said Chang was a teacher, but that he was also involved in the production brigade. When she pointed to the village where Chang lived, something jogged in my memory. I recalled that this was the same village the boy had gone to ten years earlier!

A woman cadre from the poor and lower-middle peasants' association came to meet me. Immediately I recognized her as the furious mother of all those years ago. Of course she did not remember me.

I gave the secretary's note to her and said, "I've come to see Chang Suo-chu to check up on some statistics. Is he here?"

"He's my son and he's a teacher," the woman replied. "But actually he's got involved in the Youth League, the science group and so on. He's busy all day long and seldom at home." Her satisfaction with her son was apparent, as if all her son's achievements were hers.

She had not changed much except for a few lines at the corners of her eyes and forehead. In spite of her ageing appearance, she looked healthier than the first time I saw her. The most striking resemblance between her and her son was their eyebrows, thin and arched. I smiled, and then she did, thinking that I was laughing at what she had just said. So she changed the subject saying, "Excuse me for rattling on like this. I'll brew you some tea while you taste one of our delicacies." She took out a plate from a dresser.

"Round beans!" I exclaimed. Though cooked, it was easy to recognize the round, plump beans.

"Yes, that's right," my hostess answered with surprise. "People here all call them by that name. But you. . ."

Then I told her what I had witnessed ten years before.

She looked ashamed, and her proud expression altered. "I'm so sorry to have upset you by mentioning it." I apologized, feeling rather ill at ease myself.

"Oh, no. . . ." She shook her head.

"Children are ignorant and need guidance," I said. "Take your son for example, he's a model worker now."

"But I really shouldn't have treated him in that way," she smiled.

This didn't make sense to me, as I felt it was natural in such a situation for a mother to scold her child. So why was her attitude just the

opposite? Then she explained to me what had happened after the incident.

Apart from her boy, the woman also had a little girl. She adored both her children. At that time, she felt unhappy if she did not see them even for a single day. The brigade leader had criticized her for being so attached to her children. He asked, "What if your children join the navy like their father and go away from you when they grow up?" She answered with a smile, "I'll follow them."

What had happened that day had terrified her. Since her husband was away from home, she had the sole responsibility for looking after the children. If anything should happen to them, how could she face her husband? It took a few days before she finally calmed down, but she noticed that there was something wrong with her son. Whenever he saw her, his face darkened. His mother finally asked in desperation, "Why do you always have such a long face?"

"So you want me to grin whenever I see you? O.K." The twelve-year-old boy forced the shadow of a smile. His mother was filled with sorrow.

Everyday she rose at dawn to drive her donkey cart to carry sand. There was so much of this in the Sandy River that there seemed no end to the work. When the water receded the amount of sand could almost be reduced to nothing through much hard work and effort. Then the river would fill up again, bringing more layers of sand. Each production brigade in the area used seven or eight donkey carts for transporting the sand. The country needed it and it brought in a good income for the production brigade. One morning she was up very early. After she had transported three cubic metres of sand, she drove her cart to a street to buy a packet of green peas. Once home, she roasted them and put them on a plate.

"Share them with your little sister when they're cool," she told her son. Three days later, her daughter told her that her brother had not eaten any of the food.

"Your beans scattered by the railway are more delicious, I suppose?" she sarcastically asked her son.

"They weren't for eating," the son retorted. "We picked them for planting."

This reminded her of the children's experimental plot. "Why didn't you tell me then? I could've bought you some in the street. You didn't need to risk your neck."

"But those beans were from Tachai, the model brigade!"

She lost her temper again and said loudly, "I don't care where they were from. You are not to mess around by the track!"

The boy's eyes widened in anger.

From then on, his mother felt that there was a gap growing between them.

One night the child picked up his pillow, saying to his mother, "I'll sleep at the other end of the bed."

"Why?"

"I've grown up. I can't always sleep at the same end as you."

This was quite natural, but his mother regarded it as something of an ultimatum: "I'm grown-up, and I don't need you any more!"

While working in the fields, a woman told her, "You know, there was a film show last night. On the way there my daughter, whom I was carrying on my back, dropped her shoe. It was so dark. Thanks to your Suo-chu and others we finally found it." Another woman said, "Sister, don't you see how clean the river bed is today? Your Suo-chu cleared the bottom at noon, raking up all the rubbish, which slowly floated off downstream."

Once she would have enjoyed such praise, but now it seemed as if the women knew what was on her mind and were trying to console her.

She wrote to her husband who was with the East Sea Fleet, telling him all about it. In his long reply, he wrote: "Our son belongs to his country. Our society has had a great influence on him. He won't necessarily grow up and live just the way you want him to. . . ."

She only read the letter once. "It is just talk," she said to herself. Her son of course belonged to her.

That evening, having unloaded her last cart of sand, she went to the spot on the railway track where her son had almost had an acci-

dent. Looking around, she bent down to search for the beans. But she found none.

School was over. Her son came home with a basket of weeds for the donkeys.

Seeing a new whistle around his neck, she asked, "Where did you get the money to buy that?"

The boy glanced at her, slowly emptying the weeds into the trough and then replied, "From the money you gave me for exercise books."

"So you didn't buy them then?" she asked angrily.

Following her son into the house she continued, "Why didn't you buy the exercise books?"

He picked up his satchel from the table and fished out a pad. "I've got this paper to write on. I made it myself. Anyway I can do arithmetic just as well on this."

Something suddenly occurred to her. "Have you been to the market again?"

"No. I asked someone else to buy the whistle for me," he replied quietly. "But I can go there if I want to." Then carrying his satchel he went out to do his homework with his class-mates.

Sitting at the table with one hand on her head, his mother sighed.

There was a sound of footsteps and the production brigade leader, an old kind-hearted man, entered. He smiled and asked, "Well, a penny for your thoughts."

"Oh, nothing," she tried to hide her feelings. "Just a bit tired, that's all."

"Then come with me," the old man said cheerfully.

They walked out of the courtyard, skirted a pond, passed under a row of willows and crossed a ditch. Before a slope, the old man stopped. She knew the place well. It had lain fallow for some time before the brigade had grown some sesame on it. Now the top soil was thin and sandy, which when the rain came would be easily washed away.

Before the Spring Festival the brigade leader and some villagers had planted some pine saplings, which now bore small, pinkish shoots.

She looked up at the old man, wondering what it was that he wanted to show her.

The old man squatted, holding up a handful of soft soil. "You see this," he said. "This rich soil was carried here by Suo-chu and others."

She could only smile.

The old brigade leader stood up and then opened his hand. Her feelings overwhelmed her. There lying on his palm was a round, fat bean with a small, thriving sprout.

She had a careful look at the slope covered with the new soil and envisioned hundreds and hundreds of yellow bean sprouts mocking her.

"As parents," the old man said with emotion, "we should take great pains raising our children. First we should try to know what's going on in their minds, and support and encourage their correct ideas and activities. As they grow up, they need guidance and help so that they can make progress. But you should know all this and I shouldn't have to mention it."

She carefully took the bean from him and examined it closely, exclaiming, "Oh, look how it has sprouted!"

That night she lay on her bed, unable to sleep. She pictured again all these bean sprouts dancing before her eyes. She turned on the light and saw that her son was awake too.

"Suo-chu."

"Yes," the child answered quickly.

"Your beans are sprouting well." Her tone was warm and tender.

No reply. Her son, after hearing her words, held his breath. Then, the quilt moved and before she had realized what was happening her son had crawled up to her, his face flushed with pleasure.

"Tell me," she said after tucking up the quilt, "what kind of beans are they?"

"Beans from Tachai."

"How do you know?"

The boy sat up, grinning broadly, and began to explain.

"I'll tell you everything, mum. I was going to buy the exercise books that morning. Just as I neared the railway track, I saw a train slowly approaching. I waited anxiously beside the track, wondering why it didn't go a bit faster. Then I remembered once a man at

the station saying that trains slowed down at places sometimes. Just then, the wagons jerked and some beans dropped on to the track in front of me. I looked up and saw lots of sacks with 'Tachai' written on them. After the train had passed, I picked up a bean. That lovely, round bean must have travelled a great distance, I thought."

Looking at him, his mother could not help laughing at such a description.

"When did you go to pick them all up?"

He paused and replied, "After supper that same day. . . ."

She interrupted with surprise, "What? You went back there after dark?"

"Yes. In order to avoid any risks," he continued as if speaking at a meeting, "five of us took a hurricane lamp and left the village quietly. At night it's easy to see the train's headlights and so when a train came, I would blow my whistle. I bought one, don't you remember? At the whistle, we would stand by the side of the track. I told everyone to squat down as the train flashed past, so that the rush of air wouldn't knock us over. Then we would start searching again. It took us ages. You'd scattered them all over the place, so it wasn't easy to find them."

Hearing this, she saw those beans growing larger and larger. Young as he was, her son was a very determined young man. His convictions had given him strength. The spirit of the advanced Tachai Production Brigade had borne fruit even among children.

She patted his head and asked lovingly, "Were you very angry when I threw away your beans?"

"Yes," he answered truthfully. "And if you carry on treating me like that, I'll be cross with you all my life. No matter how nice you try to be later. You can't frighten me with your words and shouting."

She was silent. She knew that her son had a mind of his own.

Seeing her quietness, her son put his arms round his mother's neck, saying, "But you're not really like that. You like our round beans, don't you?"

Later he fell asleep, huddled close to her, with a small smile of satisfaction. She saw that her son was dreaming. It was then that she began to realize that to love your child, you must first respect his

good ideas. Where had he learned these? From the production brigade leader? The model peasants? The youth task force? The science group? The teachers in the school? The radio broadcasts? Or his father? All had played their part. Her son belonged to his country, to its future.

Having told me this, her face brightened with happiness, her eyes sparkled. She looked as if she had made a great discovery, telling people that she was a mother who brought up her children as our society wished.

“But where is your Suo-chu now?” I asked.

“Oh, my goodness!” She woke from her deep thoughts and jumped up. “I’ve forgotten all about your mission. I’m so sorry. He’s led some children to harvest the round beans. Several communes are growing these beans now. It’s a first-class source of vegetable oil which our country badly needs. Comrade, you might not recognize Suo-chu after ten years. He’s now a man!”

At that moment, the boy with the arched eyebrows under a broad forehead reappeared in my mind.

Illustrated by Chen Yung-chen



Chairman Mao Travels over the Land (traditional Chinese painting, 1960)

by Li Chi



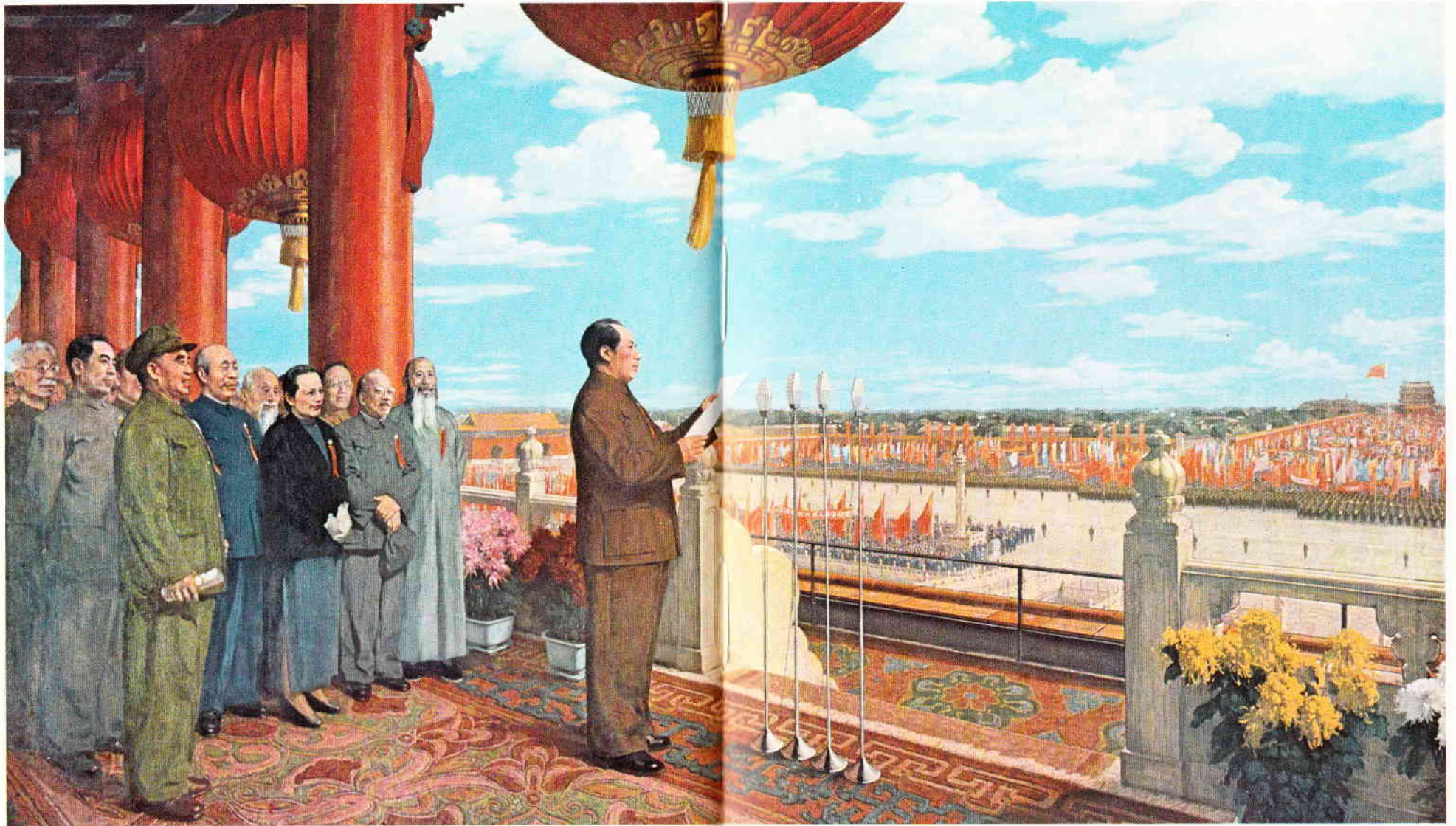
Bridge (woodcut, 1949)

by Ku Yuan



To a New Worksite (oil painting, 1977)

by Yela (Tahur nationality)



The Founding of the People's Republic of China (oil painting, 1952)

by Tung Hsi-wen



Treasuring Each Grain (traditional Chinese painting, 1954)
by Fang Tseng-hsien



Children of Liberated Serfs (traditional Chinese painting, 1962)
by Yu Yueh-chuan

Ku Kung

Devoted Hearts Wing Their Way to Peking

Is it true that Chairman Mao's heart has stopped beating? No! The heart of our great leader and teacher is still beating in the Greater Hsingan Mountains of northeast China, on both sides of the Tianshan Mountains, on Qomolangma Feng, on either side of the Strait of Taiwan, in every Chinese city, village and home and in the hearts of millions upon millions. . . .

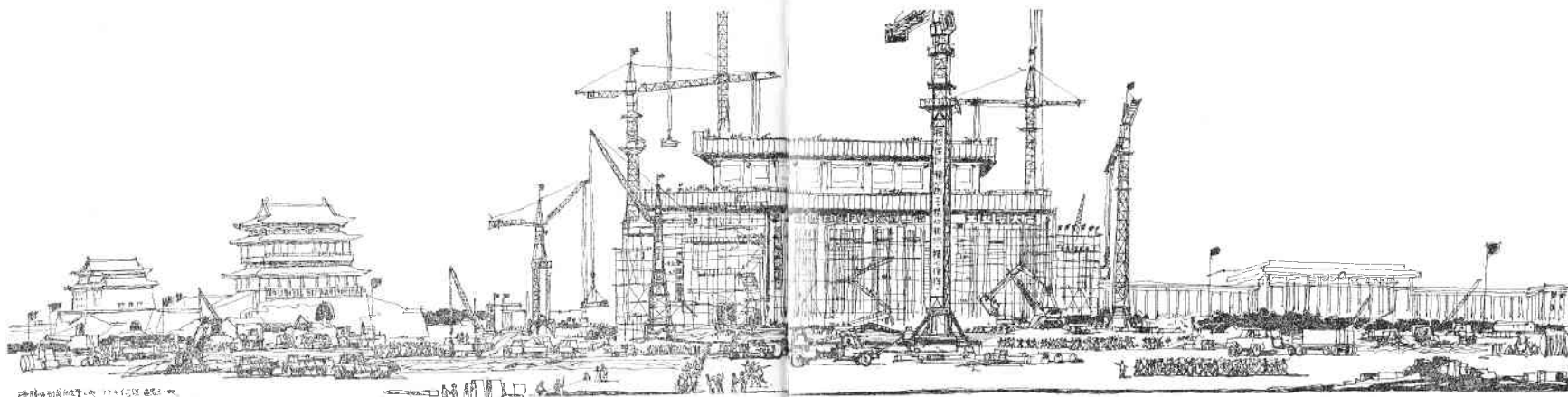
From all corners of the country countless hearts have winged their way to the worksite of Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall. They bring sunflower seeds from his birthplace Shaoshan in Hunan, jade from Sinkiang, jasmine and camellias from Yunnan, golden sand from the East Sea coast, water from the Yenho River which flows past Yen-an. . . . The deep love and respect which these gifts symbolize make them very precious. Let me try to convey a little of what it was like on the worksite of the Memorial Hall in Peking.

The huge cranes on the site seemed to be towing the white clouds round and round, and the workers on the scaffolding at night to be scaling the sky to reach for the moon and stars. And how the rest



Arduous Years (sculpture, 1957)

by **Pan Ho**



of the country envied and admired this army of labourers — the building workers and PLA engineer corps helped out by innumerable volunteers who came every day to offer their services.

Many of those working here had endured the hardships of the Long March, been wounded in the War of Resistance Against Japan, fought in the War of Liberation or crossed the Yalu River to resist the U.S. imperialists and aid Korea. These were the heroes hated and feared by the “gang of four”, who denounced them as capitalist-roaders or bourgeois democrats in their frantic attempt to suppress them. But the wheels of history move on inexorably. The ones who were crushed were the “gang of four” themselves. The brave fighters who followed Chairman Mao so faithfully for many years are still advancing today on battlefields and worksites all over the country. On the worksite of the Memorial Hall they shovelled earth and sweated. . . .

Here too came heads of different ministries, PLA generals, model workers, actors and singers from all parts of China, to say nothing of the volunteers, men and women, old and young, some of whom came from thousands of *li* away.

One retired worker, as soon as he heard that work on the Memorial Hall was to start, shouldered his kit weighing over thirty catties and

with his little grandson made the long journey to Peking from his home by the Lantsang River in south China. At the same time a veteran carpenter trudged over the ice and snow by the Sunghua River to make his way from the northeast to the capital. The worksite headquarters allowed them to work there for three days only. But in that brief period these two old men from opposite ends of the country became fast friends. When their time was up they lingered for hours in Tien An Men Square and had themselves photographed together there before reluctantly parting.

A PLA technician just discharged from hospital came to beg for some work. The reception group, unable to dissuade him, finally made an exception in his case and allowed him ten minutes of labour.

His short stint done he exulted, “These ten minutes were the happiest in my whole life!” And with that he strode back to his fighting post.

Thousands of soldiers, workers and other civilians like these came every day of their own accord to the worksite. In front of the Monument to the People’s Heroes or the picture of Chairman Mao, they solemnly vowed to work with might and main to speed up the project. When it was time to leave, some took away a little earth in their handkerchiefs or gloves as a memento. Some dropped

envelopes or wallets containing banknotes, to contribute their bit to the project.

There is no telling how many people in China went to the post-offices in their communes or towns to send their savings to the worksite. All their postal orders were addressed: Worksite of the Memorial Hall for Chairman Mao, Tien An Men Square, Peking. This confronted the postal workers with a dilemma, as the Central Committee had stipulated that the cost of the project should be defrayed by the government and no individual donations could be accepted. The people, however, out of warm love for Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party insisted on making contributions.

A cardboard-box factory in Kirin Province in which 104 Mongolian and Han women worked remitted to Peking their savings — ten thousand yuan. In their letter to the worksite they said, "Like swallows collecting leaves and mud bit by bit to build a nest, we've saved a little money. We're presenting it all to our beloved Chairman Mao. . . ."

In the city of Chengchou there was a little girl who as soon as she heard about the Memorial Hall wrote a letter to the worksite enclosing ten *fen* her father had given her. She wrote: "Please buy a few screws with this and screw them into a beam or pillar of the Memorial Hall. This is a Little Red Soldier's dearest wish."

A newly-married young couple in a PLA hospital remitted to the worksite a hundred yuan they had saved by cutting down on their wedding expenses. In their letter they wrote, "Ten years ago, as Red Guards, we were inspected by Chairman Mao in front of Tien An Men. Today we feel as if we were still being inspected by him."

An old couple living in Yingkou in Liaoning posted to the worksite the wedding rings their parents had given them many years ago. They hoped the gold could be melted and used on the gilded inscription on the Memorial Hall, to convey to future generations their everlasting gratitude to Chairman Mao.

The model Lei Feng Squad of a PLA transport company saved a hundred yuan. Then like their late squad leader Lei Feng who had served the people heart and soul all his life, they went to the post-office to remit the money. When it was explained to them that the

authorities had ruled out private donations, they made up a fictitious name, pretending this was a worker at the worksite, and sent the postal order to him. In this way the money reached its destination.

Donations refused over and over again still reached the worksite by some means or other. They kept the reception group busy. Money kept pouring in and had to be refunded. But most of the donors were anonymous. How to track them down? In the case of postal-orders they sent them back to the post-offices which had issued them and enlisted the help of the heads of local units to identify the handwriting on them.

A commune member wanted to send his family's fattened pig and nanny-goat to the worksite. A peasant who lived in a gorge in the Greater Hsingan Mountains tried to send two thousand catties of potatoes from his private plot. And some students of Hsuehchang Middle School in Honan scraped silver nitrate from broken flasks while working in a thermos-flask factory, then melted it to make a star shaped badge embossed with a hammer and sickle which they posted to the worksite.

The devotion of the whole people to Chairman Mao found expression in simple yet significant tokens — a drop of water, a grain of sand, a tea-leaf or a flower. For instance, steel workers of Sinkiang sent snow-lotus seeds gathered in the Tianshan Mountains. Young bare-foot doctors living on Mount Liupan presented saplings they had dug up from the place where the Red Army passed on the Long March. Teachers and students of Peking Medical College, after touring the countryside round Yen-an, brought back to Peking a flask of water from the Yenho River and stones from Pagoda Mountain.

The people of Tangshan, epicentre of last year's earthquake, presented a handful of soil to indicate that even if the sky fell or the earth split asunder they would fight on there to build socialism. And the miners of the Kailuan Colliery gave a catty of tea from Lungling County in Yunnan which had suffered too from a devastating earthquake and sent these tea-leaves to the Tangshan miners. They signified that our people are not to be daunted by natural calamities but will battle with heaven and earth.

On the worksite stand two pots of red camellia. The pots hollowed out of marble are engraved with the words: Chairman Mao Will Live in Our Hearts For Ever. They were brought to Peking in bamboo crates by members of the cultural and educational bureau in Yunnan. The journey took many days and nights, on foot, then by bus and train. . . . And whenever other passengers learned that these plants were destined for the Memorial Hall they at once made room to have the pots put in a safe place. Now their leaves have grown greener and more luxuriant, their flowers lovelier and sweeter.

The children of a primary school in Shaoshan where Chairman Mao had once had a picture taken with some of the students collected sunflower seeds redolent of warm sunlight and posted these to Peking.

The Little Red Soldiers of Red Crag Village in Szechuan plucked pine-cones from the trees just outside the window by which our Premier Chou had worked. They sent these to the worksite.

Our fighters defending the south coast strain their eyes through the mist which shrouds the surging waves. Their hearts are in a tumult as in their ears rings Chairman Mao's stirring call: We must liberate Taiwan! Members of a shore patrol took some water from the Strait of Taiwan and stabbing their fingers with a knife let their blood drip into the transparent salt water, then brought it to the worksite. In this way they pledged their determination to liberate Taiwan and give their lives to defend every inch of Chinese territory.

The people of Taiwan, under the cruel rule of the reactionary Kuomintang regime, are gazing towards the mainland bathed in sunshine. Their hearts beat in unison with those of the fighters and people of the motherland. They long for wings to carry them over the strait to rejoin their compatriots. To convey their love for Chairman Mao they secretly shipped scores of cherry-trees out of Taiwan and sent them by devious routes to the mainland and the worksite in Peking.

After Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall is completed, how I would like to accompany these friends and comrades through its lawns and flower-beds, up the granite steps and past the marble columns to pay

our solemn respects in the great hall. . . . Come, Tangshan miners, peasants of the Greater Hsing Mountains, Shaoshan school-children, Lei Feng's comrades-in-arms and Taiwanese compatriots. . . . Together let us pay homage to Chairman Mao, and with his instructions in mind work together to build a brighter, richer and more dynamic new world!

Illustrated by Ho Chen-chiang



Yang Tung-mei

In Praise of the Taching Spirit

— Introducing the drama "A New Dawn"

A New Dawn is a drama depicting China's Taching Oilfield. It vividly portrays the militant life of the Taching workers and their families while building a new type of oilfield, combining industry with agriculture and town with country. It pays tribute to the Taching Oilfield, which became the red banner in industry raised high by our great leader and teacher Chairman Mao, and to the Taching people's revolutionary spirit.

In the early '60s, to open up the Taching Oilfield, more and more workers and their families came here from all parts of the country. Following Chairman Mao's instruction to procure "**ample food and clothing through self-reliance**", the Taching Party committee called on the wives of all staff members and workers to turn the vast, barren plain into rich farmland and to take up side-occupations too. In response to the Party's call, Hsueh Kuei-fang, a worker's wife then nearly fifty, led four other women with only five spades to start the agricultural work in the wilderness. With them taking the lead, many

other wives later joined them. Having no draught animals they pulled the ploughs themselves. In this way they reclaimed wasteland, grew grain and vegetables, raised pigs and built houses. Step by step they built up a flourishing settlement — the Pioneers Community Centre. When Premier Chou En-lai inspected Taching, he approved of what they had done. Summing up the experience already gained there he formulated the principles of "combining industry with agriculture, integrating town and countryside, facilitating production and making daily life better" to develop the petroleum industry. In the summer of 1964, still more housewives left their homes to join in this revolutionary work.

The six-scene drama *A New Dawn* is set against this background. Centring on three married couples, it unfolds the struggle between their different outlooks. The political instructor, Kuo Teh-ying, who earnestly studies and grasps Mao Tsetung Thought, is the leader of the workers' wives. Working heart and soul to build up the new oilfield, she strives to organize the housewives to play their full part. But Director Wang, her husband and director of the family management committee, looks down on women, regarding them as "burdens". He does not believe that women can make any great contribution to building up the oilfield. Meanwhile Hsin Yu-hung, a driller's wife, arrives from the countryside eager to take part in the oilfield construction and live up to the expectations of the poor and lower-middle peasants. Her husband Li, however, says that his income is more than enough to support her and he will not hear of her working outside the home. Lin Tsai-ying, from a city in the south, is a different type of housewife. Before coming to Taching she imagined it as a big city with foreign-style mansions. As to construction work, her attitude is: "Who cares about that? After all it's an oilfield. . . . What can we housewives do? We'll just be dependents, idly sitting at home." Her husband, Chao, also a driller, refuses, however, to let her lead an idle life. He insists that she should join in the construction of the oilfield.

Confronted with these contradictions, Teh-ying firmly believes that "just as the day is dark without the sun, we women making revolution would lose our way without Mao Tsetung Thought". Not

only does she help the other women with their household chores, but she also does her best to straighten out their thinking. Afraid of hardship and fatigue Tsai-ying and Iron-Egg's Mother are reluctant to work outside. Teh-ying studies Chairman Mao's works with them, contrasts their sufferings in the old society with their present good fortune, and helps them to see the significance of the oilfield construction. She encourages them to overcome their traditional dependence on their husbands and finally makes activists of both. At the same time she educates her husband by proving to him that the housewives' production team can win the red banner for farm work and can build tamped earth houses as well. As a result, he is convinced that far from being "burdens" women are a mighty force in socialist construction. Also with her help, Yu-hung is trained to be the political instructor of the housewives' production team. Steeled by the struggles of little more than a year, these women, led by Teh-ying, become an advanced contingent undaunted by any hardships.

The drama has been commended for its realism and artistic impact. The dialogue is lively, the sequence of events stirring and convincing. This is partly because all the actors and actresses are from the Taching production front themselves. Among them are drillers, oil extracting and refining workers, as well as housewives who have engaged in farm work or in different services. All have weathered storms in the construction of the oilfield. For instance, Mou Yung-chang who plays the part of Director Wang for many years led Taching housewives to reclaim wasteland, and he himself went through the mental struggles experienced by Wang. Fan Kuei-lin, now a primary school teacher in the oilfield, plays the leading role of Kuo Teh-ying whose experience she is familiar with. Once she said: "Every time I go on the stage, I feel as if I am back in the days when I pulled a plough and built mud houses with the other housewives." Huang Yu-pu, who takes the part of the driller Li, has been a drilling worker for over two decades. He used to be so shy that he blushed if a woman so much as looked at him. In 1965 when "Iron Man" Wang Chin-hsi asked him to act in this play, he protested, "Why, don't you know me, my old team leader? Sweating and straining to pull on the brake — that's nothing. But acting is quite beyond me."

"Iron Man" Wang encouraged him: "A driller's the best person to put across the true feelings of a driller. Sure, you can learn to act!" Leaving the derrick to take the stage meant a real revolution in Huang's life. For more than ten years he has worked hard to improve his acting, regarding this as a political task, and he now gives an excellent performance as a driller. Because these actors and actresses themselves were among the heroes who built up Taching, their acting, profoundly lifelike and spirited, has a considerable artistic impact.

The drama was written and directed by the well-known director Sun Wei-shih, formerly deputy head of China's Youth Art Theatre as well as of the Central Experimental Drama Theatre. In the spring of 1964, to implement the spirit of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* and act upon Premier Chou's directive, she went to Taching to live and work with the women there, and she was deeply inspired by their heroic exploits. When she finished her script in the winter of 1965, she visited every part of the oilfield to read it to the workers and staff and their wives, then revised it according to their comments and suggestions. The Taching Party committee paid great attention to the script and discussed it several times. "Iron Man" Wang Chin-hsi himself also proposed improvements. Then, directed by the playwright, some Taching workers and their wives finished rehearsing the play in only a fortnight.

From the end of 1965 to November 1966 *A New Dawn* was shown in Taching, Peking and Shantung and warmly applauded by audiences there. It served to spur the campaign to learn from Taching in industry, to transform age-old customs and habits and to revolutionize housewives. At the end of 1965 when the troupe came to Peking to perform for the Party Central Committee and the people of the capital, Premier Chou attended one performance and congratulated them heartily on their success. Then, smiling, he conducted them to sing *Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman* and *Taching Housewives Making Revolution*, the theme song in the drama. But the Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao "gang of four" plotted to destroy Taching's red banner, slandering Taching's new type of oilfield as "sham communism". They condemned the drama as "crude and inartistic" and banned it. The

playwright Sun Wei-shih was cruelly persecuted by Chiang Ching, and this led to her death.

Sun Wei-shih, whose parents died for the revolution, was brought up and trained to be a revolutionary art worker by Premier Chou and his wife Comrade Teng Ying-chao. She went to Yen-an in 1937, and in 1939 was sent to the Soviet Union to study drama. On her return to Yen-an in 1946, she devoted herself to literary and art work for the Party. During the War of Liberation she followed the army as a propagandist. After the founding of New China she became an outstanding director and drama critic, directing such plays as *Glad Tidings from the Sangyang River*, *Pavel Korchagin* and *The Inspector General*. Putting into practice Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art, she produced *A New Dawn* specifically for the workers, peasants and soldiers. Today, thanks to the wise leadership of Chairman Hua, the Chinese people have thrown out the "gang of four" and *A New Dawn*, like red plum-blossom that has withstood frost and snow, has come into bloom again on our socialist stage.

Not long ago, during the jubilant celebration of the opening of the National Conference on Learning from Taching in Industry, the Taching workers and their wives restaged the drama in the capital. Chairman Hua and other leading comrades saw their spirited performance, then shook hands with the troupe and had a photograph taken with them as a memento. Chairman Hua affectionately encouraged them saying: "Your performance was very good!"

A Grand Display of Revolutionary Art

To commemorate the 35th anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, an exhibition of some of the best art works produced since 1942 was held in Peking. Huge crowds flocked to see these works by artists whose names had long been familiar to them, well aware that this grand pageant of Chinese revolutionary art could not have been shown while the "gang of four" were in power.

In fact, in 1972, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the *Yenan Talks*, the masses had asked for an exhibition of this sort, but the "gang of four's" followers, who controlled art circles, arbitrarily banned all works dating from before the Cultural Revolution. They even condemned the well-known traditional-style painting *This Land so Rich in Beauty*, which hangs in the Great Hall of the People and bears an inscription by Chairman Mao himself, as well as the fine reliefs on the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tien An Men Square so widely acclaimed by the masses. All this was part of their campaign to negate the fine achievements in proletarian art made under the guidance of

Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. This exhibition made it abundantly clear that the gang's strictures were a pack of lies.

In 1942, in his concluding speech at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art, Chairman Mao summed up the historical experience of the struggle between the proletarian and the bourgeois line in literature and art since the May 4th Movement, and put forward the fundamental principle that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. Chairman Mao pointed out: **"China's revolutionary writers and artists, writers and artists of promise, must go among the masses; they must for a long period of time unreservedly and whole-heartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle, go to the only source, the broadest and richest source. . . ."**

The *Yenan Talks* is the lamp that lights the way for literary and art workers. Those in our liberated areas followed Chairman Mao's call and went to the countryside and the battle front to learn from the workers, peasants and soldiers so as to change their world outlook and their class stand. As a result, a profound transformation took place in their thoughts and feelings as well as in the works they produced. It was in the heat of mass struggle that the new woodcuts and New-Year pictures of the liberated areas appeared. In order to serve the masses, our artists there learned from traditional painting and folk art, taking over popular art forms to create a new style of woodcut, simple, vigorous, fresh and lively.

Since Liberation, Chinese woodcut artists have kept up this revolutionary tradition and played a fighting role. Works such as *Writing a Poem in the Grassland*, *The Huai-Hai Campaign*, *Little Eighth-Router*, *First Bumper Harvest* and *Crossing Mountains and Rivers* have further developed our woodcut art both as regards content and modes of expression.

Turning to traditional ink paintings, we can see the political enthusiasm shown by such veteran artists as Hsu Pei-hung, who to hail the great victory of the people's revolution painted *Gallop Horse* and on it wrote the lines:

After a hundred battles, now the land returns to the people
And all obstacles on the road are swept away.

It is significant too that the depiction of figures in traditional Chinese paintings, which had virtually died out before Liberation, have been revived and further developed owing to the concern of the Party and Chairman Mao. *Testing Mother* and *Treasuring Each Grain* are good attempts at depicting new socialist things in the traditional style. Then there are paintings filled with revolutionary feeling depicting our great leader such as *Chairman Mao Travels over the Land*. Other good works of this type produced since the Cultural Revolution include *His Words Set Their Hearts Afire*, *Going to the Labour College*, *Premier Chou with the Street-Sweeper* and *Apples from the People*. Lifelike and vivid, with masterly technique, they represent a new achievement in character portrayal.

A new spirit and certain new techniques are also seen in the landscapes reflecting magnificent scenes of our socialist construction. Examples are *Moving Mountains and Valleys*, *A Thousand Hills Crimsoned*, *The Yangtse Valley Today* and *A Green Belt of Forests* which praise our people's transformation of nature. Paintings of the "flower-and-bird" variety such as *Bamboo Harvest* and *Bright Mountain Flowers* are full of vitality too and loved by the masses.

Guided by Chairman Mao's directive that we should make use of foreign things to serve China, some of our artists have gradually succeeded in producing oil paintings which our people love because they have a distinctively Chinese style and Chinese spirit. This expressive art form lends itself to depicting historical scenes from our revolutionary struggles and reflecting the spirit of our great age. In this exhibition were such examples of modern Chinese oil painting as *The Founding of the People's Republic of China*, *Chairman Mao Speaks in the Rectification Movement*, *Freed from Fetters*, *Joining the Army*, *Spring Comes to Tibet*, *Before the Battle*, *The Torches of Yen-an*, *The Nanchang Uprising*, *Only When We Keep in Step Can We Win Victory* and *With You in Charge, I'm at Ease*.

Cartoons serve as a sharp weapon in revolutionary struggle, their humorous caricatures exposing the essence of things. They can give

warm praise to new revolutionary developments too, as in the cartoon *Chairman Mao Has Sent Someone to Us*. They can also direct friendly criticism against shortcomings within the ranks of the people, as in *Don't Move a Step and You Won't Trip Up*. Equally well, they can make ruthless exposure of reactionaries, as in *Sharpening the Sword to Kill People* and *They Succeed in Climbing Up at Last* (up a dock for trial). The cartoons in the exhibition debunking the "gang of four" daily drew crowds.

Chinese sculptors have also done notable work by combining revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism. Works such as *Liu Hu-lan*, *Arduous Years*, *Rent-Collection Compound*, *The Wrath of the Serfs* and *Long Live the People's Commune* are all fine examples of post-Liberation sculpture.

Our art workers also pay great attention to the popularization of art and have made use of such forms as New-Year pictures, serial picture-books, posters and book illustrations.

Guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in literature and art and encouraged by the Party's concern, during the past twenty years and more there has appeared a contingent of revolutionary art workers who have integrated themselves with the masses and are out to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. Since the Big Leap Forward of 1958 and especially since the Cultural Revolution, many amateur artists have emerged from the ranks of workers, peasants and soldiers. Together with professional artists they take an active part in revolutionary movements and have created a number of excellent works.

This exhibition could only show a fraction of the fine works produced since the publication of the *Yenan Talks* in 1942. Altogether 764 items — many of them collectively done — were exhibited and the subject-matter and styles were rich and varied. Among the more than eight hundred artists whose works were selected were such veteran progressive painters as Hsu Pei-hung and Ssutu Chiao who learned to paint in the old society or abroad, as well as veteran artists who joined the revolution many years ago, and young artists who have grown up since the Cultural Revolution. The wide range of artists represented shows that our people will never forget those artists who have made contributions to our revolution.

Woodcuts in China's Old Liberated Areas

To celebrate the 35th anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*, a fine arts exhibition was recently held in Peking. The central hall displayed pre-Liberation works, mostly woodblock prints produced in the liberated areas, which daily drew huge crowds. Some veteran revolutionaries seeing these exhibits felt as if this was a reunion, after many years, with their close comrades-in-arms while young people seeing them for the first time were deeply stirred and thrilled. This was because these woodblocks were geared to the revolutionary struggles of that time, imbued with the artists' devotion to the workers, peasants and soldiers, and true to life.

A young friend asked me: "How come such splendid woodcuts were produced in the liberated areas?"

I told him that this had not been the case at first. Good woodcuts had only been made after the publication of Chairman Mao's *Yenan Talks*, when the artists set themselves to serving the workers, peasants and soldiers.

China's revolutionary artists were active throughout the long revolutionary war. In the '20s Red Army propagandists painted cartoons and posters on the walls showing peasants denouncing local tyrants and sharing out their land. Later on there appeared woodblock prints, sometimes in serial form as well as mimeographed or lithographed pictures. After the outburst of the War of Resistance Against Japan, many intellectuals from Kuomintang-ruled or Japanese-occupied areas went to the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia revolutionary base and other liberated areas. Among them were some wood-engraving artists whom Lu Hsun had helped to train. Under their influence a contingent of wood-cutters was gradually built up in the liberated areas. At first, however, their woodcuts were not well received because the artists had not integrated themselves with the workers, peasants and soldiers, their works were isolated from reality and the style remained somewhat foreign. In 1942, Chairman Mao delivered his famous *Yenan Talks* pointing out that serving the workers, peasants and soldiers should be the orientation of literature and art and that the basic problem is how to serve them. In line with Chairman Mao's teachings the artists in the liberated areas plunged into the fiery strug-

Autumn Harvest in Nanniwan

by Ku Yuan



New Judge Ma Hsi-wu Settles a Marriage Dispute

by Ku Yuan

gles of the workers, peasants and soldiers to acquaint themselves with the masses and their life and as a result their creative work was transformed.

Following Chairman Mao's instructions the artist Ku Yuan went to the countryside of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia border regions and worked as a secretary of a village government. After living there for a period he became one with the peasants and his outlook and feelings underwent a great change. His new grasp of village life and of different kinds of people enabled him to produce such outstanding woodcuts as *The Masses Fight to Reduce Rent** which shows angry peasants settling accounts with a landlord and *Autumn Harvest in Nanniwan* which reflects the great production drive in which the army and people of Yenan took part. The story of his *New Judge Ma Hsi-wu Settles a Marriage Dispute* is interesting. This woodcut, taking as its theme a new facet of the democratic life in the liberated areas, vividly shows how Ma Hsi-wu, commissioner of a prefecture, solved the dispute by relying on the masses. The story goes like this: A young couple

*See *Chinese Literature* No. 9, 1976.

fell in love and were engaged secretly, but the girl's father schemed to marry his daughter to a rich merchant. When the young man heard this news he carried the girl off one night and they got married. The old man went to the county government and accused the youngster of abducting his daughter. It appeared a hard case to solve. Commissioner Ma got to know of this lawsuit when he went to the countryside to make investigations. By means of relying on the masses and reasoning things out, he finally persuaded the muddle-headed father to agree to his daughter's marriage. On the other hand he pointed out that the accused had been wrong to take the girl away by force, and the young man accepted the criticism. Thus the case was satisfactorily settled.

Ku Yuan's coloured woodcut *The Bridge* shows a splendid episode from the Huai-Hai Campaign in 1948: To enable the south-bound army to cross the Huai River in hot pursuit of Chiang Kai-shek's fleeing troops, ten PLA fighters jumped into the icy water to serve as piers. They laid planks over their shoulders to make a bridge across which the other fighters dashed to rout the enemy.

Li Chun, Yen Han, Wang Shih-kuo and Li Shao-yen were also famous woodcut artists of the liberated areas. Li Chun's *Labour Hero Chao Chan-kuei* eulogizes a model worker. Yen Han's *Voting with Beans* and *Storming the Feudal Fortress* present a democratic election in the liberated areas and a fierce struggle during land reform. *No Grain Will Be Taken by the Enemy*, another of his graphic woodcuts, portrays people of the Taihang Mountains using pitchforks and sickles to drive away Japanese invaders and traitors and seize back the carts of grain which they had looted. Wang Shih-kuo's *Remoulding a Loafer*, Li Shao-yen's *Under Reconstruction*, Lo Kung-liu's *A Dauntless Mother*, Hu Yi-chuan's *The Labour-Exchange Team* and Hsia Feng's *Target Practice* were other woodcuts popular at that time. Chang Wang, Shen Jou-chien, Chi Tan and Niu Wen produced good woodcuts too.

All the woodcuts on display showed that after studying Chairman Mao's brilliant *Yenan Talks* woodcut artists in the liberated areas deliberately chose themes from the life and struggle of the workers, peasants and soldiers. They generalized these themes and refined



Voting with Beans

by Yen Han

them to produce work on a higher plane and more typical than actual everyday life so as to achieve the unity of content and form. At the same time they assimilated good features of folk art and freed themselves from foreign influences, giving their woodcuts a distinctively Chinese flavour which made them loved by the broad masses.

It was not easy to produce woodcuts in war time conditions. Because of the enemy blockade of the revolutionary base areas, even a sheet of paper or a pencil were hard to come by and they had to make their own engraving tools and other materials, sometimes with the help of a blacksmith. At times they had to carry the blocks with them on the march. It was under these very difficult conditions that so many fine woodcuts were produced. They opened a new page in the history of China's fine arts and played an important role in the liberated areas "for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy". In addition their influence extended to the enemy-occupied areas. For with the help of the armed working teams

some artists distributed their works behind the enemy lines, some even pasting block-printed posters on the walls of enemy blockhouses, thus educating the people there and boosting their morale.

Because wood-engraving in the liberated areas was the earliest art form to embody the spirit of Chairman Mao's *Yenan Talks*, it has been respected by Chinese artists as the forerunner of new China's fine arts. The experience of thirty-five years since the publication of Chairman Mao's *Yenan Talks* has proved that only by going among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers and going into the heat of the struggle as did the woodcut artists in the liberated areas, can we produce works of art serving the workers, peasants and soldiers which will be welcomed by them.

CHRONICLE

Art Exhibition "Chairman Hua in Hunan" Opens in Changsha

"Chairman Hua in Hunan", an art exhibition including 140 traditional Chinese paintings, oil paintings, woodcuts, New-Year pictures, gouaches, papercuts and sculptures, opened this summer in Changsha, Hunan Province.

The exhibits showed how Comrade Hua Kuo-feng led the people of Hunan in socialist revolution and construction and in putting into practice Mao Tsetung Thought when he worked there after the founding of the People's Republic of China. They recorded how Comrade Hua visited factories, the countryside, shops and worksites and worked with the people of various nationalities in Hunan. Under the leadership of the Hunan Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, these works of art were created by amateur and professional art workers who pooled their wisdom after having collected material in various places.

Exhibition of Art Works by National Minorities in Southwest China

An exhibition of works by national minority artists from three provinces and one autonomous region in southwest China was opened this year in Chengtu, Szechuan Province.

The 237 works exhibited were contributed by professional and amateur artists from more than twenty nationalities including the Tibet-

an, Yi, Miao, Chiang, Hui, Manchu and Mongolian in Szechuan, Yunnan and Kweichow Provinces and the Tibet Autonomous Region. They sang the praise of our great Communist Party of China, Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua, the heroes among the minority peoples and their fine achievements in the socialist revolution and construction. They also hailed the victory of the Cultural Revolution, and exposed and denounced the "gang of four". Colourful, lifelike and original, these works of art had distinctive local and national characteristics.

Forum on Literature and Art in Shanghai

A forum for writers, artists, musicians, dancers and film workers was held earlier this year in Shanghai. Armed with Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*, the participants denounced and exposed the crimes committed by the "gang of four" and their accomplices in the cultural field in Shanghai. They vowed to vent their hatred for the gang by enriching socialist literature and art under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

The writer Pa Chin said: "I never dreamt that the pen the 'gang of four' wouldn't let me use would ever be returned to me. I feel I've been liberated a second time. Feeble as I am as a writer, I'm going to make every effort to serve our great era and our heroic people." Kuo Shao-yu, an 85-year-old professor of Fudan University, reported that while revising *The History of Literary Criticism in China* he had been instructed by the "gang of four" to make it a history of struggle between the Confucian and the Legalist schools. Unable to do this he stopped working on that book. Referring to his current work, he said: "I mean to follow Chairman Mao's instructions on critically inheriting our cultural legacy and make a good job of revising my *Selected Essays of Different Dynasties* and other books." Wang Chu-yi, an 81-year-old painter, promised to produce more traditional Chinese paintings reflecting the spirit of the times. The well-known cartoonist Chang Lo-ping declared, "Cartoons have been liberated by the overthrow of the 'gang of four'." Many other writers and artists,

both old and young, expressed their determination to produce new socialist works.

Representatives from the Shanghai cultural bureau, film bureau and publishing bureau drew up three-year-plans at the forum.

New Writings

Some well-known writers whose work had been banned are now writing once again.

Chang Tien-ming, after completing the film script *The Pioneers*, wrote another entitled *Hope* which depicts with what drive our oil workers have worked for socialism after the Fourth National People's Congress in 1975. In addition he plans to write a scenario about the oil wells drilled off the Chinese coast. Last April he completed *The Pioneers* as a novel, a work in four hundred thousand characters which has a wider scope than the film script and presents still more intense struggles.

Chu Po, author of the novel *Tracks in a Snowy Forest*, had kept on writing even during his illness when he was persecuted by the "gang of four". *Tumultuous Mountains and Seas*, his new novel of more than eight hundred thousand characters depicting the Chinese people's War of Resistance Against Japan, is now being printed. He has also written a short novel *Jungngo Monument* about the life and struggles in an army hospital in the rear during the War of Resistance.

The 77-year-old woman writer Hsieh Ping-hsin has not laid down her pen. Last year, in those days of anguished mourning for our great revolutionary leaders, she wrote the essays *Chairman Mao's Brilliance Will Guide Me Forward Forever* and *Premier Chou Will Live Forever in Our Hearts*. Recently, after visiting the worksite of Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall, she has written *Standing Before Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall*. And in response to a request from a literary magazine, she has written *Ulantowa's Words* for young readers.

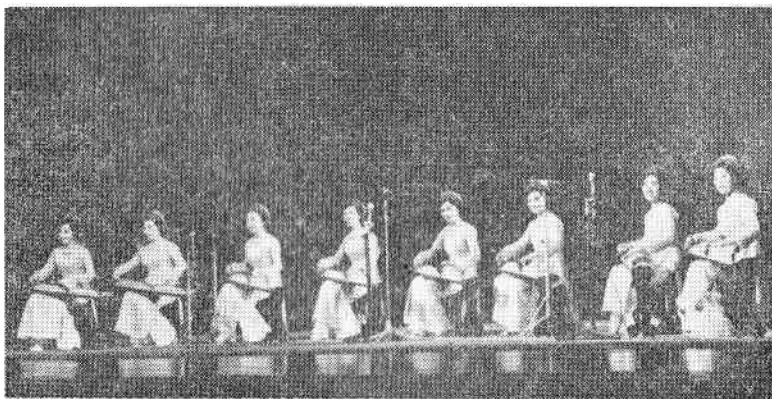
Hao Jan, who became a writer after the Liberation, has completed the third volume of *The Bright Road* and gone back to live in the countryside to collect material for the fourth volume of this novel.

Vietnamese National Music Ensemble Tours China

In June and July this year a national music ensemble of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam made a friendly tour of China and was warmly received by the Chinese people.

The Vietnamese artists' items included instrumental solos and ensembles as well as vocal solos and choral singing. The solos *Singing in Ho Chi Minh City* and *Song of Reunification* showed how the Vietnamese people cherish the memory of their great leader President Ho Chi Minh and how they rejoice over the reunification of the north and south of their country. *Chau Yen Girls Shoot Down Enemy Planes*, a female chorus, and the solo *On Transport Trails* showed the confidence of the Vietnamese people in their war against aggression.

Chinese audiences were impressed by the Vietnamese artists' skilful performances on their distinctive instruments — the tarung, dan bau, klong-put and the Miao flute, also by the warmth with which they sang in Chinese *Ode to Peking*, *Wave upon Wave on the Hungbu Lake*, *The North Wind Blows*, *Army and People Join in the Production Drive* and their rendering of the Chinese compositions *On the Golden Hill* in Peking and *Happy Encounter*.



Target Practice (woodcut, 1945)

by Hsia Feng



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