CHINESE LITERATURE

1978 1

Main Characters in Chapters 9—12 of "Builders of a New Life"

Secretary Tao	*Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Committee of Weiyuan County, Shensi Province*
Yang Kuo-hua	*Deputy Party secretary of Weiyuan County who is in charge of mutual-aid and co-operation work*
Liang Sheng-pao	*Young chairman of Beacon Co-op in Hsiapao Township, Huangpao District, Weiyuan*
Liang the Third	*His father, an old poor peasant*
Kao Tseng-fu	*Vice-chairman of Beacon Co-op*
Jen the Fourth	*Stockman of Beacon Co-op*
Kuo Chen-shan	*Administrative chairman of Hsiapao Township, who is not active in the mutual-aid and co-operation movement but pretends to support Sheng-pao.*
Wang Tso-min	*Party secretary of Huangpao District*
Lu Ming-chang	*Party secretary of Hsiapao Township*
Wei Fen	*Leader of the work team sent by the county to help with the setting up of Beacon Co-op*

CONTENTS

No. 1, 1978

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

Builders of a New Life

We present below four chapters from the first part of the second volume of *Builders of a New Life*, a novel by the well-known writer Liu Ching. When the first volume of the novel was published in 1960, its first part was serialized in *Chinese Literature*, 10, 11 and 12, 1960. The first and second chapters of the first part of the second volume appeared in *Chinese Literature*, 10, 1961 though the book was not published until 1977.

The novel depicts how China's 500 million peasants responded to Chairman Mao's call to "get organized", and embarked on the road of collective farming in the 1950's. Agricultural collectivization was a revolution in itself, for the minds of the peasants were fettered by ideas of individual economy and private ownership, which had prevailed in China for thousands of years. The novel delineates the changes taking place in the thinking of the various characters and their psychological reactions.

The following extract shows how Beacon Co-op, the first agricultural producers' co-operative of Huangpao District in Weiyuan County, Shensi Province was set up and led by Liang Sheng-pao. At this stage, land was collectivized as well as draught animals and large agricultural implements.

Born in Wupao County, Shensi, the author Liu Ching lived for many years in Huangpao District, the background of his novel. He is now writing the second part of the second volume of his novel.

— **The Editors**

9

As the weather forecast had predicted, a cold wave from Siberia reached the central Shensi plain by mid afternoon. A moderate northern gale swept across the Wei River and drove the peasants, who had been squatting in the village streets with their rough, earthenware rice bowls in their hands, back into their own homes. In the wasteland along the Lu River, the wind whipped up the dust from the paths and mercilessly snapped the young branches from the trees beside the road.

Walking along the Lu River Valley, pushing his bicycle against the wind, Yang Kuo-hua, deputy secretary of the Weiyuan County Party Committee, found it impossible to proceed to Toupao Town, to say nothing of returning to the county seat. So he turned around. Now cycling with the wind, he passed deserted village lanes and soon retraced his way to Tawang Village. A fresh gale was buffeting dark clouds on the horizon, and so by the time Yang finally reached the village, the top of Mount Chungnan, on the southern bank of Lu River, was no longer visible. He went into the administrative office to ring up the county Party committee but the line had been out of order for some time. Wheeling his bike, Yang went back to the work team's compound. Although it was afternoon, they were working by lamplight.

"Looks like Old Man Heaven's in a bad temper today," Yang told his comrades. "He doesn't care a fig about our urgent business. Beacon Agricultural Producers' Co-operative is to be started very soon, and I've got to go to Hsiapao Village."

Some young cadres suggested that when the weather cleared up Yang could go directly to Hsiapao via the plateau on the southern bank of the Lu River, instead of first returning to the county town.

"Sorry, but that's not possible," said Yang smiling. "Some problem's cropped up over Beacon Co-op. The county office called me yesterday, asking me to go back. Secretary Tao wants to look into the matter again. . . ."

After dark the gale turned into a blizzard. Large flakes of snow pelted on to the roofs of the tiled houses, splattering the peasant

compounds and their mud walls. Since he'd attended to the affairs of the May First Co-op before dark, Yang now sat in a tiny room of a peasant home, preoccupied with Hsiapao Village. By the light of an oil lamp, he re-read the report submitted by the Beacon about the first and second stages of its preparations. Having finished this, Yang paced the tiny floor, striding back and forth across the narrow space between the stacks of mat-covered grain. Thoroughly and systematically, he went over in his mind the social backgrounds of the residents of Frog Flat and Hsiapao Village and thought about those on whom he could rely and the political level of the masses. Yang decided that he had sufficient confidence in Liang Sheng-pao, chairman of the co-op, in the few cadres around him and in those people who supported what he stood for. Originally in the course of setting up the co-op, a few village cadres outside the co-op movement had expressed dissatisfaction about various matters, but Yang's support for Sheng-pao had not changed.

Yang knew that he lacked experience for although he had worked in rural areas for more than a decade, it was mainly during the period of democratic revolution.* He wondered if he wasn't biased by what Wang Tso-min, the district Party secretary, told him. Then perhaps Wang himself had been influenced by Lu Ming-chang, the township secretary. If biased views were being passed on from one secretary to another, then county Party secretary Tao, the top leader of the county, would be sure to make mistakes. Yang thought it was high time that he went in person to Hsiapao Village to see things for himself.

Preoccupied by these thoughts, Yang did not notice when the storm let up, but he was pleased as it meant he could return to the county town the next day and then proceed immediately to Hsiapao. He picked up his small torch lying by the *kang* and went outside. What a surprise! Snowflakes like goose-feathers came swirling into the compound yard. The entrance to the street and the pile of faggots at the other end of the compound were no longer visible in the torch's beam.

*The period before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 after which China embarked on the socialist revolution.

"Beautiful snow!" Yang looked up and spoke to the skies. "Now, Old Man Heaven, if you're really in earnest, just you go on like this throughout the night. That'll be doing us a very good turn. We try to teach the people not to be superstitious, but that doesn't mean we aren't delighted to see rain or snow at the right times. . . ."

Yang's good humour showed that the problems of Beacon Co-op and Sheng-pao weren't weighing too heavily on his mind. Knowing how good snow was for winter wheat at that time of year, Yang felt very happy, for he was in charge of mutual-aid and co-operation. Pleased with life in general, he got ready for bed. In those brief moments before he dozed off when he felt the piercing cold, he wondered vaguely whether his little son and daughter were warm enough at home in the county town since their mother had also gone to the countryside.

The next morning as soon as he was dressed, Yang went outside to see how deep the snow was. Almost blinded by the white glare, he could hardly open his eyes. Peering around, everything seemed a white blur. After lowering his gaze to accustom his eyes to the brightness, he was able to distinguish the outline of the snow-covered Mount Chungnan in the distance, the plateau across the Lu River to the south, and the other compounds with their roof tops and the trees. Snow blanketed everything. The locust-tree beside him was bowed down under the weight on its branches. There was no time to lose. The snow must be swept up and spread over the fields. . . . This was their vital and immediate task. Yang felt sure that all the districts would get mobilized. The masses would work with a will, especially since they had just been roused by the teachings of the General Line. . . .

After breakfast all the people of the May First Joint Co-op of Tawang set out to sweep up the snow and pile it on to the fields. Men and women, young and old, joined in, including members of the work team. Yang meanwhile left for the county town. Leaving his bicycle and his bedding roll behind, he carried only a rucksack containing his papers. Like in his old Yenan district cadre days, he tied some hemp neatly around his trouser-legs and strode off over the dazzling white plain.

From outside, the bespectacled county Party secretary Tao, working intently at his desk, was dimly visible through the window. With a lighted cigarette in his left hand and a pen in the other, he was buried deep in his papers. Now and then he would draw on his cigarette, scribble something or make a mark. Tao, suffering from chronic stomach trouble and a lack of sleep, had a dull sallow complexion. On average, he read about 50,000 words a day of documents either typed, mimeographed or handwritten, and these were piled around his desk. He studied conscientiously and with great concentration all the memorandums and documents issued by the central and provincial authorities, considering all the points seriously. For the benefit of his cadres in charge of various departments of the county, he marked the important sentences and phrases, scribbling comments above them. The noises of the town and the whistling of a train pulling in and out of Weiyuan Station on the Lunghai Railway failed to distract this man, who was responsible for the carrying out of the Party's policies in the county. Although his back often ached from long hours of sitting, he never left his desk to read his papers in a more comfortable position. His diligence and stoicism in this respect were well-known to those around him.

Full of admiration for Tao's attitude to his paper work Yang stood for some time out in the yard with its tiny bamboo grove, without disturbing the silence in the little brick compound or the busy county secretary. After the janitor had opened the door of his office, Yang went quietly inside.

"Is Tao still having his injections?" he asked the janitor.

"Yes."

"What about his stomach trouble?"

"He's still taking some medicine."

"You must try and persuade him to turn in early every night," Yang urged him. "Otherwise he'll just keep going till dawn."

"I know. I bring him hot water to wash several times every evening as a reminder that it's getting late and he should go to bed."

"How often?"

"Oh, at least three times. Sometimes he gets a bit annoyed. . . ."

Yang smiled sympathetically. When the janitor had returned with

his water basin, Yang sat down on an armchair to remove his muddy shoes and socks and change into a pair of new padded slippers sent to him from northern Shensi. When he had finished washing, the janitor came in to kindle a fire. Yang told him that as he was going away to visit the villages there was no need for it. He then went to Tao's office on the other side of the conference room next to his own.

"Old Tao," cried Yang as he stalked along the corridor with water dripping down from the melting snow on the roof.

"Is that you, Old Yang?" answered Tao, his head still bent over his desk.

Yang lifted the cotton door curtain and entered into a warm, stuffy atmosphere. Tao, a big stocky man, was wearing a blue cotton padded uniform. Putting down his pen he left his swivel chair behind the desk and grasped Yang's hand. The two Party leaders sat down on the armchairs side by side, while a kettle on the large stove boiled merrily.

"When you didn't come back yesterday I thought you wouldn't return for a couple of days. That was a heavy fall of snow! How did you manage to get here?" Concern showed in Tao's tone as he said this, but there was a patronizing expression on his face.

Yang laughed and slapped his knee. Unable to restrain his enthusiasm he jumped up and, gesticulating excitedly, he launched into a description of what he had seen on his way back to the town.

"You know, Old Tao, you ought to get out of town and see for yourself. Every year we mobilize the masses to collect snow for the fields, but they've never come before in such numbers or with such fervour. Men and women, young and old, all came with their spades, wooden shovels, brooms, baskets and crates. You should have seen how the people gathered by the roadside and in the village lanes. I really felt those lines: 'This land so rich in beauty. . . .' and '. . . the land, clad in white, adorned in red, grows more enchanting'*. . . ."

*Lines from Chairman Mao's poem *Snow*.

Tao smiled at his words, his eyes crinkling in pleasure. "That's wonderful! With every different assignment from the Party, new things appear. Here, have a cigarette."

Yang took a cigarette and sat down again on the armchair. He had removed his padded cap, which had protected him during his journey through the snow, and with his crew-cut showing, he seemed more like a sports master than a Party secretary. The janitor came in to pour out some tea for them. Tao got up and took some toffee from a cupboard for Yang, who taking a sweet without ceremony peeled off the wrapping paper and popped it into his mouth. He began to feel hot, as his seat was near the stove, so he unbuttoned his padded jacket revealing a knitted sweater underneath.

Having chewed his toffee with relish and swallowed a few mouthfuls of tea, Yang hurriedly began his report about the work in Tawang Village: "The livestock of all four co-ops have been combined to be looked after under one roof. The members of the joint committee have been elected, and the regulations adopted. However, the proportion of returns for labour and land is still undecided, and only the general principle of giving more returns to labour than to land has been agreed upon. The exact figure will be calculated from the total output later. The higher the total income, the greater the proportion the returns for labour should be. Our target is to increase the income of every single household. Though this appears to be a mere economic question, in fact it's in essence a question of class line."

As Yang had spent a lot of time on and given much of his attention to these questions in Tawang Village, he was surprised to see Tao's face was void of expression as he listened. As they'd made no impression on him, either he hadn't understood or perhaps he was just not interested. Yang was stunned. Tao, who was meticulous in trying to understand the letter as well as the spirit of all papers issued by a higher organization, seemed to care nothing about what was happening to the units under him. This kind of leadership on the part of a secretary responsible for Party policy made Yang very apprehensive over the development of the mutual-aid and co-operative movement of which he was in charge.

He stared into space for some time before he glanced down at his watch. With a dry laugh, he turned to Tao:

"Shall we discuss the problem of Hsiapao Village now? I'm going there this afternoon."

"This afternoon! But you've just got back and it's a long walk to Hsiapao. Wait till tomorrow." Tao tried earnestly to dissuade him from going.

Yang made an effort to smile. "Oh, it's no distance really compared to the times of the War of Liberation when a hundred *li* a day was nothing. . . ."

"But things aren't so urgent now."

"And they're not so easy either," said Yang. "Inauguration meetings have been held already for the Progress Co-op of Wangtu District, the Radiance Co-op of Chiuchai and the Red Flag Co-op of Sankuan. Yet Beacon haven't even got their livestock under one roof and it'll soon be the Spring Festival."

"Yes, the work's fallen a bit behind there," Tao admitted. He stroked his hair with his right hand and laughed. "That time when the standing committee was discussing this question, you said you meant to set an example for the two districts on the southern edge of the mountain and I agreed with you. Now that I think about it, the conditions for a co-op in that area are not quite ready. Well . . . we've been a little premature."

"In what ways aren't they ready yet?" Yang noted Tao's measured words.

Tao went on in a casual tone, "First of all, they've only eight households in their mutual-aid team, which they only started in earnest a year ago. Joint mutual-aid team activities didn't start until the movement for the government's exclusive purchasing and distribution of grain. That led to the co-op movement. Don't you think you should take this into account?"

"Yes, I grant you that," said Yang in a noncommittal manner. "What else?"

"Their cadres are a weak point too," Tao continued coolly with his analysis. "Liang Sheng-pao is young and has plenty of drive, but he needs more experience. The vice-chairman is thirtyish but

they say he hasn't many ideas and he's stubborn in a mulish, peasant way. As for the accountant, he left primary school barely a year ago, he's just a kid unable to do any complicated calculations on his abacus yet. According to Wei Fen of the work team, Kuo Chen-shan, the township head, has played an important role in launching the co-op. Kuo was a progressive person during the land reform and later on he was made a people's deputy. That comrade's got ability."

Yang was puzzled. "Why didn't Wei Fen mention all this during our two meetings? Why did he report this to Tao alone? Perhaps he felt embarrassed about giving me these facts because he thought I was too keen on setting up the co-op. That was quite unnecessary. . . ."

"What about the character of the two men?" asked Yang, remaining composed. "Did Wei Fen mention that?"

Tao spoke impartially. "Both are good comrades. Kuo Chen-shan is more upright in his behaviour. Immediately after Liberation, Liang Sheng-pao is said to have had some trouble in his personal life, over some girl in his village and a young wife in his neighbourhood. There was talk, but it didn't amount to much. He's a young man, mind you. Before Liberation he had to hide in the Chin Mountains to get away from the press-gang, and you know how bad morals were in the mountains. Perhaps he was slightly influenced. But they say in recent years he's been so preoccupied with Party work that there've been no further probems of this sort."

"Then just what is the problem?" asked Yang anxiously. He'd never expected to find such a skeleton in Sheng-pao's cupboard.

"Better try and find out for yourself first," said Tao. "Perhaps Wang Tso-min's judgements of Chen-shan and Sheng-pao are based only on what they did in 1953. If so, then it's not so good. It's not a balanced view. I've found that Wang's sometimes too hasty in his opinions. Mind you, Yang, it's not easy to understand a person's position in a certain situation. Chen-shan was in a muddle for a time, but we can't deny his competence, experience and the people's respect for him. Whereas we shouldn't overestimate Sheng-pao, though he was outstanding then. His youthfulness itself means certain limitations. Well, Yang, what do you think?"

"Theoretically, you're quite right." Yang smiled blandly. "But it's still too early to say exactly what are the facts."

"What do you mean?" Tao stared in surprise at Yang who appeared rather sure of himself.

"Let me have a look at Hsiapao and Frog Flat first. Now what about Beacon? Can we stop them from launching into the co-operative at present?"

"That can be decided after you've been there and looked into the actual situation," Tao spoke with assurance. "The general principle is that if you can persuade the masses to wait and continue as a joint mutual-aid team for another year, then they'll be in a better position to switch to the co-operative. By then, we'll know whether to let Chen-shan take command or Sheng-pao. It seems to me that the best thing to avoid right from the beginning is any possible split in the village."

"Suppose I can't persuade the masses to wait? Remember, Old Tao, that the county committee has given it's approval and the name of Beacon Co-op has already been used."

"In which case we'll have to cope with the situation as best we can. Just make it clear to Wang that when we were debating possible co-ops to be set up as examples in the county, we never even considered his Huangpao District. It was he who insisted on pushing forward his pet place. So they'll have to do more to keep it going and not depend so much on the county. Do you agree?"

"Yes," Yang assented. "That seems clear enough. Do you want me to take something to your wife Ya-mei?"

"Take what? She'll be back soon."

"What about a letter? Write it now and I'll come back and fetch it after lunch. Or you can have the janitor give it to me."

"Oh heck, I can't be bothered." Tao smiled smugly. "I'm not as crazy as you."

Yang ate a hasty meal in the office canteen, but had no time to return to the dormitory building to see his children. By two o'clock he was on the road to Huangpao Town. He wasn't too worried about Beacon Co-operative, whose inauguration he had so actively ad-

vocated. Nor was he afraid of shouldering responsibilities. Yang Kuo-hua, son of Yang Mo-lin who gave his life for the revolutionary cause, hurried across the snowy plain, heading straight for the village and its problems. The revolution was a matter of intense emotion to him. He could never deal with anyone or any problem in his work in a detached way. All along the path to Huangpao he remembered that the facts weren't quite as Wei Fen had presented them. One question kept repeating in his mind:

"What sort of a character are you really, Sheng-pao?"

10

When the snow stopped, Frog Flat was a world of white. Morning found all the compounds blocked by snow. The peasants in the village busied themselves sweeping their doorways and compounds. No sign of activity was seen among the scattered groups of thatched huts in the paddy fields. Dogs ran out from the compounds, chasing, biting and rolling in the snow. Vapour rose from Kuan Creek, Liberation Creek, Unity Creek and Black Dragon Creek as well as Tang Stream, whose muddy waters flowed amid a white expanse.

After breakfast the snow was swept up and carried to the fields with young and old all pitching in so that contact between the peasants was resumed as the paths leading from compound to compound were also swept clean. Everyone seemed especially energetic and happy, and the atmosphere was livelier than usual. No one remained indoors, but all bustled around, driven to activity by a sense of joy. There is an old saying, "A snow in bitter winter ensures a good harvest the next year." But that wasn't the sole reason for their happiness.

The whole village was on their way to the compounds of Feng Yu-yi and Kuo Ching-hsi to see the new stables — everyone's current interest.

People of all ages, who lived Upstream or Downstream, or in the Kuan Creek Hamlet, those who had joined the co-op and those who hadn't, those who liked the co-op and those who didn't — all converged towards the new stables.

"I was told that the wind blew up yesterday just as the troughs were finished."

"Yes. The weather was fine all the time Beacon Co-op were building their stables. If it had changed a few days ago it would have been difficult to plaster the walls as the mud would have frozen."

"Fortune is favouring the co-op. Sheng-pao will get the credit."

"Yes, he's been lucky ever since the day he went to buy those rice seeds in Kuo County. Fate's been with him all along."

"How can you say that?"

"Because the weather didn't turn bad before the stables were finished. If that isn't a bit of good luck, what is?"

"It may seem all like chance, but he also did a lot of planning."

So went the conversation from one of the paths cleared of snow. From another track was heard:

"Has Beacon Co-op decided on a lucky day for bringing all its livestock to the stables?"

"No need. Once the stables are ready all the animals will come."

"I heard that Old Tao was expected to preside over the establishment of Beacon Co-op, but as it's snowed so heavily, I don't think he will."

"Then he'll send a big official. After all it's an important event."

The peasants reached the stables. The Frog Flat peasants could hardly wait to see the stables even if they were still empty. From late morning till early afternoon, the villagers went in the door at the front for the cattle and out of the door at the back for manure and earth. They examined the roof, the walls and the ground as if they were something new, though all the timber, bricks, tiles and mud were exactly like those used in the houses at Frog Flat. They felt the walls to see whether they were dry, shook the stakes where the livestock would be tethered to see whether or not they wobbled, stretched out their arms to measure the troughs and calculated the number of animals each stable could hold. And they freely gave a lot of advice to the co-op cadres.

Chairman Liang Sheng-pao, Vice-chairman Kao Tseng-fu, First Team Leader Feng Yu-wan, Second Team Leader Yang Ta-hai, four other group leaders and two stockmen had been on their feet

all day at the stables. There were still lots of small chores to be done, and chores were chores even though the event was an important one. They hung up on the outside walls the ploughs, rakes and other big farm implements bought from the members, and now assets of the co-op. They collected straw from the nearby households and had it cut up. The finer the chaff, the better the animals liked it. Water vats were carried over and placed beside the troughs where the chaff would be mixed. Fires were lit in the two rooms to prevent the new mud trough-stands from freezing and cracking. To Sheng-pao this was an unforgettable day for everyone. With so many people milling around, some got in the way, so Sheng-pao had to persuade those who weren't helping to stand back a little.

The co-op cadres and helpers went home at dark after a busy day. Only Sheng-pao, Tseng-fu and the stockman, Jen the Fourth, stayed behind in Feng Yu-yi's compound.

Brushing down his clothes on the steps outside the stable Sheng-pao said, "Let's go home. We can't see what we're doing. Let's leave it till tomorrow."

"Yes. Time to go home, Jen," Tseng-fu said as he came out of the stable. "I want to have a word with Sheng-pao. . . ."

Emerging from the thatched hut and locking the door, Jen laughed.

"So great minds think alike. I've also got something important to tell Sheng-pao, so I want to go home with him too."

"Say it now and then off you go," Sheng-pao told him. "I'll be a while with Tseng-fu, and you can't wait that long."

Saying goodbye to Yu-yi, they left the dim stable and came to the threshing ground where it was lighter. The heap of earth, carried there by the co-op members over the past two days for later use in the stable, was covered with snow and looked like a small hill. From both banks of Tang Stream, smoke rose from the fires heating the *kang*. Smoke rising from stoves always gives peasants a feeling of warmth in the depth of winter. They left the threshing ground, walked past the nearby compounds and came to a path where no one could hear them.

"I bet you two won't like what I'm going to say," began the old man, his back bent over with age.

"You just go ahead, Jen, and speak your mind," Tseng-fu urged him sincerely. "The co-op will always welcome good suggestions, and it's written in our regulations that it's got to be run in a democratic way."

Then Jen the Fourth slowly began to speak. "Well, our co-op has done everything the people wanted except one thing which is like a rock weighing on our hearts."

"What's the matter?" asked Tseng-fu seriously.

Sheng-pao suddenly burst out. "Why waste our time, uncle? Better go home now and sleep. There's no weight on the hearts of the old people, just a trifle which will go of its own accord in time."

"What is it?" asked Tseng-fu bewildered. "Let him talk."

"Forget it," said Sheng-pao. "It's a disgrace to our co-op. You know, they want to choose an auspicious day to bring the livestock to the stable. What do you think, Tseng-fu?"

Tseng-fu threw back his head and laughed. In the sky a few stars could be seen. "I have been so busy lately that I heard nothing about this."

Sheng-pao spoke to Jen frankly. "Go home now and forget about it, all right? If you mention this to Yu-wan he'll be hopping mad. He said if anyone wants to bring his animal on a lucky day, then he can keep it and the co-op can manage without it. If Jen the Fourth isn't happy because an auspicious day hasn't been chosen, he doesn't have to be the stockman. You either believe in the Communist Party or the gods. If you believe in the gods then you can forget about the Communist Party."

"Yu-wan's too dogmatic." Tseng-fu shook his head disapprovingly.

Jen turned and said to Tseng-fu, who was more sympathetic, "Of course he is. The peasants are joining an agricultural co-op, not the Communist Party. They've entrusted their livelihood to us in order to live better. Can't you understand how they feel?"

Warmth and sympathy showed on Tseng-fu's face.

"How many in the co-op want a lucky day, uncle?" asked Sheng-pao.

The Chingkang Mountains (traditional Chinese painting) by *Li Ko-jan*


革命摇篮井冈山

Counting his fingers, Jen told him, "Your own father, for one, and then Yu-wan's mother-in-law. There're also Sheng-lu, Ching-hsi and their families, and Feng Yu-yi too. . . ."

"And the stockman of the first team, Jen the Fourth," Sheng-pao teased.

"I . . . er," Jen was embarrassed. "I count as one. . . ."

"Let's drop it, uncle," Sheng-pao went on. "Instead of my father telling me, he asked you to do it. Why? Because you speak for superstition. Remember that time when you and I went up a mountain and you entered every temple on the way to kowtow? Tell me, what good did it do you? You were just as poor. And farm tools and land were allotted to you even though you hadn't kowtowed once to Chairman Mao. Why don't you explain these things to the superstitious old folk instead of acting as their spokesman?"

Old Jen, who had been accustomed to respecting Buddha in the old society, felt convinced. With his back bent over and coughing as he walked, he headed for home along the snow-covered path in the dim light. Tseng-fu respected Sheng-pao for his remarks.

Hesitatingly he began, "Er . . . perhaps this won't interest you but. . . ."

"You never waste my time with small talk," Sheng-pao reassured him. He had a great deal of regard for his vice-chairman.

Tseng-fu thought for a moment. "Why are Chen-shan and the others in Kuan Creek Hamlet beating gongs and drums and applying to set up a co-op? It's been on my mind for the past two days."

"I haven't given it a thought," Sheng-pao replied indifferently.

"What! Not at all? Just as if you hadn't heard anything about it?"

"Exactly. For the past two days we have been so busy discussing and thinking about our plans that I've had no time to think about anything that doesn't directly concern our co-op. If Kuan Creek Hamlet wants to organize a co-op and they're able to do it, then good luck to them."

But, Tseng-fu felt miserable. "I don't like it. I feel as sick as if I'd swallowed dirt with my rice. It seems to me that Chen-shan has made up his mind to outshine us."

"That's not true," Sheng-pao reassured him. Though Tseng-fu was an activist, he was still rather narrow-minded. "You mustn't think like that. Good heavens! We've just set up a co-op and have a heap of things to attend to. Neglecting anything will have serious consequences. Agricultural co-ops are new things, even the work team has no experience of them. Wei has made many trips to Huangpao to make phone calls to the county for help."

"You're right," said Tseng-fu. "But I'm so fed up with what people are saying."

"Saying what? I haven't heard anything."

Tseng-fu spoke softly though they were alone in the fields. "Last night my brother came over to tell me that an upper-middle peasant in Kuan Creek Hamlet sneered at both of us saying that we probably wouldn't do a good job although we're following the correct line. He said: 'Those paupers who worked for the landlords and rich peasants before Liberation always took orders from their bosses. After Liberation it's true they were allotted a small piece of land, but they've only had practice in farming on a small scale, so they're sure to make a mess of big things like an agricultural co-op. Let's wait for the fun to start.' He's scoffing at us, don't you see?"

"Not just us, but at all the poor and hired peasants," said Sheng-pao quietly. "What else did you hear?" he pressed him so that he would tell everything.

"Just that he was jeering at the two of us," Tseng-fu insisted. "You know who he was? Yang Chia-hsi. He also said that Chen-shan could run a co-op better with just half a brain."

Sheng-pao threw back his head and laughed heartily at the night sky where the stars were numerous. Then, becoming serious again, he explained to Tseng-fu:

"You know we can learn something from what he said, Tseng-fu. Of course he won't praise us, since we've just started our co-op and haven't done anything yet. But if he still talks about us like that once we've gathered our bumper harvest in the autumn and every

household has increased its income, then he certainly will have something against us. At the moment what he said is a good thing. . . ."

"How so? It's bothered some of our co-op members," Tseng-fu argued angrily. "And that's just what he wants."

"I don't care. If anyone is upset by that, then no one is forced to join the co-op. Listen to this." He began, "I worked as a hired-hand for Lu the Second on the other side of the river when I was nineteen. Hoeing in the fields one day we began to feel sleepy. Then the overseer told us a story to keep us awake and I've always remembered it. Two students were going to sit the imperial examination. Everybody was sure that the cleverer one would pass, while for the other it would only be a waste of money travelling to the capital. The opinion his villagers had of him made the second student work very hard. He passed the exam."

"What about the brainy one? I suppose he failed," Tseng-fu said. "I've heard that story too."

"You're wrong," laughed Sheng-pao. "The overseer said that smarty-pants didn't sit the exam at all."

"Really? Why?" Tseng-fu gaped.

Slowly Sheng-pao went on, "All that praise went to his head. He was so full of himself that he visited all the scenic spots on the way. Two days before he reached the capital it rained, so he wasn't able to finish the journey and sit the exam."

Tseng-fu, a solemn peasant in his thirties, slapped his thighs and skipped with glee, forgetting all about Yang Chia-hsi's remarks.

Sheng-pao went on, "It's always difficult to start a project, Tseng-fu. Haven't you noticed how low my spirits became these past two days, not like at the Party branch meeting sometime ago?"

"Yes," Tseng-fu was full of sympathy. "It's been hard. And you don't have enough sleep. You look haggard and you need a haircut too. How's your appetite?"

Sheng-pao touched his long hair.

"If you sleep a lot you eat a lot. If you lack sleep, you lose your appetite. That's always the case so don't worry about it. When you're young you can sleep less and work harder. But there is one thing. . . ."

"What's that?"

"But you mustn't tell anyone about it," Sheng-pao pleaded. "Not even Yu-wan."

"My lips are sealed," Tseng-fu promised solemnly.

Having decided to share his secret with Tseng-fu, Sheng-pao looked around to make sure that they were alone.

"I sometimes feel very depressed. Not because of Yang Chia-hsi and Sun Chih-ming's clamouring to set up a rival co-op. I couldn't give a damn about them. Not a damn! We're not the only ones who think that they can't succeed. Everybody knows they're a crooked pair. I am fed up because class education, choosing cadres, making plans and discussions have made me realize how difficult it is to run an agricultural co-op. Chairman Mao said that we could only do it well, that there is no other way. Our co-op members have a lot of ideological problems and other difficulties. I didn't realize these at the beginning. I saw only a revolution without complications. Now I know we've got heavy responsibilities, Tseng-fu, and I'm not so sure that I can cope. The district and the county Party committees have trusted me and I mustn't fail them."

Deeply touched Tseng-fu moved closer to him in order to see him better in the dark.

"Well. I didn't realize how you felt before, and I agree with everything you've said." Tseng-fu was full of respect for him.

Sheng-pao, youthful and full of lofty ideals, said, "We've been given a worthy job to do, and so instead of being conceited we've got to examine our weaknesses and ask for help from our comrades. When I went to buy nails for our co-op in Huangpao one day, I heard someone say, 'There's Liang Sheng-pao.' I was surrounded and people looked up to me as the chairman of Beacon Co-op. I was so flustered that I couldn't even count my money properly. I went out completely embarrassed, realizing that as we were the first co-op by Tang Stream, Beacon Co-op was famous. So I must make a good job of it. Strangers think what a capable fellow I am, yet everybody in Frog Flat knows just when I grew out of my split-pants and that I'm no great shakes. Isn't that true?"

Tseng-fu stared at Sheng-pao's frank face under the white towel he wore on his head, as if seeing him for the first time. It was as if he had never really known this young man and was trying to find out more about him.

Suddenly Tseng-fu cried out as something dawned on him. "You must have spoken about this to Wei Fen, or he wouldn't have been sounding me out the other day."

"What did he want to know?"

"He was hinting about a certain county which was to have set up an agricultural co-op and which only went through class education, the first step in the preparations, before it gave up the idea. They said that conditions were not yet ripe and they didn't want to make a bad name for co-operation by coming a cropper. So they decided to wait for another year. . . ."

"There's more to this than meets the eye," Sheng-pao said confidently. "Chairman Mao directed us not to set up the agricultural co-ops for your benefit or mine but as an example for the two districts at the southern edge of the mountain and for our whole country too. Although Wei's the head of the work team, he doesn't take any responsibilities. He's always trotting over to Huangpao to make phone calls for advice. And though he's not an upper-middle peasant, he's always finding faults with us instead of patiently helping us. It was only when I told him what I thought that he changed his tune."

"What did you say?"

"I told him that my life had no meaning if we didn't begin Beacon Co-op. Not because I want success and fame. But ever since it was decided to set up a co-op, I've had no time for anything except mutual-aid and co-operation. When I'm walking along the streets and I hear people say that so-and-so's son is engaged, or someone's wife has had a son, or another has won a prize, or that pumpkin cooked with millet is delicious and things like that, I feel that these people's lives are empty and narrow. I just hurry up and get ahead, not wanting to walk beside them. But when I hear people talking about mutual-aid teams and how to set up a co-op, then I immediately feel drawn to the speakers even if they are strangers. Falling

into step with them, I'm eager to join in their conversation. If they say something wrong, I want to give them advice. That's how I am. I can never do anything by halves. So I told Old Wei that if the county decided against setting up the co-op, I won't listen to them."

Tseng-fu listened attentively and said in a quivering voice: "Now I know how you feel about it, and you know what I'm like, I'll stick by you whatever happens over the co-op. Let's wait and see what the county leader says when he arrives. How about going home now? We'll catch cold if we stay out here too long."

But still wanting to add something, Sheng-pao said, "Most important of all, Tseng-fu, is to guard against pride, anger and carelessness. . . ."

"Right."

"And we must ask Yu-wan and Ta-hai to do the same."

"O.K. Now let's go home. See you tomorrow. . . ."

The night grew darker. Sheng-pao headed for home alone. Tseng-fu was a good comrade, but how could Yu-wan's temper be changed so as to make things easier for Beacon Co-op, he wondered. What a difference it would make if instead of losing his temper all the time he thought of ways and means to get things done. He must have a word with Yu-wan when there was a chance. . . ."

Then he heard someone running along the road. Why was he in such a hurry? Had he been up to no good? Was he someone from Kuan Creek Hamlet eavesdropping on the work team?

"Who goes there? Stop!" Sheng-pao shouted.

As the man approached Sheng-pao stepped aside into the paddy fields and, clutching two handfuls of snow, got ready to throw it in the eyes of the man before grabbing him. The ex-militia leader waited.

"Who are you? Stop running!"

"Chairman! Quick!" It was Jen the Fourth.

Throwing away the snow, Sheng-pao rushed over. "Why, what's happened?"

"Very important!" Jen panted.

"What is it? Is someone in trouble?"

"Secretary Lu . . . asked Wei Fen . . . to go to an important meeting."

"What for? . . ."

"Deputy County Secretary . . . Yang . . . has come."

Sheng-pao felt a sudden warmth coursing through him.

11

The winter night was cold and still. At the foot of Mount Chungnan beside Tang Stream, Hsiapao Village was enveloped in snow. In the township government, a room of the former Grand Temple, Yang Kuo-hua, deputy secretary of the county Party committee, was sitting in front of a charcoal fire. Beside him were Wang Tso-min, secretary of Huangpao District Party Committee, and Lu Ming-chang, secretary of the Hsiapao Party branch. Both of them came at Yang's invitation. The other man present was Wei Fen, the work team leader sent by the county Party committee to help set up Beacon Co-op. He was to give an account of the team's work. Yang was an experienced man who encouraged Wei to speak his mind. It didn't matter if Wei made a few mistakes. He felt the other two comrades would understand the situation and correct him. Yang began by saying that they all understood the purpose of their work and that they were all determined to make a good start in the country's socialist revolution. While speaking, he noticed that Wei's face changed colour. He had thought that afternoon while on his way to the meeting that he might have to sit up all night again because of a rumoured disagreement between Wang and Wei. Now it was clear this was not so, yet Tao had taken their so-called difference of opinion rather seriously.

Wei was a junior official of the Rural Work Department of the county Party committee. Now it was his turn to speak. He told them that after his return from his last visit to the county town he had had a long talk into the early hours of the morning with Han Pei-sheng, another cadre of the county's administration based in the village. He had learned from Han that Sheng-pao had had a very hard life before Liberation. Though very young, he was self-possessed, and his

ability and character were not easily discernible. When specific problems occurred at the meetings of the co-op preparatory committee, he would always let Chen-shan speak first. If Chen-shan was right, Sheng-pao just kept silent. So for a time Wei had thought of him as lacking in self-confidence. Han had not agreed with him, saying that Sheng-pao had done it on purpose so as to be on good terms with Chen-shan because they would soon be running co-ops together. Yang noticed that this satisfied Wang and dispelled the look of hostility in his eyes. Now that Wei Fen admitted he had been wrong, naturally Beacon Co-op should be set up at once.

It was midnight when they all agreed that the following day all the livestock of the co-op would be put into the new stables. After Wang and Wei had left, Lu let Yang sleep in his bed in the office, as he could go home for the night since he lived in the village.

Yang closed the door and climbed into bed. He took off his clothes and threw his greatcoat on to the quilt and then blew out the oil lamp. Since he was used to riding a bicycle, he felt extremely tired having covered thirty-five kilometres on foot. There was a pain in his ankle and his legs ached. Oh, how comfortable it was just to lie down in bed! However, he was not sleepy. Closing his eyes he pictured Tao in his brick compound, with its arched door, and he himself sitting in Tao's office with its big stove. ". . . Perhaps Wang's judgements of Chen-shan and Sheng-pao are based only on what they did in 1953." He recalled Tao's words. "If so, then it's not so good. It's not a balanced view. I've found that Wang's sometimes too hasty in his opinions. Mind you, Yang, it's not easy to understand a person's position in a certain situation. Chen-shan was in a muddle for a time, but we can't deny his competence, experience and the people's respect for him. Whereas we shouldn't overestimate Sheng-pao though he was outstanding then. . . ."

Tao's tone had been calm and kind. A persuasive leader! But things were so different once you went a bit deeper. He smiled remembering Tao's patronizing expression. He thought over again what Tao had said about Wang being hasty in his judgements, unlike Wei, and of his warning not to be biased, as if Tao was not biased himself. On reflection Yang no longer felt it so amusing. Instead

he began to worry. What role would Tao play in this great revolutionary movement sweeping the whole country? Burying himself in piles and piles of documents how could Tao know what was the main job to be tackled. Yet his whole demeanour seemed to be saying he was doing very well, leading the people of Weiyuan County on a correct course. What an irony!

There was no further need to dwell on the problem since Beacon Co-op's situation was now clear. He relaxed and, overcome by fatigue, he soon fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when he awoke. People were shouting, selling bean sprouts and bean-curd on the village streets. He got up, washed and put on his heavy coat. He decided to go immediately to Frog Flat, refusing the local cadres' offer of breakfast in the village. He didn't want Lu to accompany him either. After turning down the flaps of his cap he thrust his hands into his pockets.

"I only came to see about Beacon Co-op," he told the cadres. "I couldn't go straight there before as I had to discuss a few things here first. But now we've got that sorted out I ought to be off. You just carry on with your plans. Spring Festival's approaching, and there are so many things to be done. There's no need to accompany me. . . ."

The local peasant cadres had only admiration for his concern for his subordinates. Respectfully they saw him off at the entrance of the administrative office, shaded by several ancient cypresses.

Before the Grand Temple the road stretched. Lu, in a grey cotton-padded jacket, pointed out Hsiapao Village to Yang, who gazed at the snow-covered southern bank of the Tang Stream. Was that thatched hut by a path Sheng-pao's house? Good. He made for a forked road beside a vegetable plot, and then followed a path to the riverside.

Eager to meet Sheng-pao, the youngest of all the co-op leaders in his county, Yang tried to picture him. He was thinking as he walked along the snowy path beside the stream, that although people's ages, education and experiences might differ, a person's aims have nothing to do with that. With a worthy purpose in life, a person is more confident and able to cope with any situation. He doesn't

throw his weight about. He was sure that Sheng-pao was such a man. He was young but promising. And he had the guts needed to build a new country. Sheng-pao felt pressure, of course, and not from Chen-shan alone. But he bore him no grudge, and just pursued his own goal. A young sapling today could be a strong tree in the future. Yang felt he should visit Hsiapao Village more often as it hadn't been doing so well. A poor co-op, with a young chairman. . . .

He started to cross the stream. The cloudy water caught his eye. So that was why the stream was called Tang — which means soup in Chinese.

As he stepped on to a log makeshift bridge, he noticed a big peasant wearing a felt cap stalking towards him, his breath steaming in the cold air. Yang had never seen him before. Then he returned to his own thoughts. "It's a poor co-op at the moment," he mused to himself, "but if its leaders are capable, things will change."

"Secretary Yang!" the peasant hailed him, his face beaming. "So you've come. Did you sleep well? Were you cold last night?" He proffered his big hands, his arms strong from farm work.

There was something unusual about this man, Yang thought, eyeing him with surprise. He wondered who the man was, walking in the freezing cold so early in the morning? In this county several hundred thousand people recognized Yang, though Yang knew only a few. Before he could open his mouth to greet him, the man continued, introducing himself, "I'm Kuo Chen-shan. We met at the County's People's Congress last spring. You asked me all about winter wheat and then we talked beside a locust tree in front of the hall. But I suppose you talk to so many people, that you're bound to have forgotten it. Well, well. . . ."

So this was Kuo Chen-shan! Yang took out his hand from his pocket and gripped Chen-shan's. His large hand and powerful build suggested strength and determination. Yang couldn't help sizing him up as a kind of man who easily attracted people's attention.

Only when Chen-shan turned to walk back with him, did Yang realize that he'd come especially to meet him.

Chen-shan was one step behind Yang. "It's so bitterly cold these days, yet you've gone to all this inconvenience to get here." He sounded appreciative. "Our Party workers really care for us. When we heard last night that you'd arrived at Hsiapao and would soon visit Frog Flat, all of us went to bed late."

"Why was that?" Yang was uneasy.

"We felt so excited and talked about your coming."

"Really?" Yang felt more uncomfortable.

"Oh yes, absolutely. How could I lie to you? Frog Flat's a poor place. None of us had a cent before Liberation, so we really love the Party."

"What you say is true," Yang said, turning to look at Chen-shan. "But it's also a criticism."

"How?"

"Because few of the leading comrades of the county have ever visited here before. Though I began to work in this county in 1949, this is the first time I've crossed your log bridge. So in fact the villagers have actually criticized me."

"Nonsense, Secretary Yang!" Chen-shan argued. "You ask too much of yourself. There are hundreds of villages in our county. I bet you wouldn't be able to visit all of them, even if you had another five years."

He's right, Yang thought. He was not only intelligent but also persuasive.

"Anyway I ought to visit all the villages outstanding for their work in mutual-aid and co-operation," Yang explained smiling.

After passing by a snow-covered paddy-field and a row of poplar trees along the dyke, there was nothing to block their view of the thatched huts and courtyards of Frog Flat. Kuo hastened to explain, "See over there, Secretary Yang, that area from the hut beside the ditch to that hut by the huge honey-locust tree, that's called Downstream and belongs to the First Team of Beacon Co-op. The Second Team's land includes all Upstream, from that tree there to that hut. Of the forty-seven households, both Upstream and Downstream, twenty-eight joined the co-op. Another five would have joined had the preparatory committee agreed. But how could we! This is an

experimental co-op, isn't it? We have to abide by the county's directive that the number in a co-op shouldn't exceed thirty. Though Sheng-pao talked to them over and over again, they just turned a deaf ear. Finally Wei asked me to put in a word, and they agreed to join next time. . . ."

Snow-covered compounds were dotted throughout the village. In the cold early morning, the street was deserted. Yang nodded approvingly at Chen-shan's words. "Fine! You've done a good job. It wasn't our county Party committee's directive actually, but the Party Central Committee's. These co-ops need to be run on a small scale at first to ensure success. . . ."

"I see," Chen-shan nodded. "Do you see that row of compounds close together?" he asked. "That's Kuan Creek Hamlet and it's got fifty-two households. Except for a rich peasant and three households farming on their own, all the other forty-eight were grouped into three mutual-aid teams. Now we're forming a joint team in preparation to set up a co-op. And that brick house there belongs to Yao Shih-chieh, a reactionary rich peasant, who hates me as a Communist, and dreams that one day he will be able to crush my bones. Some dream!"

Yang noted his fighting spirit.

"That tile-roofed house there in that mud-walled courtyard is Kuo Shih-fu's house. He's an upper-middle peasant with good land, draught-animals and enough manpower. He's even better off than Yao. Because of these two old reactionaries, it has been more difficult to start mutual-aid and co-operation in Kuan Creek Hamlet."

Yang believed him. Where there were two or three reactionary people, then there was bound to be trouble in the mutual-aid and co-operative movement.

"It's better to be well prepared and not rush things. In a district or township and even in the same village, situations can vary in different parts. The Party doesn't insist on everyone going at the same pace. Co-ops are a new development. There'll be plenty of time in the future to work for our Party and the people."

Chen-shan began to laugh.

"Quite right, I agree." Chen-shan was full of beans now. "Cut your coat according to your cloth. Don't bite off more than you can chew. One man's meat is another man's poison. We can't try to do everything the way other people do it. You know, Secretary Yang, I was very anxious at the beginning when I learned that Beacon Co-op was starting. But I soon calmed down, because there was no need to be in a rush. We won't lag behind for many years. You can be sure of that. Don't worry too much about Frog Flat. After all those meetings about how to build socialism, I'll always do my best for co-operative farming. I often go to the county seat and listen to the leading comrades' talks and it's not in at one ear and out of the other. No! I'm not some idiot who doesn't know what he's doing. . . ."

By then they'd already reached Sheng-pao's house. Yang stopped and shot another glance at Chen-shan.

His large weather-beaten face showed determination and ambition. Yang knew from what he had heard the previous night that Chen-shan had taken part and done well in the land-reform movement, and that he was capable. In time he'd be a good leader. Naturally a peasant with no schooling may have some out-dated ideas, and it would be absurd to expect him to be an advanced Party worker right away. Nevertheless Yang believed that Chen-shan loved the Party and hated class enemies. If he wasn't manipulated into putting forward a wrong policy or criticized too severely, then he'd do well in Hsiapao.

"That's right," Yang said encouragingly, "you must always follow the correct line, otherwise you'll get it wrong and make a mess of things no matter how capable you are. . . ."

They entered the low doorway of Sheng-pao's courtyard. It was very quiet. They wondered if they were all at a meeting so early in the morning.

"Sheng-pao," Chen-shan shouted. Silence. Then he called for Wei. Still no reply. He tried again, "Aunty!" A grey-haired, wizened old woman appeared at the door of a dilapidated hut, a poker in her hand. When she saw there was somebody else with Chen-shan she became excited.

"Oh, is this Secretary Yang, Chen-shan?"

"Who else did you expect?" Chen-shan was proud to be with such an important man. He turned to Yang and introduced her. "This is Sheng-pao's mother."

"You look well," Yang said warmly.

Yang looked so ordinary that the old woman felt confused. Perplexed she didn't know what to do with her poker, so she threw it on the doorstep. Lifting the white door curtain, Yang entered followed by Chen-shan and the old woman.

"Sheng-pao went to the first stable before dawn," his mother said enthusiastically. "And Wei went to the Second Team's stable. We're going to put all the draught animals together, so they went to see if anything needed attending to. If you don't mind waiting, they'll be back very soon for breakfast. Chen-shan, will you please go and look for them while I fetch a drink for Secretary Yang? I'd just boiled some water when I was cooking breakfast."

Chen-shan went out. Left alone in the room, Yang looked around. It was a simple bachelor's room. Rough mud walls, a large portrait of Chairman Mao and clusters of red peppers. It was rather bare and empty. Sheng-pao's mother poured out some water for him, but he didn't drink. Instead, he went into the small courtyard and examined it with great interest. New straw had been added to the thatched roofs of the huts on both sides, and there was still some snow on the roof tops. In the middle of the courtyard was a huge elm tree, around whose trunk were tied clusters of corn cobs. Yang was fascinated by their golden colour. Beside the tree were stacks of straw, sheaves of corn and millet stalks. At the sight of the harvest, Yang thought delightedly how in a few years the courtyard itself would improve a lot. . . .

Yang walked to the back of the hut on the west side of the courtyard. There was a small shed. He heard a munching sound and a man's voice. The back door was ajar so he peeped in. There he saw an old man wearing a felt cap pulling the corn off the cobs and dropping it into a trough. All the while, he was speaking to an old white horse. "He must be Sheng-pao's father," Yang thought.

"There old fellow, help yourself. This is your last meal here.

You're going to the co-op's stable today. You did all the hard work here, but you had so little to eat. Believe me, I wanted to feed you well but I didn't have enough even for myself. I've got enough food this year. Now we're going to join the co-op, so you can't stay any longer in my home. Please eat some more. You know this is your last meal with us. . . ."

What an interesting conversation, the old man saying goodbye to his horse! He was so engrossed that he didn't hear footsteps outside. Yang, not wishing to disturb him, wanted to stay and hear what the old man would say next.

Unfortunately Chen-shan came over all smiles.

"Uncle," Chen-shan said to the old man, who was known as Liang the Third, "I thought you were out collecting dung. Look, here's our Secretary Yang."

Liang the Third, wearing a new cotton-padded jacket, looked at Chen-shan dubiously. Then he stepped out of his shed, his hands still busy with the corn. Seeing Yang in his heavy coat with its fox-skin collar, he was dumbfounded. His eyes stared in disbelief and his mouth gaped wide. Before Chen-shan could introduce them, Yang asked, "How old are you, uncle?"

The old man did not answer. Flabbergasted, he just stared. Gradually the look of astonishment faded from his wrinkled face and he looked deeply moved. Yang understood that usually old people were slower to adapt, especially to surprises. And they were sometimes hard of hearing too. Yang asked him politely, "Are you about seventy, old uncle?"

But the old man was not listening.

"I'd never expected this! Never!" he said. "Wei and my son wanted to go and invite you over here after breakfast when the sun's up and it's warmer. But you're here already. . . ."

Old Liang wiped away a tear with his sleeve and began to scrutinize Yang's smiling face.

"Let's go into the house," Chen-shan said. "It's so cold outside."

They all went in and Yang sat on Wei's bed. Chen-shan poured Yang a bowl of hot water. Yang put the bowl on a long table and asked the old man warmly, "Are you in your sixties?"

Morning in Shaoshan (traditional Chinese painting) by *Li Hsiung-tsai*

Liang the Third talked now. Holding up his fingers, he indicated that he was sixty-four. Then he turned to Chen-shan, "You must've heard what I said to my horse, Chen-shan. Don't think that I'm reluctant to part with it. Don't think that Sheng-pao's father is unhappy about following the socialist road. Don't take it like that. I've been honest and frank all my life. We should speak the truth before the county Party secretary. I'm all for the co-op, not the slightest doubts. But I'm all upset this morning because my horse is leaving. You know, it reminds me of all the animals I've tended and now the past is flashing back in my mind."

Chen-shan laughed. "If that's what's in your mind, then better forget it. Thinking of the old society will only upset you. . . ."

"But, I can't help it," Liang the Third said in embarrassment. "Try not to laugh at us country folk, Secretary Yang."

Yang felt drawn to the old man and asked him seriously, "Old people have long memories and will never forget their past sufferings. That's good. Why should I laugh at you? You must've suffered a lot then."

"It's a long story. . . ." Old Liang shook his head and then said kindly, "Have some water and warm yourself. Let me first put this corn into the trough and then I'll tell you everything."

As the old man went out, Chen-shan said that he'd sent word to Sheng-pao with a passerby but he'd rather go and find him himself.

"Oh no. Please don't," Yang stopped him. "Let them take their time. But you carry on with your own work, if you've got something to do. I'd like to stay here and chat to Old Liang."

Kuo took his leave. A moment later Yang heard the old man speaking as the head of the family, "Prepare some food for the secretary!"

"Yes, I'm getting it ready," Liang's wife replied cheerfully.

Pushing open the door the old man re-entered carrying a little crate with a few corn cobs. He closed the door behind him and went up to Yang.

"The god of cattle is the master of us peasants," he observed in earnest. "We can't do without those animals. If we don't have them, we're like animals ourselves. It's true!"

"Yes, you're right," Yang could not agree more. Holding the bowl he continued, "It was true in the old society. . . ."

Liang the Third was delighted that the county Party secretary saw eye to eye with him. While chatting he squatted down to pluck the corn with his calloused hands. He talked about his past. Yang put down the bowl on the table and bent to help him, but the old man stopped him as he was about to break a corn cob.

"Oh no! That's my job. You have some water," he pleaded, gripping Yang's sleeve.

"I'm not thirsty or cold. I want to listen to you," Yang said smiling but not giving back the cob.

Since Yang insisted on working the old man had to give in. As they worked together, he felt more at ease than before. He began to talk about the black cow he had looked after when he was only a small child. He went into great details about the livestock his father, he and his son had tended. How they had ploughed, how they had driven the water wheels. He even told Yang about selling them and their deaths. One of his father's oxen, he said, had been taken away by some bandits as far back as in 1912. And two oxen had died in his hands. When he came to how he had to sell his son's favourite ox so as to ransom him from being conscripted, he stopped working, his hands trembling. It was bitter for him to recall the event. When he described the plight of his family the last time they had had no draught animal to help them farm, he could not help wiping his tears with the sleeve of his new cotton-padded jacket.

Yang was touched. He knew of course that peasants treasured their livestock, but this was the first time he had heard someone talk about his animals with such feeling.

"Uncle," Yang tried to console him, "you won't suffer when your horse leaves your house this time. It won't be like that. Have you joined the study sessions on the struggles between the capitalist and socialist roads?" He wanted to know how political studies and class education were progressing in the village.

"Yes, I have," he sounded choked.

"Do you believe what they said?"

"Oh yes, I do . . . I do. But to reach that stage the Communist Party must be capable. I'll be frank with you. I won't beat about the bush."

He looked up, worried in case Yang was not happy with what he had said.

But Yang was very interested.

"Do you think that the Communist Party is doing well?" Yang asked.

"I hope you can come here more often. . . ." Liang the Third began with an effort.

He would have continued his subject had not Wei and his son come back. Entering the room, Sheng-pao was so delighted to see Yang that with both his hands he clasped Yang's hand. Sporting a new hair cut from the previous night, Sheng-pao's face was lit up by a broad grin. He was so excited that he did not know what to say to Yang.

12

It was the first fine day after the snow. The morning sun shone brightly, and the dazzling glare forced people to screw up their eyes. After breakfast, groups of villagers from Big Crossroads, Wangchia Bridge, Kuochiaho, Machiapao and Kochiapao on the north bank of Tang Stream were all making for Frog Flat. The collectivization of the farm animals was made more significant with the arrival of Yang. Gongs and drums marked the progress of the peasants in the revolution in the countryside. It was thought that the celebrations came from Beacon Co-op, but they came in fact from Kuan Creek Hamlet on the south bank and were led by Yang Chia-hsi and Sun Chih-ming. They were the ones who had gone to the district authorities for permission to set up a co-op and had been reluctant to congratulate Beacon Co-op on its inauguration. It was only after his meeting with Yang that morning that Chen-shan had organized his villagers to participate. Everybody knew that the celebrations were meant for Yang's ears.

After the meal many people came one after the other to Liang the Third's house. Wang Ya-mei, a woman comrade in the work

team, Niu Kang, another team member from the Party committee of Huangpao District, and Han Pei-sheng, a cadre of the county administration based in the co-op, all came to shake hands with Yang. They were chatting and laughing like one big family. As there was no room for him to squat and the conversation was between Party members in a language unfamiliar to him, Liang the Third quietly slipped away. The Communists could talk to their hearts' content as far as he was concerned.

Outside the door, the old man met Tseng-fu, Yu-wan, Ta-hai and Huan-hsi coming into his courtyard. They were all smiling happily for they'd come to pay their respects to Secretary Yang. Old Liang smiled and lifted up the door curtain for them because they were close friends of his son. Then he went down the steps and out of the gate to find some men gathered in the street furtively peeping into his courtyard. They weren't swaggering into his house as usual. And there were some neighbours and villagers from Big Crossroads and Kochiapao waiting outside to see what Secretary Yang looked like.

"If my little hut wasn't so crowded, you could go in and see Yang for yourselves and even talk to him. He doesn't put on any airs. This morning he helped me strip corn off the cobs and asked me to tell him about the lives of my grandfather, father and myself and our livestock. He wasn't in the least bored but listened patiently. He seems to know a lot about us peasants. No wonder our Sheng-pao is so eager to try and set up the co-op. He's got courage because great minds like this one are teaching him how to do it."

As Old Liang was talking, Yang left the courtyard followed by a troop of work team members and co-op cadres. Smiling at the onlookers in the street, Yang said goodbye to Old Liang and went with Sheng-pao and Wei along the cleared path. Behind them a stream of people trudged over the glistening snow towards the south. The peasants who had waited to see Yang outside Sheng-pao's house, followed in the same direction. The band from Kuan Creek Hamlet had moved to an open space in front of the First Team's stable.

Old Liang was left alone in his doorway. Shading his eyes with his hand to look at the snow-covered fields along the stream, he felt

unusually happy. For many days he had been preparing to endure parting with his old white horse, but he still couldn't be certain that he wouldn't weep. The impending pain of parting had been increasing like an ache. But Yang's arrival and his friendly and reassuring behaviour had changed Old Liang's mood.

Returning to his now quiet courtyard, he went to find his wife vigorously washing up after the breakfast she'd served to their distinguished guest.

"It's a lucky day today, isn't it?" Old Liang smiled.

"How do you know?" retorted his wife.

"Because it is," he insisted. "Before the sun rose a magpie on the tree cried loudly. Then Secretary Yang arrived. So it must be a lucky day."

His wife smilingly agreed with his absurd conclusions, then told him not to delay her so that she could attend the meeting to mark the collectivization of the co-op's farm animals. "I've never been to anything like this before in all my life. . . ."

"Listen to me," his tone was instructive, "it's not just the first time for you alone. Nothing like this has ever happened before. Even in my dreams, I've been wondering if it's true or not."

"Ah, there you go again!" his wife gaped at him.

"Now don't you give me away," he chortled. "If you do, they'll laugh at me, being Sheng-pao's father. When I'm dreaming I hear them say it's only a joke that the villagers in Frog Flat have removed the landmarks for individual plots, dug an irrigation ditch and gathered the farm animals together for collectivization. Then I wake up, and it's all true. As you know, the work team members, co-op cadres and villagers are all very keen to serve the co-op. Sometimes I wondered why they didn't let the other villages have a go at this. If the leaders insisted on this for Hsiapao, why didn't they let that old fox Chen-shan do it at Kuan Creek Hamlet?"

"You're surely not going to let down our Sheng-pao, are you?" scolded his wife. "You're always chopping and changing. It's high time you mended your ways!"

The old man snorted and went on, "No, that's past. Look, in

spite of the snowy weather Secretary Yang came to take part in celebrations to collectivize our livestock. You can't say the Communist Party from the grass-roots to the leaders isn't dedicated."

At this moment Old Liang didn't mind any more that a lucky day had not been chosen from the almanac beforehand for collectivizing the farm animals. He felt confident it had turned out a lucky day because Yang had come to Frog Flat. Wasn't a Party secretary's arrival a lucky event? There was a rumour going round Kuan Creek Hamlet that Sheng-pao was not as competent as Chen-shan in setting up a co-op. Having witnessed Chen-shan's discriminating attitudes first to Yang and then to the peasants, his stature was diminished in Old Liang's eyes. In contrast he felt overjoyed that his son had treated everyone equally. That's the way to behave, my boy, he said to himself. No matter who's with you, you ought to be yourself and not to throw your weight about with the villagers and flatter the bigwigs. He had noticed that Yang was evidently more pleased to see his son than Chen-shan. How proud he was!

Having paced around the room, he made up his mind and decided not to tell his wife about this for the time being. In high spirits he pushed open the door and went across the yard to their shed in the west corner. His old white horse had munched up the corn he and Yang had stripped from the cobs. He fondly stroked the horse's head, saying:

"Good, you've had plenty to eat, so you won't be homesick now. We're soon going to have to part. At dawn or in the evening I'll always pop into the stable to see you. Now don't you worry about being bullied in the co-op stable. Jen the Fourth has a heart of gold, see?"

Before long, the large brass bell hanging on a honey-locust tree outside Wang Sheng-mao's courtyard sounded. Old Liang had watered and brushed his horse and cleaned the dung away from around its hooves. Hearing the bell, he called to his wife who was in her room. After she had fastened a red ribbon to the bridle, he solemnly led the horse out of the gate.

In a space cleared of snow Liang halted. Huan-hsi's mother led out of her courtyard a beribboned young ox, with Su-fang, Shuan-shuan's wife, following behind to tend it. Liang found that its rosette looked prettier than his horse's red ribbon. Delighted by the sight, he resolved to wait for his neighbours so that they could go together. After the class education and the study about the two roads, Old Liang had changed his mind and would never look down on Su-fang again.

"Why is your brown ox so dressed up?" he joked with her. "Is Huan-hsi about to get married?"

"Huan-hsi's too young yet. Maybe it's Sheng-pao who's going to marry," she replied, a woman in her forties and dressed in a padded jacket covered with a clean blue tunic. "Didn't you see his girl friend come to our village a few days ago?"

"I only heard them talk about it. . . ." he replied truthfully.

Chatting cheered them up. Old Liang went first leading his old white horse along the path, the woman team leader followed with her ox, and Su-fang, in a white scarf to mourn for her dead father-in-law, brought up the rear.

"Sheng-lu's coming, uncle!" Su-fang shouted.

"Wait a moment, third brother," Huan-hsi's mother called. "Let's wait for our neighbour."

Liang the Third halted and turned his head to see Liang Sheng-lu, leading his black horse without much enthusiasm. Old Liang thought he ought to wait for him.

A pipe in his mouth, Sheng-lu looked neither happy nor downcast. As he came closer, Liang the Third stared at his nephew and in the glare from the snow he could make out a slight blush on the younger man's face. Perhaps he felt ashamed at having backed out of the mutual-aid team last summer.

But they now had joined together to send their farm animals to the co-op stable.

"I haven't seen your father for a long time, Sheng-lu," said Huan-hsi's mother with concern.

Pulling out his pipe, Sheng-lu stammered: "Oh . . . he's had stomach trouble for some days. . . ."

Su-fang knew Liang the First well, for she used to see his family often.

"Ah, third sister-in-law," Su-fang sighed. "Don't you know that the older men grow, the more cussed they become. Once something has got stuck in their minds, nine oxen can't dislodge it. Since the co-op was proposed, my uncle Liang the First has eaten less each day. And his belly is swelling up, but he won't send for the doctor. I don't know why."

"Your father's old, Sheng-lu," the woman team leader put in. "His daughters-in-law ought to humour him."

Leading the way, Liang the Third remained silent. Huan-hsi's mother, now a cadre in the co-op, had shown her concern. Liang the Third had been upright all his life, and never flattered anybody. He thought: "It's all rot that he has stomach trouble. Besides Kuo Shih-fu in Frog Flat, now Liang the First is pretending to be ill. He used to bathe his black horse in the ditches in the hot summer days. At night he would squat driving away the mosquitoes for it with his fan. Yet just when the co-op was being founded and his black horse was being taken to the stable, he didn't even go to see it off.

The co-op members living around Feng Yu-yi's courtyard had already taken their animals to the place where a rope was tied between two locust trees to which were tethered horses, oxen, donkeys and mules. They wouldn't be taken to the stable until the afternoon feeding time. It was the same with the Second Team's stable upstream at Kuo Ching-hsi's courtyard. In the square where the brass bell hung on the honey-locust tree outside Wang Sheng-mao's courtyard, Kuan Creek Hamlet folk were beating gongs and drums. This was the centre of the events. Tseng-fu was lodging at Sheng-mao's and next door in Iron Lock Wang San's house was Beacon Co-op's office.

The people of Hsiapao on the other side of Tang Stream who had come to Frog Flat to see the sights, were led from the First Team's stable to the Second Team's one. Others from Huangpao visited the two stables in the reverse order. They admiringly touched a

newly-made trough, or counted the wooden-handled ploughs hanging on the walls, carefully examining them. Visitors crowded around a shed for storing hay or peeped in curiosity through the latticed windows of another store-room. It was as if the newly-cut hay, water-wheels, wooden rakes and harrows sold to the co-op by its members had become exotic rarities. They even took an interest in the mound of earth near the stable which was like a little hill and yet it would not last more than half a year. More people crowded round the tethered livestock. Some were asking about their prices, about the co-op's method of handling the members' investment of their cattle, and when this would be repaid. How much would they invest in cash if they had no farm animals, or what would happen if they couldn't afford to make an investment. . . ?

Liang the Third arrived at the clearing outside Feng Yu-yi's courtyard leading his old white horse. Jen the Fourth was excitedly answering the visitors' questions. Catching sight of Old Liang, Jen stopped speaking to the crowd and went chuckling to take the reins from Old Liang. Jen pointed to the straw rope between the two locust trees and indicated to Huan-hsi's mother and Liang Sheng-lu to tether their animals there. Liang the Third was so cheered by the sight that he no longer felt disturbed by his brother's refusal to see off his black horse. He couldn't stop grinning and tried to think of some appropriate words to say, but was at a loss, unused to such events.

Jen the Fourth had changed completely. First thing that morning he'd shaved his face and head, on which he wore a new towel headdress. Liang the Third looked at his new blue sash and wondered when he had bought it to replace the old straw rope he'd worn previously. Dressed in new clothes, in a new frame of mind, doing new things, it was as if he'd become a new man! Because of his large family and lack of manpower, he'd been appointed as stockman so that he could earn workpoints all year round and afford to raise his children. No wonder he was feeling so proud and happy. Next to Old Liang stood a peasant from Kuochiaho, who asked jokingly:

"Now you've got such a cushy job, who'll make our mud houses next spring?"

Jen the Fourth looked up and laughed loudly with the others. Having tethered Liang the Third's old white horse, he did not stop to speak to Huan-hsi's mother or Liang Sheng-lu, but resumed his explanation with a serious face.

"We haven't got all that much livestock because some are too old or too young to be invested in the co-op. They can be fed by the owners as our new co-op hasn't enough capital to feed idle mouths. If the members don't want to feed them, they can sell them at the market, but the money must be handed over as their investment if they have no other strong cattle to invest. Thus we can afford to buy some stock next spring, and Beacon Co-op will have enough livestock for its ploughs, carts, and millstones. I'm told by Old Han, the cadre who's staying in our co-op, that I'm now the leader of our cattle 'tractor' team."

Excellent! Jen's answer was very clear. Liang the Third never expected that after taking part in the preparations for the co-op for only a month, Jen would wax so eloquent. He longed to speak too. Pointing to Jen the Fourth who in recent times had grown closer to him, Liang said admiringly:

"Jen's black calf was sold for sixty yuan and he insisted on handing over all the money. . . ."

"As my black calf could only drive a water-wheel, I was advised to sell it and so I agreed," Jen modestly interrupted him. "Since I'm the stockman, I think, it's better for me not to feed my own calf with the others, so that no one can accuse me of favouring it."

This poor peasant's honesty, kindness and rectitude greatly impressed the visitors. Everybody in Hsiapao knew that it was fine old peasants like him who had eaten chaff and herbs and never had a good meal most of their lives. With the founding of the co-op, the first thing they wanted to do was to harvest more crops. On other points they were inarticulate at the moment.

A robust peasant, wearing a towel wrapped around his head, heaved a sigh and said:

"Peasants who farm on their own can't produce more crops. When they have no draught animals or when their animals are weak they cannot plough or sow properly."

"And they can never sow their seeds in time," a shrivelled old man with a goatee cut in. "Always too late, for they'd be waiting for the owners of the livestock to finish their sowing first. . . ."

Liang the Third thought to himself: "These are two real old-timers." Just at that moment Iron Egg's mother from Kuan Creek Hamlet snapped:

"Well, my good neighbours! You may know about men's work, but you've no idea how hard things are for us housewives. Without animals, our legs are all swollen up dragging the millstones to husk or grind. And if we borrow an animal from some neighbour, we have to send our greetings three times a day to please him or force a smile whenever we meet even from a distance."

Liang the Third listened attentively, his eyes fixed upon the old woman. The heart of this suspicious, uncertain and conservative old man was moved and warmed by her words. Young people thought that a happy life meant high buildings, electricity, telephones and the mechanization of agriculture. But the old people knew otherwise. The collectivization of their livestock was happiness. Old Liang deeply sympathized with Iron Egg's mother.

"Don't you worry," he assured her. "Wait till the experiment of Beacon Co-op is successful. Remember the old saying: After the cart has gone ahead, there must be a track to follow behind. You poor peasants of Kuan Creek Hamlet will certainly lead a better life sooner or later." The old woman was very pleased hearing this.

The old man now parted happily with his old white horse. Before Liberation, when they had sold their yellow calf, Liang the Third and Sheng-pao had wept and repeatedly cast fond looks over their shoulders as they left the market. But today the old man didn't look back even once. Like a V.I.P. he swaggered around some mounds of earth and then made his way through the crowd into the courtyard of the First Team's stable.

Feng Yu-yi, who had put on his precious skull-cap for the occasion, was standing in the courtyard answering questions about farm implements and fodder. Liang the Third pricked up his ears and heard him explaining, "The big horse-drawn farm implements now belong to the co-op and have been accounted for. Small farm tools are private property still and will be kept by individuals. At the present stage, all the fodder comes from the members according to their manpower and land. . . .

"After the harvests in the summer and autumn, we'll reserve enough fodder for the livestock before distributing the rest among the co-op members." Yu-yi readily explained everything while the visitors from the neighbouring villages nodded with interest.

"Yu-yi's doing a fine job," thought Old Liang liking him immensely. With so many people crowded into the courtyard, Yu-yi didn't see him, so deciding not to bother him, Liang the Third made his way towards the stable.

There was a couplet written on sheets of red paper at the entrance. What a joyous event it was!

A teacher from Hsiapao Primary School was reading aloud: "Agricultural co-operation is an enormous force. Collective production has tremendous advantages. — It's example will shine far and wide!"

"Well composed!" the primary school principal approved. "And the handwriting's beautiful too. I wonder who in the work team has such a good hand?"

Liang the Third could neither read a single character nor appreciate the calligraphy. He only stood in front of the couplet, trying to make sure that the sheets of red paper were pasted on straight. Then, grinning from ear to ear, he entered the stable where his old white horse would begin its new life and which he would often frequent.

There were so many visitors from the neighbouring villages standing in front of the troughs that the old man had to edge his way through the narrow passage behind them. Like the people from Kuan Creek Hamlet who had visited it the previous day, they were also asking about how many animals the stable could hold and whether or not the beasts would be able to lie down at night. Kuo Sou, a pipe tucked in his girdle, was answering their questions:

"Three oxen will be tied up at this trough, four donkeys by that one and two horses and a young mule in that manger over there. There won't be any other animals here, because there must be room for the animals to lie down at night after a day's work."

Hearing that his old white horse would be at the far end of the stable pleased Old Liang, though he felt a little apprehensive about its being tied up beside Sheng-lu's black horse. Because his white horse was old and unable to eat so fast, he'd have a nasty time eating in the same manger as the black horse.

"When I come back to see him later on, I'll ask Jen to tie the black horse further away from the trough in case he eats up all the fodder in it." The old man turned this matter over and over in his mind, no longer bothering about what the visitors were discussing. He didn't like Sheng-lu or his father, but he had long admired their horse. What a sleek horse it was! But now the co-op owned it.

Approving of everything, the old man's spirits rose even higher. Now, like a head of the family, he opened the water vat filled to the brim. After that he made his way behind the crowd and went out of the back door.

Liang the Third shielded his eyes from the glare. He was surprised to see so many people heading for Frog Flat from the direction of Huangpao. Like going to market, they walked in groups along the snow-swept path. There seemed to be more visitors from the neighbouring townships than from Hsiapao. The old man couldn't have imagined earlier when he was inside the stable that the fame of Huangpao District's first co-op was so widespread and would attract so many peasant visitors.

A crowd had gathered at the threshing ground outside the compounds of Wang Sheng-mao and Iron Lock Wang San. Nearly a hundred boys and girls were thronged around the drums and gongs. People were streaming in and out of Iron Lock's compound. There were notices pasted on the mud walls both sides of the door, and many were looking at them.

Liang the Third stared at the scene for a while, then lowered his hand shielding his eyes. Deciding to go to the Second Team's stable and from there to the co-op's office, he made his way along the creek leading straight to Kuo Ching-hsi's compound.

It was already the end of the twelfth lunar month and the days were getting longer. The snow began to thaw as the sun moved

from the Eastern Plain to the sky above Frog Flat. Water from the melting snow on the slope ran on to the road, forming little streams, only to disappear into the dry earth.

About noon time, Party secretaries from the townships and leaders from major mutual-aid teams, which had been notified by the Party committee of Huangpao District, arrived at Frog Flat one after another to celebrate the inauguration of Beacon Co-op. Wang Tso-min had wanted to stimulate enthusiasm for the setting up of co-ops through this event, while the secretaries of the Party branches of Huangpao, Fengtien, Liutsun, Shangpao, Hohsi and Changtsun Townships, who supported collectivization whole-heartedly, had brought with them all the leaders of their mutual-aid teams, making the atmosphere all the more exciting.

They came to the village crossing over Wangchia, Huangpao and Kuan Creek Bridges, and were drawn to Iron Lock's courtyard by the sound of drums and gongs. All the co-op cadres and some of the members were waiting to receive them. Sheng-pao and Tseng-fu shook their hands and accepted their gifts — couplets written on two scrolls. Several tables and benches had been arranged in the neat courtyard and on each table were some earthenware bowls. Feng Yu-wan and Yang Ta-hai were busy serving boiled water to the guests, while the comrades of the work team went to hang the couplets on the walls of the compound. In the neighbouring compound shared by Sheng-mao and Tseng-fu, the two women team leaders, Huan-hsi's mother and Fu-tan's wife, were engaged in boiling water with some of the women.

At last several men on bicycles, including the director of the district's supply and marketing co-op and some other cadres with Wang Tso-min in the lead, were spotted racing across Huangpao Bridge towards the crowded threshing ground. When Wang dismounted, Han Pei-sheng taking his bicycle from him told him that Yang was in the office, and so he went straight there.

"I telephoned Tao last night immediately after I got back to the district office," Wang said taking off his padded hat with one hand and wiping away the perspiration on his forehead with the other. "I told him everything about the situation here and your opinions.

He was in agreement with our plans and so around midnight I sent some men to notify every township. . . ."

Yang, who was sitting on the edge of Han Pei-sheng's bed, smiled with satisfaction and asked, "Have you brought the seals with you?"

"Yes, of course!" From a pocket on his cotton-padded jacket, he fished out two seals, one rectangular and the other round, and handed them to Yang.

Yang looked at them for a minute or two before he passed them to Wei and Chen-shan with a smile.

While they were talking in the office Sheng-pao and Tseng-fu were in the courtyard receiving the guests and gifts from the district's supply and marketing co-op, the bank and the public health centre. Glossy black characters on three bright red satin flags expressed their heartfelt congratulations on the inauguration of the district's first co-op.

Liang the Third who had strolled back from the Second Team's stable from Upstream felt completely bewildered by the scenes at the crowded threshing ground and in Iron Lock's courtyard. He simply had not known that all this would take place. He had thought previously that after the little plots of land had been linked together, the irrigation ditch dug and the big farm implements collectivized, the co-op would be formally established after the animals were installed in the co-op stables. He had never dreamt of all this ceremony. Now he realized that the reason why Sheng-pao and Wei had come to the office so early that morning was to make preparations for welcoming the guests. If only he had guessed or somebody had told him.

During the days of preparation for inaugurating the co-op Old Liang had seized every opportunity to have a private talk with his son whenever he found Sheng-pao alone. He'd told him again and again that the classification of land and manpower and the pricing of the animals and farm implements should be honestly and fairly done. From his experience of family squabbles, these things worried him a lot, but he didn't know that a co-op was nothing like a family. So Old Liang was sometimes very worried, while others were carefree. All his life he'd been worrying about something or other, but now the

Dawn in the Yenan Date Garden (traditional Chinese painting) by *Chien Sung-yen*


秦園晴光
一九七七年九月錢松嵒敬繪

festive atmosphere made him light-hearted and he felt proud for the first time in his life. He could not help grinning at everyone he met. The tired old man had acquired a new lease of life. A new spirit was stirring in him too.

He kept walking backwards and forwards from the threshing ground into the office compound, unable to stand still for a single moment. He wanted to see how many people from Kuan Creek Hamlet were present or absent and whether or not there was anyone around who still didn't trust his son. He had already noted that Kuo Shih-fu, the upper-middle peasant, and his two brothers, as well as the middle-school student, Yung-mao, were there. In fact the whole village had turned out except for the family of the rich peasant, Yao Shih-chieh.

The couplets sent by other townships attracted the old man's attention. Just then Sheng-pao and Tseng-fu came out carrying a table, followed by Feng Yu-wan, Yang Ta-hai, Han Pei-sheng and Huan-hsi, each carrying a bench. It was announced that the meeting would begin, with the guests standing on one side and the co-op members on the other. Tseng-fu went to the adjoining compound to fetch the women. People began to move to their places. Only when everyone was almost settled did Old Liang go to the back, but when Kuo Ching-hsi, Sheng-mao, Iron Lock and some others insisted that he should move to the front, he had to comply. The moment he joined the men at the front, Yang, Wang, Wei, Lu and Chen-shan came out of the office one by one. Though there were several benches, Yang didn't sit down and so neither did the others.

When Wei announced the opening of the ceremony to celebrate the founding of Beacon Co-op, firecrackers exploded merrily. Old Liang was slow to realize that he should clap his toil-worn hands, as he looked around at the others applauding. But he joined in the clapping when Wei invited Wang to hand over the seals on behalf of the district Party committee and the district government and stared attentively when he solemnly gave them to Sheng-pao.

Was it overdoing it, celebrating the establishment of this small co-op in such a grand manner? Not in the least. For when you consider it carefully you will see that the success or failure, progress or

set-backs and the experiences and lessons of this small co-op did not belong merely to the few peasant families in Frog Flat, or to the district and county. This movement would soon spread throughout the country, and so such a celebration was appropriate.

Yang briskly climbed on to a bench when Wei invited him to make his speech. Smiling, he waved his hands to stop the audience from applauding. The peasants soon quietened down but Yang announced that this was not the occasion for a long speech and that he would only take up a couple of minutes. Since they were here for the setting up of the co-op, he didn't want to waste their precious time. He only emphasized the point that the Party committee of Weiyuan County would strictly adhere to the decision of the Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao in establishing examples for the rest to follow. In other words, to let the masses educate themselves. The Communist Party upheld socialism as the best way of life, but it would not be imposed on any peasant.

"Well, well!" Liang the Third was moved and glad that he could live in such good times. "Their ideas are really reasonable and just!" he thought.

Han Pei-sheng told Old Liang that all the morning's activities had been personally arranged by Yang after his arrival at the village the previous night. He had worked in the office till shortly before the rally, attending to everything.

Then Sheng-pao addressed the meeting on behalf of the cadres, promising that they would act according to the co-op regulations and prove worthy of the trust of their leaders and the co-op members. He ended by thanking them for their warm wishes. His speech was concise and to the point, and his father listened with a smile and wondered if Yang had taught him. . . .

After the meeting, Liang the Third wasn't in the least tired, and his spirits soared even higher. Together with the guests, he went to Feng Yu-yi's compound feeling full of confidence. He tried to hold himself erect, straightening his bent back a little. He wanted to have another peep at the animals before they were taken to the stables that afternoon.

Everything would have been all right if he hadn't seen it, but he found something which immediately lowered his spirits. His heart ached as if he had been injured. On the previous day he had seen the black horse belonging to his brother with a pair of leather reins, but now these had been replaced by a worn-out rope, and moreover the bridle had also been exchanged for a shabby one. Other families had decorated their animals with red ribbons and rosettes, while Liang the First and his son Sheng-lu had changed the bridle and reins of their horse just as if it were for sale.

Walking home alone Old Liang recalled what had happened when he and his elder brother had divided the family property to set up separate households. He'd been ashamed of his brother then for quarrelling even over something as trivial as a piece of firewood. . . .

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Chen Yu-ying

Unforgettable Years

I come from a poor peasant family in Pakuang, Ninghsiang County, Hunan. While still a small girl I was sold as a child-bride, and in my teens I worked as a servant in different families of landlords and capitalists, who treated me worse than a beast of burden. I shall never forget as long as I live the day in December 1926 when I went to work as a nurse-maid for Yang Kai-hui, then living at No. 1 Wangluyuan in Changsha. At that time Kai-hui was expecting her third child. Her eldest son An-ying was only four, and her second son An-ching had just turned two; so they needed someone to help them in the house. When I went in, I saw Chairman Mao reading a book and Kai-hui practising calligraphy. At sight of me they smiled and got up to greet me.

"We're glad you've come to help us," said Kai-hui. "You must consider us as friends, not treat us as master and mistress."

I felt I'd stepped into a new world! For more than ten years I'd worked for different families, all of whom treated me as the lowest of the low. But these two were so different, they must be good people.

During my stay in Wangluyuan, Chairman Mao had to go out on business in all weathers, carrying his umbrella and wearing a pair of cloth shoes. Sometimes he was away for days at a time. Later I learned that he had gone to the countryside to study the peasant movement there. Each time he came home, he was so busy writing up his notes that he had little time to rest. As Kai-hui was pregnant, she seldom went out but would help Chairman Mao write up or copy out his notes at home. When some comrades came there for meetings, Kai-hui would join in their discussions too. After I'd been there for about three weeks, Chairman Mao left for Wuchang in Hupeh. Ten days later, Kai-hui took her mother and children and me to Wuchang too, to stay in the left section of house No. 41 Tufuti.

Many revolutionaries had lived in this house and held meetings there. By now I had often heard Chairman Mao explain that we must organize the peasants to rise up and overthrow the reactionaries. Only when we toppled their regime could we peasants be liberated. He also told me that in our work we must not be afraid of hardships, difficulties or even death. Those words made a strong impression on my mind.

In those days Chairman Mao was giving lessons in the Peasant Movement Institute, and he had to write articles too; so he was kept very busy and only came home late at night. Then he had to write notes, and the light in his room would stay on into the small hours. Kai-hui's main work was to help Chairman Mao write up and copy out his notes, but she also went out sometimes to attend meetings, give lessons and do other work. Many a time she too sat up working till late. While they were hard at work, I would sew or mend clothes for the children and get them their supper. Chairman Mao always made me share their meals — something that had never happened to me in other families. And although they went to bed so late they would urge me:

"Sister Sun, you'd better go and get some sleep. You've worked hard all day without stopping to rest, and tomorrow will be another busy day. No one's made of iron: you must look after your health."

Chairman Mao lived very frugally. At that time he had only two vests, one white shirt and one long grey cloth gown. He usually

wore the white shirt when he went out to teach. One day I saw that it was dirty, so I washed it. Chairman Mao had to give a lesson that day, however, and as the shirt hadn't dried he put on the cloth gown although it was very hot.

One day when I went out I got lost and had difficulty finding my way back, as I couldn't read and I spoke with a Hunan accent. When Chairman Mao heard this, he carefully wrote down my name and address on a piece of white cloth.

"Put this in your pocket," he said. "Next time you lose your way, just show this to someone and he'll tell you how to come back." So this solved my problem.

Another time, I accidentally broke a thermos flask.

"Don't worry," said Kai-hui. "It doesn't matter." She added jokingly, "This gives me the excuse to buy a new one."

I was very moved by all their kindness to me.

Kai-hui's work kept her busy all day, but whenever she had a moment to spare she would feed or bath the baby and do her best to help me with household chores. Kai-hui trusted me and was very good to me. She helped me to understand politics as well, and explained to me about the revolution.

"For the time being, people are divided into rich and poor," she told me. "But once we've overthrown the foreign imperialists and the capitalists and other reactionaries, the poor will have a better life."

In this way she helped me to become more politically conscious.

Kai-hui went to hospital to have her third baby on the third day of the third lunar month in 1927. Not till four days later did Chairman Mao have time to go and see her.

"I'm sorry I couldn't come earlier," he said.

"Never mind," said Kai-hui. "Go on with your work. Sister Sun is looking after me very well."

I carried little Mao-mao over for Chairman Mao to see. He looked at the mite lovingly.

"I don't suppose anyone has swopped babies with me, eh?" he joked.

That set Kai-hui laughing.

Kai-hui was devoted to Chairman Mao. If he had a meeting outside and was late for supper, she would tell me to keep the food warm for him. She always left the best food for him to eat. When Chairman Mao was working and the children were making too much noise, she would shoo them away so that he could work in peace.

We stayed little more than four months in Wuchang. On July 15, Wang Ching-wei, the Right-wing leader of the Kuomintang, launched a counter-revolutionary coup and they started arresting and killing revolutionaries.

"I had a narrow escape today," said Chairman Mao calmly one day when he came home. "I was walking down a street in Hankow when along came two fellows who asked me whether I'd seen Mao Tsetung. I pointed at an alley on one side and told them: Yes, he just went that way. So they rushed off in that direction."

Then Chairman Mao decided to leave Wuhan and go to the countryside to start armed struggle. We went back to Changsha and stayed at a place called Panchang in the east suburb, while Chairman Mao went to the Pingchiang-Liuyang area to organize the famous August Harvest Uprising. On September 20, he led the insurgents to the Chingkang Mountains in the border district between Hunan and Kiangsi, and on the 27th of October the revolutionary base in the Chingkang Mountains was established.

2

On Chairman Mao's instructions, Kai-hui remained in Panchang to continue the Party's underground activities and organize the peasants for armed struggle. She often went to the villages to study conditions there and do propaganda work for the revolution. She was on the best of terms with the local peasants, who called her "Auntie Hsia" or "Sister Hsia". Dressed like a village woman, she would go with a bamboo basket to pick herbs or visit peasant homes, sometimes taking me and the three children with her. Sometimes she invited a few peasants home for a chat. To get more peasants to join in the movement and to keep her activities secret, she sometimes stayed with relatives for a few months. When she discussed the

political situation with peasants, I often joined in too. And if she went out at night, I often went with her carrying a lantern. Kai-hui was good at explaining revolutionary truths in simple language.

"Setbacks in the revolution are temporary; so are the hard times we poor folk are going through," she said. "We must work hard and soldier on. We must get organized and arouse the masses to fight against the reactionaries; and we must never lose heart. We poor folk are bound to come out on top in the end."

Her words gave confidence and strength to the poor peasants who were oppressed by the white terror and they carried on the revolutionary struggle, dealing hard blows against the Kuomintang diehards.

After Chairman Mao had gone to the Chingkang Mountains, we sometimes got messages from him. Each time Kai-hui received a letter from him she was elated and would read it over and over again. When I asked her how Chairman Mao was, she told me that he was very busy organizing campaigns against the enemy.

"Sister Sun," she said jubilantly, "when we win the war and defeat the reactionaries, all will be well and the poor will have a good life."

She knew that the revolution would be victorious.

An-ying sometimes asked her, "Mum, when will my dad come back?"

Kai-hui looking into the distance would promise him, "After the war is won, dad will be back."

Life during those days in Panchang was hard. Sometimes when we managed to get hold of some small fish, we would bake them in hot ashes then add salt to them, as we couldn't afford cooking oil. But although she lived so frugally, Kai-hui was always trying to help her poor neighbours. When she found that a woman had no clothes for her child, she would give her some of her own children's clothes; when she found that a family had no food, she would send them some of her own. Her heart was always closely linked with the masses.

"We poor folk are having a hard time, so we must help each other," she often told me and the children. "We must give other people a helping hand and not just think of ourselves."

Kai-hui treated me as one of the family, and I admired and loved her from the bottom of my heart. While we were in Wuchang, I

Yang Kai-hui (sculpture) by *Szutu Chao-kuang* and others

received wages from them. But after we moved back to Changsha, as she had to support her family and Chairman Mao could seldom send money home from the Chingkang Mountains, I refused to accept any payment. We got on very well together, and the four years I spent with her were invaluable to me. I began to understand that the sufferings of poor people like myself were owing to oppression and exploitation at the hands of the reactionary ruling class, the landlords and local despots. I felt that Chairman Mao and Kai-hui were the only true friends of the poor, determined to topple that corrupt regime. Their work was very hard but very great, and I was willing to share in their dangers and join the revolutionary ranks.

In 1930, after the Red Army under Chairman Mao's leadership had won many victories and the revolutionary forces were growing in strength, the Kuomintang reactionaries in a panic set about arresting all the revolutionaries they could find. They put up notices offering big rewards for the capture of Chairman Mao and Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh. They also announced that if Mao Tsetung could not be found, a reward would be given for the capture of his wife. Near us in Panchang lived a man called Fan Chin-hsi, the head of the local militia who worked under the Hunan warlord Ho Chien. He was suspicious of Kai-hui and took to calling on us, claiming that he was a distant relative and addressing her as "Cousin Hsia". Since Kai-hui knew he was an enemy agent, she was on her guard and often moved away to stay with relatives. At dawn on October 14, 1930, we had just returned to Panchang for a few days when this man Fan came on orders from Ho Chien with sixty men armed with spears to surround our house. Fan and five or six others ordered old Mrs. Yang to open the door. At once Kai-hui got up and burned her Party documents in a side-room. Then Fan and his men burst in.

"Cousin Hsia, don't blame me for this," said Fan. "You must come with us for an investigation."

"What are you arresting us for?" she asked angrily.

"It's nothing important," Fan answered. "They just want you to go to Changsha to answer a few questions."

Kai-hui was calm and unafraid.

"All right," she told the soldiers.

They brutally tied us both up, then pushed and kicked us out. An-ying was taken too. Nearby peasants hearing this uproar came running over.

"Two women and a child, they can't run away!" they protested. "Why manhandle them? What crimes have they committed?"

A few peasants at the risk of their own lives brought two wheelbarrows for us. The first barrow had a wicker cradle in it, and Kai-hui and An-ying sat in that. I sat in the second. The enemy took us to the railway station and we went by train to Changsha, where we were marched to the garrison headquarters — a place where the Kuomintang reactionaries jailed and tortured revolutionaries. We were thrown into a dark cell, and on the very first day were interrogated. The inquisitor sat there like the king of hell. He pounded the table with his mallet, and at once the thugs below let out a yell. Snatching up whips, bamboo sticks and instruments of torture, they knocked Kai-hui and me to the ground.

"Where is Mao Tsetung?" asked the interrogator. "Where is your underground headquarters? What have you been up to in the east suburb, inciting the peasants?"

"I don't know!" was Kai-hui's firm answer.

"A woman, yet acting so tough!" he snarled.

The same questions were repeated over and over, but every time she answered in the same way.

"So you don't know?" he said. "You've been in communication all the time. Didn't you know that?"

The beasts ripped off her blouse then, and flogged her with leather thongs and thick bamboos till her flesh was torn and she kept fainting away. Then they repeated their questions, but still she answered fiercely:

"I don't know!"

In desperation they tried a more cruel torture: a wooden bar as thick as a bowl was rammed behind her knees as she lay face down, and two torturers stamped on each end of the bar. I felt sure her knee-joints must have cracked. She was beaten black and blue. When she passed out, they doused her with cold water. But each time she came round, she raised her head to curse them. When the

enemy found that they could not get any information out of her, they tried different tactics. They made her sit down and put on a show of sympathy.

"You have your mother and sons to think about, and you're still young," they said. "You must think of your future. Just tell us where Mao Tsetung is, put an announcement in the paper saying that you're divorcing him, and give us a list of your underground contacts — then we shall set you free."

Kai-hui replied with angry contempt, "I know what my duty is. You don't have to tell me."

The enemy threatened her, "If you won't speak, we'll kill you!"

"Do as you like," she retorted. "I've nothing to say."

The enemy was flabbergasted. Torture and bribery alike were useless against such a staunch revolutionary.

Each time, after interrogating her, the enemy pounced on me. Kai-hui's fearlessness had set an example for me. I was burning with hatred for those devils because of their cruel treatment of Kai-hui, and I faced them without flinching. When asked by the interrogator where Chairman Mao was and whether he had written to Kai-hui, I answered:

"I don't know."

"So you don't know either. Nonsense! You know everything that goes on in their family. You've been running all their errands. You're the one who delivers all their letters and messages. They've turned you into a Red too!"

"I don't know about their family affairs," I said. "I just stick to my work."

Then he pounded the table again, and the torturers did the same to me as to Kai-hui. I could bear it, though, because I knew very well that Chairman Mao and Kai-hui were making revolution to liberate the poor, and I only wished that I could take all the tortures to save Kai-hui from suffering.

The interrogator asked me, "Is that boy Mao's son?"

"No, he's a Yang," I answered.

For when we were in jail, Kai-hui had told An-ying to call her "auntie", and to save him we both said his name was Yang, not Mao,

even when we were put to torture. When they saw I was not to be frightened, they made a show of sympathy again.

"You're just Yang Kai-hui's servant," they said. "Why should you suffer too? Tell us where Mao Tsetung is, what people have been to her house, what they look like and what they do. Provided you tell us these things, we'll let you go and find you another good job."

This bogus talk only made me more furious. I remembered then what Chairman Mao had said when he was training peasant cadres: "You mustn't be afraid of hardships or death, but must struggle on!" I gritted my teeth to bear the pain and not to cry out under torture.

When the reactionaries saw that they could neither frighten nor deceive us, they tried to trick little An-ying.

"When did you last see your dad?" they asked. "Where is he now? Last time your dad came home he gave you some sweets wrapped up in a handkerchief, didn't he?"

Though An-ying was only eight, he had seen how savagely the enemy had treated us, and was burning to pay them back.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said. "I haven't seen anything."

Then the enemy tried to hoodwink Kai-hui, saying, "Your boy has come clean. Why should you remain so stubborn?"

To me they said, "Yang Kai-hui has confessed. Why don't you admit that you've been to where Mao Tsetung is hiding?"

I saw through these empty threats and tricks and knew they could never outwit us. I was determined, come what might, not to yield to the enemy.

After being locked up for ten days in the garrison headquarters we were transferred to a place known as the Clean-up Headquarters. There we underwent the same interrogations and worse tortures than before. After another ten days we were finally transferred to the military prison. This was really a hell on earth. Only the most serious cases — the chief political prisoners — were sent there. I remember it as a large enclosure with no windows, only an opening through which food could be sent in. It had no brick walls around it, just a palisade of thick wooden stakes, so that we could see people

outside and they could look in. Armed guards patrolled the whole time, watching our movements. More than twenty people, women as well as men, were locked up here. We just huddled in different corners, and as there was no furniture of any kind, not even a plank of wood, we slept on the ground on some straw. Kai-hui and I shared one quilt with An-ying. Our hands were kept tied except when food was sent in. After the meal we were tied up again.

In that prison Kai-hui encouraged our fellow-prisoners, telling them to stand the test and seize every chance to carry on revolutionary work and struggle against the enemy. When the guard outside was out of hearing distance, she would explain the revolution to us, urging us to unite and help each other and to fight resolutely against the die-hards. Kai-hui's sixth aunt sometimes sent in some food, and Kai-hui always shared it with fellow-prisoners who were weak or ill. Sometimes she gave money to one of the guards to buy some food for them; but the guard always embezzled half the money and bought only half the amount. Once when her sixth aunt came to see her, Kai-hui wrote something on a slip of paper which she rolled up and passed to her aunt. She was probably sending out some information to her Party organization and trying to make contact with outside.

During those ten days in the military prison, the guards outside kept saying to each other:

"If some are to be shot, Mao Tsetung's wife is surely the first we should pick."

"We should kill her quick, or the situation may change."

I felt they were going to kill her, and Kai-hui was prepared for all eventualities.

"Never mind about me," she told me. "When the children are grown up, you will have a good life."

At seven o'clock in the morning of November 14, some thugs opened our door to drag Kai-hui out, warning the rest of the prisoners not to move. They tied Kai-hui's hands behind her back and started pushing her out.

The guards commented, "This one won't be coming back."

Knowing that this was the end I burst out sobbing, while An-ying cried bitterly too. The other prisoners watched indignantly. I

was hugging An-ying tightly and trying at the same time to drag Kai-hui back. The soldiers beat and tugged me, and I fought them with might and main — I wanted so much to die together with her.

"She's done no wrong!" I screamed. "You mustn't kill her! You can kill me instead."

Kai-hui turned to me and said gravely, "Take An-ying with you, Sister Sun. Things will be better by the time he grows up."

The boy and I tried to follow her, but she was already out of the door. A few yards away, she gazed into the distance and shouted the slogans:

"Down with the Kuomintang reactionaries! Down with Chiang Kai-shek! Long live the Chinese Communist Party!"

I heard later that she was shot at Shihtzuling, outside the Liuyang Gate. At the time of her death she was only twenty-nine.

After Kai-hui's death, An-ying and I were kept prisoner for another eighteen days, during which I was questioned and beaten every day. An-ying fell ill with dysentery. Weak as I was, I nursed him as best I could, determined to keep Kai-hui's and Chairman Mao's son alive. After eighteen days we were released through the good offices of Kai-hui's relatives and other comrades outside. We stayed for a few days in Kai-hui's sixth uncle's house. Then he took us back to Panchang, and all the nearby peasants came to see us. At first I thought the news of Kai-hui's death would be too great a blow for old Mrs. Yang, so I kept it from her, just telling her that Kai-hui had gone to join Chairman Mao. However, after ten days I couldn't hide the truth any longer. I burst out crying bitterly and told her what had happened. We wept together for a long, long time.

As Kai-hui's mother was old and An-ying and the two other children were so small, I decided to stay on to look after them and bring the three boys up safely. However, after three months, some comrades sent to warn me that the enemy meant to arrest me again and that I must go into hiding immediately.

Old Mrs. Yang said sadly, "Sister Sun, they want to kill you. They're after you again. Don't let yourself be caught; you must live on. After all these years in our family, you're one of us. Even if we hadn't enough to eat, we'd want to stick together. We

can't bear parting with you, but now we have no choice. You must keep away from here for a while."

Old Mrs. Yang lent me some money for my journey. And early one morning in February 1931 I left Panchang with a heavy heart, wretched at leaving the place where Kai-hui had lived and fought for years, the three children whom I loved, Kai-hui's kindly mother and the local peasants. I went back to my old home in Ninghsiang County, where again I had to beg for food and work as a servant for landlords and capitalists. In those bitter days I kept remembering how good Chairman Mao and Kai-hui had been to me. I dreamed of the victory of our people's revolution under the guidance of Chairman Mao. I longed to see Chairman Mao again, to tell him how fearlessly Kai-hui had faced death in jail.

3

In April 1949, I was in the countryside when I heard that the People's Liberation Army was approaching Changsha. I went there to welcome them, and could not hold back tears of joy when I saw our people's troops. I passed on this wonderful news to all the poor folk I met and could not sleep for excitement, so eager was I to see Chairman Mao, our saving star, after more than twenty years.

In April 1950, Chairman Mao's eldest son An-ying came to Changsha and I saw him. We had parted in those days of white terror; now, after eighteen years, we came together again under the red flag. An-ying brought me greetings from Chairman Mao. My heart brimmed over with gratitude to our great leader who, busy as he was working for us poor people, still remembered his children's nurse from years ago. He was really our people's great saviour! I shed tears of joy, too, to see An-ying grown up and looking so well. An-ying was deeply moved too.

"My mother was very brave," he said. "I remember that well. You had a very hard time too."

An-ying showed the most loving concern for me and asked about my work. After he went back to Peking I wrote to him, and on August 19, 1950 he wrote me a long letter, passing on Chairman

Mao's greetings and his instructions to me: "Never backslide, but go forward with the masses!" Little did I think that three months after writing me that letter An-ying would die on the Korean battlefield, for he responded to Chairman Mao's great call to take up arms and aid Korea, laying down his young life for the revolution.

Our great leader Chairman Mao showed concern for me and wrote several letters to me and my daughter. Knowing how much I longed to see him, he invited me several times to Peking as his guest. And although he was so busy, he received me four times at his residence in Chungnanhai. The first time I saw him in his office in June 1957 was an occasion which I shall never forget. When I went in, he smiled and got up to shake hands. His first words were:

"It's thirty years since last I saw you, but you haven't changed. You still look in good health."

The sight of Chairman Mao's tall, powerful figure, his face radiant with health, and his kindly smile, made my heart brim over with joy. He made me sit on the sofa and chatted with me for more than two hours, showing a clear recollection of everything that had happened in the past.

"Kai-hui wrote to me that you were very good to her," he said. "You were both very brave in jail, not giving in to the enemy under torture. How much you must have suffered! You've had a hard life; now you should take more rest. Why not come to Peking once a year, to see all the new construction and changes, and consider this your home."

He asked what had happened to Kai-hui and An-ying in jail; but for fear of upsetting him I kept back the most gruesome details. I told him how firmly Kai-hui had stood up to the enemy torture and tricks, always loyal to the Party and Chairman Mao. When I spoke of her true love for him and her hopes for the children, Chairman Mao shed tears of grief.

"Kai-hui was truly good," he said. "And so are you. And An-ying was a good lad." He observed, "Victory wasn't easily won. Six members of my family lost their lives for the revolution. Some people lost all their dear ones." He then spoke of others who had

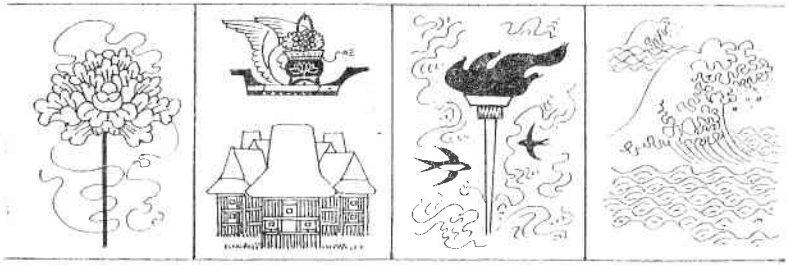
---

Peitaiho Bay (traditional Chinese painting) by *Ya Ming* and *Chin Chien-ming*


北戴河

given their lives, showing his deep love for them as well as for Kai-hui.

I have done little for the revolution, but I can never express all my gratitude to the Party and Chairman Mao. I was a beggar and a bondmaid until they liberated me, and now the Party and the people have shown me great honour. Chairman Mao's love for the people was deeper than the ocean. Since his death, I have constantly been thinking of him and of Kai-hui. When I recall those days fifty years ago when I lived with them, and my four visits to Peking when I was able to see Chairman Mao again, their faces rise up before me. A long time has passed, but they will always live in my heart.



Our Gifts to Chairman Mao

(*Nahsi*)

Of the peonies in our gardens
We shall pluck the prettiest.
Of the honeycombs on the cliffs
We shall take the sweetest.
Of the silkthreads from cocoons
We shall choose the finest.
Of our brass plates shining golden
We shall pick the brightest.
The flowers we'll bind with silken thread
And hold them in the left hand.
The honey we'll set on our brass plate
And hold it in the right hand.
And these most precious gift of ours
We shall give to Chairman Mao.

Our Hearts Ever Turn Towards the Sun

(*Tai*)

The golden lotus has many petals;
Each receives warmth from the sun.
The green dragon-bamboo has many shoots;
Each is watered by the spring rain.

Thirty thousand bamboo huts by the Lantsang River
Glitter in the splendour of Chairman Mao;
The sunlight has dispelled the dark clouds of sorrow
And our homes are happy in this land of flowers.

Why is our land, Hsishuangpanna, golden?
The Communist Party gives us dew and rain,
Which makes the land blossom like Tachai.
Everywhere there is a bumper harvest.

We shall pluck ninety thousand lotus flowers
To make a fragrant basket.
We shall cut nine hundred dragon-bamboos
To make a winged barge.

Our winged barge will soar to Peking
Bringing our songs of praise.
Presenting our flower-basket to Chairman Mao
Our hearts will turn for ever to the sun.

Our Chairman Mao in Peking

(*Uighur*)

Who transformed nights into days
And brought joy to our sad people?
Who set ablaze all our land?
The flaming beacon in Peking.

Who launched our fighters in the air
And ground our foes into the dust?
Who liberated all of us?
The great leader in Peking.

Who stormed the enemy bases
And worked tirelessly for the masses?
Who overcame all obstacles?
The indomitable hero in Peking.

Who thought profoundly with such wisdom
And gave the call for revolution?
Who led us on the path of struggle?
Chairman Mao in Peking.

My Wish

(*Tibetan*)

I wish I were a cuckoo
In verdant spring;
Singing in flight to Peking
I'd land on Tien An Men Gate.

I wish I were a ripple
In sultry summer;
Surging with the waves to Peking
I'd flow into Chungnanhai.*

I wish I were an ear of wheat
In golden autumn;
Swelling a bumper harvest
I'd adorn the Nationality Palace.

*The place where Chairman Mao lived and worked in Peking.

I wish I were a snowflake
In white winter;
Full of love for our leader
I'd rest on the roof of the Great Hall of the People.

Golechukt

In Search of the Well

The night was pitch-black and rain was drizzling down when Old Palaken suddenly awakened to hear his dog barking. Leaping out of bed he strode to the door and shouted to the animal to stop. When the barking had died down, voices were heard chatting and laughing coming from the direction of the posts where the horses were tethered.

"Did you hear that row? And you called this a wilderness!" a man chuckled, realizing from the noise of the dog that they were near a settlement.

"Fancy getting lost like this! It's a damn nuisance!" grumbled another man irritably.

It was strange that the men should complain at reaching an encampment after having been lost in the vast steppe on a wet night. By the light from his yurt, Old Palaken watched in bewilderment as three shadowy figures approached him.

Shaking the water from his clothes, one of the strangers greeted him and apologized for disturbing him in the middle of the night.

Golechukt is of Mongolian nationality.

"Never mind. One can expect a few problems travelling after dark." Then pointing the way with his right hand, he invited them in.

The old man watched them as they went ahead and he followed behind to bolt the door. Immediately a commotion arose over where they should sit. The jostling and arguing in low voices with one another continued for some time, and Old Palaken did not know what to make of it. His cat was asleep near the door and just as the old man was thinking about it, one of the visitors pushed the other two aside and plumped himself down almost on top of it. With a shrill shriek of alarm, the cat ran off.

At first Palaken's wife remained seated and had welcomed her visitors with a smile recognizing them as frontier guards. But she cried out, "Oh, Lord Lama, what's happening?" when her cat screamed.

The man who had frightened the cat joked, "What a ferocious beast! With one swipe from its paw, I fell to the floor!" The others hooted at his rhyme.

Seating himself beside his wife, Old Palaken began to scrutinize his guests in the lamplight. In the seat of honour was an officer in his thirties, with a shrewd cheerful expression. Beside him was a young soldier with a boyishly handsome face. The third, an older man who had jostled with the others for the seat near the door, was hidden in the shadows.

"So you're frontier guards," Old Palaken said, his moustache trembling with pleasure. "Take off your coats and have a rest." Smilingly he stood up to raise the wick of the lamp.

After taking a good look at the old man, the officer suddenly turned to the other man in the shadows, "Just look who's here! Isn't it Uncle Palaken?"

"Who?..." the man questioned, and then, perhaps amazed at the coincidence, paused before exclaiming, "Why, there's no doubt.... It is Uncle Palaken! Good gracious! And I thought that thanks to the devil we'd got lost, when in fact it was Lord Lama who led us to Uncle Palaken!" He began to laugh heartily.

"So you all know me?" Old Palaken was puzzled beyond words. His eyesight failing, he blinked and looked around in embarrassment.

"Uncle," the officer spoke softly, "during the war about twelve years ago, a man asked your daughter for information about the enemy, but unfortunately both were caught. Have you forgotten that man?"

"Oh, what a fool I am!" Old Palaken cried as the recollection dawned on him. In delight he slapped the officer's back and said, "Of course, you're Ayusi! Little Ayusi, General Hatanbatol's bodyguard. I've got a head like a sieve!"

His wife exclaimed in amazement, "Ah, Lord Lama. It's too good to be true!"

"Where's General Hatanbatol now? Is he still in Huhehot? How is he?" Old Palaken inquired eagerly.

Before Ayusi could answer, the man near the door replied, "He's fine, Uncle Palaken. And what about you? You must be about seventy."

"Just over seventy. Well, what's the matter with you then? Just because my cat took a swipe at you, you shouldn't sit there in that dark corner feeling ashamed. Why not move over into the light?" Lifting up his small oil lamp, Old Palaken saw a large robust man in his fifties. Grinning broadly, he looked at the old man while polishing a machine-gun with his hand.

Old Palaken couldn't tear his eyes away from this soldier's lively face and for a long time he just gazed at him. The man remained where he was grinning steadily. Old Palaken tried to recall all the old faces of soldiers he'd known in the past. Suddenly it clicked. In surprise he recognized the man as General Hatanbatol, whom he'd met twelve years previously. His eyes grew moist. He said the name softly to himself and was about to say something more, when his wife poked him in the back and brought him back to earth. He'd made a fool of himself once before mistaking another man for General Hatanbatol and when he lowered his lamp a little he noticed that the man's uniform was the same as the young soldier's. So he was just an ordinary soldier. If his wife hadn't warned him in time, he'd have made a laughing-stock of himself again. But as

he couldn't remember the fellow's name, he said in embarrassment to Ayusi, "So many people look alike." Then he put the lamp back and sat down.

Catching his look of embarrassment, the man by the door purposely changed the subject, "Where's your Darima these days? Is she still at the same job?"

"Good heavens! You can even remember my daughter's name!" the old woman murmured to herself.

"Don't talk such nonsense," her husband scolded her. "Of course they know her, they're Hatanbatol's men, aren't they? She'd have been dead long ago but for them."

"I can still hardly believe it. Thanks to Hatanbatol my daughter was saved." Then as if she was complaining, she continued, "Darima was once the head of our banner, but now she's back here as an ordinary herder. I don't know why. She went out somewhere tonight to tend the horses. She did very well at the banner, so why does she have to work like this again? . . ."

"Enough of that," Old Palaken cut her short. "What about some tea for our guests? Where's their food?"

"Oh dear me! I forgot all about that. . . ." She apologized and got up.

"Don't trouble yourself, aunty," Ayusi stopped her and turned to consult the older man by the door. "What do you think? We don't want any tea, do we?"

"No. It's getting light now. No time for tea, so don't bother, aunty."

But the old woman would not hear of it. "Now, not another word from you. During the war I never let anyone of you go to bed on an empty stomach, so if you think that's going to happen now there is peace. . . ." The old woman began to bustle about kindling the stove.

"Honestly, aunty, we don't need anything. We're just like one big family, so why treat us like special guests? Better to let us catch a bit of sleep now so that we can set off early in the morning."

Persuaded, Old Palaken told his wife, "All right, but they can't go to sleep on empty stomachs so just quickly heat that stuff in the pot."

The man by the door didn't make any objections to that. Instead he got up and told Ayusi that he was going to attend to the horses first. He went to the door.

"No! Leave that to us. We're younger than you, and you need more rest." Ayusi and the young soldier jumped to their feet and rushed to him to prevent him from leaving.

"Stop all this arguing," he insisted. "There's no need for all three of us to get soaked. As I'm nearest the door, I'll go myself."

Then another jostling match started at the entrance.

The old couple watched in amusement until the older man finally tore himself free and dashed out with the other two in hot pursuit.

"Take your horses to the south, we have crops in the back which will provide us with winter fodder," Old Palaken shouted after them. Then he went and sat down again with his wife, chatting about the night's events.

Presently above the sound of the rain, they heard some noises. The door opened and in walked Ayusi with the young soldier, shaking the water from their caps and uniforms. "There's no let-up in the rain," he remarked.

"Where's the older comrade?" asked Palaken.

"Oh, he insisted on staying behind to attend to the horses. He'll get drenched. But don't worry. Let's go to sleep now, uncle."

"I know. All Hatanbatol's men are a fine crowd," the old man murmured as he picked out a new quilt from a heap of bedding and handed it to Ayusi. "Here, this is for you. Bring it over here and sleep by me." Then he took out two blankets and threw one to the young soldier saying, "And this is for you, you little terror. You and the other fellow can sleep over there." But at a glance from Ayusi, the young man took the quilt and spread it out on his place and then folded the blanket to serve as a pillow.

Puzzled, Old Palaken asked, "But why do you want to sleep there, Ayusi?"

"It's not for me, but for our guide. He's getting on."

"He really is a character," Old Palaken admired. "See the way he grabbed the seat by the door. Had it all worked out. Well,

well! Now how about you two having something to drink." He took a bowl of koumiss from his wife and gave it to Ayusi.

Gratefully Ayusi took the bowl from Old Palaken and said, "Talking of the old man, he's an expert in grabbing all the toughest jobs. But today acting as our guide he lost his way."

"And he refuses to admit it," the young soldier chipped in. Everyone laughed.

"Yes, you keep on talking about it, but where were you going to?" asked Old Palaken.

Ayusi said, "Uncle, do you remember when Comrade Darima and I got caught, you led our troops to rescue us and wiped out the enemy by that caved-in well?"

"As if I could forget! Seeing you again, it's as if it happened only yesterday."

"O.K. We've come this time to find that well. We'll rebuild it and bore some new ones too, so that we can run a ranch for our army horses in this steppe. The old fellow with us was recently transferred here, and as he said he knew the area well, he volunteered to be our guide. But you know what happened. . . ." He began to chuckle. "In the end, he brought us to this big settlement of yours, which was nothing like the open grassland he remembered. But we don't blame him. He's getting old and besides he was only there once twelve years ago and at night too."

"That's some tale," said Old Palaken smiling at his wife, who quickly hid her face with her sleeve until only her merry eyes showed. Then he said soothingly, "Anyway, don't worry. Just you get a good night's sleep and tomorrow you'll find that well all right."

Ayusi gazed at him and said, "Of course. Now that we've found you, we'll rely on you two old men. Well, let's get to bed." With that they drained their bowls.

By the time the older soldier had returned to the yurt soaked to the skin, his two companions had fallen asleep.

Palaken joked with him, "See how wet you are! That's a punishment for being a rotten guide. Come over here and sit with me. You know there is a saying, 'The last are blessed,' so let's finish this koumiss."

"Listen, uncle, it's not like that," the man replied. "You know this is the first time in my life that I've lost my way after I've been to a place once before. I must be getting old. Perhaps I soon won't be able to be a soldier any more." Feeling a little depressed, he drained the bowl in one gulp and returned it to Old Palaken.

"You must have forgotten how the land looks or you wouldn't have got lost."

"Last time I crossed a large flat plain. There were no special landmarks. But I do remember that when you led us there, we took a path along a ridge to the south which led to the well beside a small sand-pit."

"That's right! Didn't you follow the same route this time?"

"Of course I did and by my horse's paces I knew I was on the right track."

"And didn't you come across something?"

"Yes, you and that's why we're here!" the man sighed and shrugged his shoulders in despair.

"Now, now," said Old Palaken giving him another bowl of wine and shaking his head in mock disbelief. "Do you remember where the well was?"

"Oh very clearly! I remember it was right there by a small sand-

pit below the ridge . . . and, oh yes, there was a rock, a large one about the size of a bull at one side."

"Well then, since you remember it in such detail, you won't have any trouble finding the place. You must be one of General Hatanbatol's best soldiers. Sometimes when I recall what happened that time, I can hardly believe it happened. It's more like a dream. Well, drink up. Cheers!"

"Yes, when I set out on this trip, you can't imagine how much I longed to see this place again, even though it was a lonely wilderness."

"That time your lot were here you did a wonderful job. You're an old soldier so you know that Hatanbatol's no run-of-the-mill general. No, he's no ordinary star." Old Palaken raised his eyes to the night sky part of which could be seen through the flap in the yurt, as if really looking for a star.

The older soldier, not altogether agreeing with his words, hastened to add, "But we could never have won without the great support and help from you poor herdsmen, no matter who was in charge and what star was guiding us."

"No, that's not true," Old Palaken argued. "For an old soldier you don't seem to know too much about your general."

"Look, uncle, if the general is spoken of as a special sort of star, it's only because of the exaggerated reputation you old folks have given him through your excessive praise. In fact there's no star at all." The man chuckled.

"Nonsense!" Old Palaken stubbornly insisted. "I'm telling you General Hatanbatol is no ordinary star, and that's all about it."

Old Palaken's voice had grown louder and the older soldier, noticing this, lowered his own to say, "Well, don't you think it's time we went to sleep. Tomorrow if you'll help us, we'll look for that well."

The old man wanted to go on arguing about General Hatanbatol, but remembered he should let his guests have some rest. Rather reluctantly he said, "Yes, I can see you're very tired. Don't worry about that well. All Hatanbatol's men are fine soldiers. You'll find it, no doubt. Have a good rest."

The soldier looked at his young companion fast asleep and wondered where he should lie down.

"They made your bed over there by that young rascal," Old Palaken told him. "But you'd better watch out for my cat!"

With a laugh the man retorted as he went to the bed, "Yes, I've been praying silently all along that as I've got to find the way tomorrow, please spare me from another swipe of your cat's paw."

At this there was a snort of laughter. Old Palaken saw that apart from the young soldier, the others were still awake.

"You'd better hang up your wet clothes on that rack there to dry," suggested Ayusi.

"Good idea," agreed the older man and then went over to the young man snoring under his army coat and lay down beside him.

The dim light from the oil lamp flickered inside the yurt. Outside, the rain continued.

The old soldier was exhausted and before long, he was snoring. But Old Palaken tossed and turned, thinking about the abrupt and unsatisfactory end to the argument. Then he noticed Ayusi get up quietly and take the wet clothes from the rack to dry them by the stove.

"Ayusi, I bet you learnt that from General Hatanbatol," whispered Old Palaken. He didn't feel in the least bit sleepy and so he sat up to chat to Ayusi.

"It's part of our tradition," Ayusi told him.

"I know, Ayusi my boy, that you've always been a fine bodyguard to General Hatanbatol. But when did you leave him?"

"Not long ago I was transferred to this border area. I've been with him all the time. I suppose you haven't seen Hatanbatol since that last meeting?" Ayusi laughed mischievously.

"No, I haven't, but my daughter would give me news of him, as they often met when she attended the meetings in Huhehot. Now he's such a big cadre, he's probably far too busy to be able to pay us a visit in this remote place. So I don't suppose I'll ever have the chance to meet him again in my lifetime. But I'll never forget how we first met. . . ." Too moved to continue, Old Palaken just shook his head.

"Please hand me the poker, uncle, the fire's going out. I don't know much about that occasion. Of course I heard a few tales later. How did you meet him?"

"Where to begin? Because of that time, I tell you Hatanbatol's no ordinary star, yet that old comrade of yours just argued with me. There's some dry cow-dung behind you there. Could you put some more on the fire? When you and Darima were taken prisoners, what was I to do? There was only one thing, find Hatanbatol. I didn't know much about him, only that there was a good PLA general, who had come here to help our people and fight the enemy. I hadn't a clue what he looked like. But with you and my daughter captured, I had to find Hatanbatol urgently. At Hulas Lake, I asked the villagers there about him, but they said his troops had been defeated by the enemy, and that there wasn't one survivor as they withdrew to Penbatu region. They'd all been wiped out. I was thunderstruck. I couldn't believe it. I had to go and see for myself and so I rushed off to Penbatu. There the scene was like a slaughter-house with corpses everywhere and smashed trucks and an assortment of weapons strewn all over the place. I recognized Kuomintang soldiers, Chungnai's bandits and even some of our own men but I was searching for the PLA and Hatanbatol. I rode across the vast battlefield, the air smelt acrid. Then I rode further into the open country. Suddenly in the distance I spotted a line of soldiers marching towards the horizon as the sun was setting. . . ."

"They say you reached Hatanbatol just as he and the men were marching."

"Don't interrupt me. I recognized they were our soldiers even from that distance and raced to catch up with them. I was shocked to find only a handful of men, about a dozen, their heads bent and their horses on the verge of collapse. In answer to my question a young soldier at the rear just pointed his chin to the leader, because his mouth was too dry to speak. I wondered if the man in front was Hatanbatol, because how could a general slog along with the rank-and-file? When I got to the front I took a look at him. He was about forty and dressed exactly like the others. He'd been badly

wounded on his right shoulder and the strip torn from his coat to bandage it was heavily encrusted with dried blood. My heart ached for him, but the man just marched along steadily, his head held high, and with two of his exhausted comrades' rifles slung over his left shoulder. I greeted him and asked where Hatanbatol was. Without a word he stared up at me grimly. I wondered if this meant that they really had been defeated and my head reeled. I could hardly catch his words when he spoke at last. 'Never mind, uncle. Some of our men are still alive and we'll fight back. . . .' "

"Then where did you meet Hatanbatol?"

"Listen and I'll tell you. As time passed small groups of two or three soldiers who had been scattered in the battle, rejoined our troop until there were about fifty men. It was night, so we let the horses go to graze while we rested. Of course there was nothing to eat or drink. The soldiers, tired beyond exhaustion, began to snore as soon as they'd flung themselves down. But it was impossible for me to sleep, and so I just lay there staring at the stars in the sky. Then the wounded soldier I'd spoken to crawled over to me and asked if there was any water in the area. I told him about that well, the one you've come to find. I also said that as it was the only well in the area, it was the only place where he'd find water. But he couldn't go there because Lord Chungnai, that despot, and his gang were bound to be camped by it. But he became very cheerful and pressed me to lead him to the well no matter how much I tried to warn him against it. So it was, in the early hours of the morning, that we all set off to find the well. . . ." Old Palaken suddenly broke off and nudged the enthralled Ayusi, "Hey! That coat's about to go up in flames. You'd better keep it back from the fire a little."

"Where was Hatanbatol when you set off?"

"Goodness, you are impatient! The sky had become overcast and it was quite dark." Then, pausing to point to the older soldier sleeping in the corner, he added, "I suppose he must have been there too, because he remembered the way we took along the ridge. Suddenly we saw a bonfire ahead. I told my wounded companion that the well was there and that there were obviously people there too. Signalling to our men to dismount, he and the others had a hurried

discussion, whispering for a few moments. Then, leaving the horses behind and with me acting as their guide, we all headed for the fire. As we approached we heard a girl scream. Her voice pierced my heart. 'Darima!' I cried out without thinking. The alarm having been raised, an enemy sentry immediately shouted, 'Who goes there? Stay where you are!' But my companion showed great presence of mind. He calmly replied, 'It's us, out grazing the horses. We've got here an old fellow, the father of that girl who's head of the herders' association.' The voice shouted from the direction of the fire, 'Bring him here!' My companion told me not to worry as everything would be all right and off we went. Two of our men pushed me forward towards the fire while he followed close behind."

"Oh, Lord Lama!" his wife couldn't stop herself from exclaiming.

"You can forget about your Lord Lama," her husband sneered at her. "You'd have been scared to death if you'd been me." Then he continued with his story. "As we reached the bonfire we saw that rat Chungnai sitting on the huge rock by the well, a cruel expression on his face, intent on torturing you and Darima. Then he recognized me immediately, and snarled, 'Trying to rebel again, eh? Where's your fine Hatanbatol now? Take this old wretch away and give him a good beating!' he casually ordered his men. When nothing happened he realized something was wrong. In fact our men had overpowered his guards. When he tried to make a bolt for it, my companion dashed over pointing his pistol at the swine. Then he announced to their astonishment and mine, 'You wanted to know where Hatanbatol was. Well, here I am! All of you bastards are finished!' And that's how that rotten Chungnai was captured alive." Old Palaken laughed heartily.

"So that's how you met Hatanbatol," Ayusi cried delightedly. "That's some story. By the way, how did you defeat all Chungnai's soldiers later?"

"Why later? Hatanbatol had planned everything beforehand. While we sorted out that old bastard, our men gathered all the enemies' guns as they lay fast asleep dead to the world."

"Yes, it was too late for action even if they had woken up. Hatanbatol certainly turned the tables on them."

"Of course, but you try to tell that to your old soldier over there. He had the cheek to say I exaggerated when I talked about Hatanbatol." Old Palaken thought about their disagreement. Pointing at Ayusi, he asked, "Do you think Hatanbatol's just an ordinary star?"

"Would you recognize him if you met him now, do you think?" Ayusi queried.

"Of course, I'd know his face anywhere!" the old man boasted. Then, glancing at the sleeping form of the older soldier, he whispered, "You know, he's so like Hatanbatol that when I first saw him, I almost thought he was the general."

"You're off your head!" snapped his wife irritably.

Without speaking, Ayusi grinned, and his expression seemed to say, "Shows how much you both know about Hatanbatol." Sensing this, Old Palaken began to feel hot around the collar and started to blush. "You mean to say . . . Ayusi. . . ." he faltered gaping.

"Please, Ayusi," his wife pleaded, "don't tease him so. He's getting old and stupid." Then glaring at her husband she said, "Just because Ayusi's here, there's no need for you to go completely crazy."

His wife's sharp words brought him down to earth again. He tried to work out what Ayusi was up to, so that he wouldn't make an even greater fool of himself. There sat Ayusi, a little more serious, but still silent and with a twinkle in his eyes. Old Palaken's eyes gleamed craftily as he asked, "What a tease you are, Ayusi! Now suppose you had a general who worked as a guide for his bodyguard. Wouldn't that be out of this world?" His mind just couldn't credit such a possibility. It was too ridiculous.

"Well, uncle," Ayusi broke his silence, "let me ask you this. Darima was a responsible cadre, yet now she's just an ordinary herder. Where do you find something like that in history?" His tone became more serious.

Old Palaken said solemnly, "How can you compare my daughter to Hatanbatol? I'm afraid you're mistaken. You know what he's like. One of the old revolutionaries who followed Chairman Mao when you were knee-high to a grasshopper. And he's a general.

Huangyangchieh (traditional Chinese painting) by *Wei Tzu-hsi*

It's good for a banner head to work as a simple herder for a while. But how can a general just be an ordinary soldier. After all, a general is a general and a soldier is a soldier."

Since Old Palaken was adamant, Ayusi said, "All right, uncle, let's drop it for now. Perhaps we can sort this out when Darima comes back. The old man's clothes are dry, so we can leave in a few hours." Then he rose and, having placed the dry clothes by the man, lay down to rest.

Old Palaken was wide awake. He wondered when his daughter would return and so he turned to his wife, "Shouldn't Darima be here?"

"How you can have the nerve to ask me that," she exploded, "on such a wet night, when you should have gone to replace her for a while?"

Without another word, Old Palaken got up and dressed and then went out.

The rain had stopped at last. It was getting light. The old man trotted along on his horse looking for his daughter. He soon found a herd of horses, but no Darima. Deciding that she must have headed for home by a different path, he circled round the horses to make sure that everything was all right and then made for home himself.

It was dawn. The vast grasslands were tinged with gold in the early sunlight. The sky was clear. As he rode home, he thought of those three frontier guards who had lost their way. He was pleased that the terrain had changed so much in such a short time. The future was good. To the south of the ridge now stood the white yurts of Penbatu Commune. To the northwest grew green crops for the winter fodder of the fast-growing herds of horses and cattle. Men and women herders went galloping past. Another happy day at work had begun. . . .

Nearing his yurt, he noticed his daughter talking animatedly to the three soldiers by a couple of mechanized wells at the sand-pit. Their laughter reached his ears as he tied up his horse and hurried over to them.

The three men were stripped to the waist washing themselves with the water in a large concrete trough.

"I bet it feels good to wash yourself in the water from that old caved-in well, Comrade Hatanbatol," Darima laughed. She was a strong woman of about thirty years old, and she was standing by the large rock the size of a bull.

"You're telling me. It feels marvellous. This place has developed so much that I hardly know where to start." He continued to pour the water over his arms.

At last Old Palaken knew that the man was Hatanbatol and then saw the scar on his shoulder. He stood rooted to the spot.

"So the elusive guest has turned up at last uninvited," Darima laughed. "When dad sees you, he'll go wild."

"That's good, but he won't understand. He still hasn't recognized me." Hatanbatol laughed and wiped his face.

"But I did recognize you, my dear Comrade Hatanbatol," Old Palaken suddenly said behind them. "I knew who you were the minute I saw you, but my stupid wife persuaded me otherwise."

"It's too good to be true!" butted in his wife appearing from nowhere. "Oh Lord Lama. . . ." she was too choked with emotion to continue.

Old Palaken just gripped Hatanbatol's hands with all his might and gazed at him dimly through his tear-filled eyes. Finally in a quivering voice he declared, "Hatanbatol, my friend, you'll always be a general as well as a soldier."

Illustrated by Liu Jen-ching

Yuan Yun-fu

Some Paintings in The Chairman Mao Memorial Hall

The Chairman Mao Memorial Hall was completed by September 9, 1977, the first anniversary of the passing of Chairman Mao. It stands in Tien An Men Square, at the heart of Peking. Chairman Mao's remains lie in the main hall. On the walls of the four halls on either side hang twelve large paintings in the traditional Chinese style, among them *Morning in Shaoshan, The Chingkang Mountains, Huangyangchieh, Dawn in the Yenan Date Garden* and *Peitaiho Bay*. Painted by well-known artists, these are a graphic reflection of China's revolutionary struggles. They show the victorious advance of the Chinese people led by Chairman Mao and their undying love for their great leader.

Eighteen artists were commissioned to paint for the memorial hall. Before starting work, they visited different places where Chairman Mao had worked and battled to collect material and learn from the local people.

The Chingkang Mountains was painted by the well-known artist Li Ko-jan, now over seventy. The central feature of this painting is the Huangyangchieh Monument, surrounded by the undulating

Lohsiao Ranges — a superb expanse of green. The forests of towering pines, the vast sea of clouds and the winding highway convey a magnificent sense of spaciousness.

It was on the Chingkang Mountains, in the middle of the Lohsiao Ranges in the province of Kiangsi, that Chairman Mao in October 1927 set up the first revolutionary base in the countryside. Since then, the Chingkang Mountains have been honoured as the cradle of the Chinese revolution. With an area of about 500 square *li* comprising high peaks and deep valleys, these mountains were strategic terrain. And at Huangyangchieh, one of their five most important passes, Chairman Mao directed a decisive battle. After Liberation in 1949, a monument to the fighters who died in the battle was built. To give a good depiction of the changes that have taken place in this area since Liberation, Li Ko-jan visited the Chingkang Mountains three times. In his painting, he presents the green forests in spring by means of a combination of bold colour washes and meticulous strokes in a powerful and moving composition.

Huangyangchieh by another old artist, Wei Tzu-hsi, conjures up a lively picture of the Chingkang Mountains in autumn. Huangyangchieh Pass in the forefront is backed by the magnificent Lohsiao Ranges, and black ink, vermilion, ochre and indigo are used to bring out the vivid colour contrasts between the green pines and cypresses and the red autumn leaves. Whereas Li Ko-jan's *The Chingkang Mountains* conveys a sense of spaciousness, Wei Tzu-hsi's painting is more like a close-up in a film. Though both artists have chosen the same theme, their different approach gives each work its distinctive features.

Eighty-year-old Chien Sung-yen painted *Dawn in the Yenan Date Garden*. During the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945) and the War of Liberation (1946-1949), Chairman Mao lived in Yenan for thirteen years. The focus of this painting is Chairman Mao's cave-house in the Date Garden. Deep valleys interlace the distant background, the pagoda thrusts skywards above the morning mist, and the Northern Shensi Plateau stretches away to the horizon. In the past Chien Sung-yen painted many works in praise of Yenan, but this new composition of his is different in that its looming mountains and sea of clouds serve as a foil to the cave-house in the Date Garden.

Shaoshan in Hunan Province was Chairman Mao's birthplace and he worked in the fields there when he was young. In his *Morning in Shaoshan*, Li Hsiung-tsai has portrayed Chairman Mao's old home in a setting of red leaves, green pines, hills and bamboos, giving us a vivid picture of Shaoshan. This painting glows with colour, the composition is harmonious and the brush work meticulous.

Ya Ming and Chin Chien-ming's painting *Peitaiho Bay* is based on Chairman Mao's magnificent poem *Peitaiho*. Peitaiho is in northeast Hopei, near the harbour Chinwangtao. In 1954, Chairman Mao climbed a height here to look out across the sea and wrote a poem, the first five lines of which read:

A rainstorm sweeps down on this northern land,
White breakers leap to the sky.
No fishing boats off Chinwangtao
Are seen on the boundless ocean.
Where are they gone?

Gazing at the rolling waves, Chairman Mao recalled Tsao Tsao (155-220), the famous Emperor Wu of Wei, who rode northward to Chiehshih and wrote the lines: "Dense the trees and bushes here, rank the undergrowth; the autumn wind is soughing, huge billows are breaking." Now the landscape remained the same, but China had changed. So Chairman Mao ended his poem with the lines:

Nearly two thousand years ago
Wielding his whip, the Emperor Wu of Wei
Rode eastward to Chiehshih; his poem survives.
Today the autumn wind still sighs,
But the world has changed!

Drawing on the images in Tsao Tsao's poem, the painters took the affirmation "the world has changed" as the main theme of their painting. They used strong vermilion and russet colours to paint the fiery red maple leaves of an autumn morning. In the foreground they show a pavilion and in the distance the busy Chinwangtao Harbour, epitomizing our socialist motherland which has been transformed.

Yu Chiang

The Tung Fang Art Ensemble Returns to the Stage

The Tung Fang Art Ensemble, which specializes in performing songs and dances from Asia, Africa and Latin America, has recently returned to the stage after a ten years' absence and given public performances in Peking.

The Tung Fang Art Ensemble was formed in 1962 from a class studying oriental songs and dances in the Peking School of Dancing. In addition to studying Chinese classical and folk dances, their main task was to learn songs and dances from third world countries. At that time, Premier Chou En-lai personally invited outstanding artists from Asian countries to come to China and teach the students their classical dances and traditional music. He also encouraged the students to learn from and exchange items with foreign art troupes invited to tour in China. In 1961, before the establishment of the ensemble, the students went with Premier Chou to visit Burma and Indonesia and had the opportunity to learn the songs and dances of these countries. They thus began to build up a repertoire of their own. At a reception held by Premier Chou during his visit to Burma, the

The Long Drum Dance

students performed songs and dances of more than ten different countries to the delight of the audience. After returning to China, Premier Chou proposed that preparations should be made for the setting up of the Tung Fang Art Ensemble. In January 1962, the ensemble was formally inaugurated, its name — Tung Fang means Oriental — being given by Premier Chou himself. To mark the inauguration, the late Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Chen Yi came on behalf of Premier Chou to express his congratulations. He encouraged the

ensemble to learn the best songs and dances from Asia, Africa and Latin America, so as to enrich their own art to serve world revolution, and to promote friendship between the Chinese people and other peoples of the world.

Following Premier Chou's instructions, the Tung Fang Art Ensemble learned from the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America during their visits abroad and through meeting foreign troupes invited to China, or by sending small groups to study abroad. As a result, their repertoire comprised 173 folk dances and 84 songs. During their performances in China, they presented not only the outstanding folk-songs and dances of our various nationalities but also the songs and dances of the Asian, African and Latin American countries.

Within the short period of four years from 1962 to 1966, the ensemble visited 16 countries, introducing to them the revolutionary songs and dances of socialist New China and performing for them other countries' songs and dances. Through these cultural exchanges,

An Ethiopian dance

A Bangladesh dance

they helped to deepen the friendship between the Chinese people and the people in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

However, just as this art ensemble was beginning to have some influence at home and abroad, the "gang of four" — Wang Hung-wen, Chang Chun-chiao, Chiang Ching and Yao Wen-yuan — and their associate Yu Hui-yung did their utmost to suppress it. Chiang Ching said, "All oriental songs are decadent," while Yu Hui-yung condemned all African dances as "rock-and-roll". They banned the ensemble and forbade any further performances of oriental songs and dances. This was a vicious attack on Premier Chou, since it was on his instructions and under his careful supervision that the ensemble had been set up and developed.

Premier Chou fought back against the gang. During the Cultural Revolution, he showed his warm concern for the ensemble by asking its members: "Have you forgotten your African dances?" When they answered "No", he was pleased and said, "It's good that you haven't." And he gave them further encouragement when he added, "The Tung Fang Art Ensemble has a fine name, which you must always live up to."

The gang tried to distort our culture for their own purpose. In the literary and art field, those who acquiesced survived but those who opposed them were punished. Aware of the situation, Chairman Mao said in 1975 that a hundred flowers were not blossoming any longer. This was a stern criticism of the bourgeois despotism in the cultural field practised by the "gang of four". But the gang completely ignored this. As the Tung Fang Art Ensemble was anathema to them, the ban remained. It was only after October 6, 1976 when Chairman Hua led the people of the whole country to smash the gang that the ensemble was able to start performing again.

The members of the Tung Fang Art Ensemble knew that victory had not been easily won. It was therefore with great excitement that they prepared to take the stage again. At their premiere, they presented songs and dances from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Kampuchea, Vietnam, Burma, Japan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Egypt, Mali, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Mexico, Peru and Argentina. The audience was thrilled by the variety of their lively performances.

Harvesting Apples, a dance created by Korean art workers, shows a group of North Korean girls working happily in an orchard. *Harvesting* and *Jar Dance*, two folk dances from Sri Lanka, show joyful Sinhalese peasants reaping the paddy fields and graceful Tamil girls fetching water from a river. *Combat*, a Mali dance, is an epic of the Mali people's struggle. It shows how in order to overthrow the oppressive colonial rule, the Mali people organized themselves secretly in the forests and then rose up to fight for liberation. *The Performance on the Plateau* is a folk dance that the people on the northern plateau of Argentina love to dance during their festivals.

The celebrated woman singer Wang Kun, who was victimized by the "gang of four", gave an impassioned rendering of the Bangladesh folk-song *Come, Rain* and the Indian *Song of the Cradle*. In addition, the musicians of the ensemble, using Chinese national instruments, played the Burmese music *Sea-gull*, the Egyptian *The Nile* and some Mexican dance music. This performance helped the Chinese audience to have a better understanding of the life, work and struggles of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples.

The ensemble also put on dances reflecting the life and work of the Chinese people. Among them were national minority dances such as *The Long Drum Dance* performed by the well-known Korean dancer Tsui Mei-shan, *The Cups and Bowls Dance* by the Mongolian dancer Modguema and *Picking Grapes* by the Uighur dancer Ayitula. *Chairman Hua Leads Us Forward* was a new dance composed by the ensemble which with great verve conveyed the joy of the people of all China's nationalities after the victory over the "gang of four".

We have received quite a number of letters from readers asking us to give a systematic introduction to the development of classical Chinese literature. We are therefore starting this section and we shall also be publishing reviews of noted authors as well as some of their works. We hope readers will send us their comments on this new feature.

— **The Editors**

Hu Nien-yi

Myths and Legends of Ancient China

The Chinese, like all other nations, have many beautiful myths and moving legends left them by their ancestors who lived in primitive times. These legends, constantly revised and enriched, were passed on by word of mouth throughout the long period of slave society which lasted approximately from the 21st to the 5th century B.C. However, at that early date, they were not recorded in writing. It was not until after the 4th century B.C., which saw the start of feudalism in China, that fragmentary legends began to appear in philosophical writings such as *Chuang Tzu* and *Huai Nan Tzu*, poetic works like *Chu Tzu* and geographical works like the *Book of Mountains and Seas*. Unfortunately, none of these was complete and they may have departed from the original form.

Marx described myths as natural and social phenomena reshaped artistically by men's imagination. Myths evolved as a result of primitive men's attempt to explain unpredictable Nature. They reflect their desire to triumph over Nature. Later myths also reflect such social phenomena and struggles as the battles between different tribes. The most widespread often include explanations and conquests of Nature as well as reflections of human society. Though strange and fantastic, these myths were not pure fantasy but had some basis in the work and struggles of the people of early times.

Many ancient Chinese legends give miraculous explanations of the origins of heaven, earth and mankind as well as of the sun, moon and stars, mountains, rivers, plants and trees. Here, we shall introduce three which are relatively complete.

The Story of Nuwa:

> Nuwa, a powerful goddess in ancient times, was said to have the body of a snake or dragon and the head of a woman. By mixing water with earth she made the first human beings. But tiring after some time she decided to speed up her work by using a rope as a tool, and in this way she made a large number of people. In class society, this legend was distorted by the ruling class who claimed that the people she moulded with her hands were rich nobles while those made with the rope were poor commoners. Actually, at the time when this legend evolved there was still no distinction between rich and poor.

But the best part of the story of Nuwa was the account of how she mended the sky. This is recorded as follows in *Huai Nan Tzu*:

> Very, very long ago the four pillars propping up the sky broke down and cracks appeared in the earth. The sky could not cover the earth which started falling to pieces. Fires spread far and wide; floods wreaked havoc. Wild beasts devoured innocent people and a huge bird carried off old men and young children. So Nuwa melted down coloured stones and used them to mend the blue sky. She chopped off the legs of a giant turtle to use as the four pillars for the sky. She killed the black dragon which had ravaged the people and gathered great piles of reeds to kindle a fire, the ashes of which stopped the flood. Now that the sky

had been mended, the four pillars stood firm, the flood subsided and peace reigned throughout the land. Wild and cunning beasts were wiped out and the people lived.

This tale of "mending the sky" depicts the second creation of heaven and earth. It is only a fragment of the original legend but gives us some idea of how colourful and rich this must have been.

The Story of Yi:

Yi was a hero of the Hercules type. *Huai Nan Tzu* relates:

In primitive times when the tribal chief Yao ruled, ten suns came out together, scorching the crops and killing plants and trees. There was famine in the land. The Centaur, Long-fanged Ogre, Water Monster, Giant Bird, Wild Boar and Serpent preyed on the people. Yao ordered Yi to kill Long-fangs in the wilderness of Chouhua in the south and the Water Monster by the banks of Hsiungshui in the north. Yi also brought down the Giant Bird which could whip up a gale by the Ching-chiu swamps in the east, and shot down nine of the ten suns, leaving only one in the sky. The Centaur was executed, the Serpent cut to pieces in Tungting Lake and the Wild Boar captured in the region of Shuanglin. The people rejoiced and made Yao their sovereign. Thus people came to know the geography of the land and all about its mountains and rivers as well as the distance of the roads.

In this story Yi accomplished seven exploits, of which shooting down nine suns was one. According to ancient folklore, there were ten suns which roosted in a big tree at Yangku named the *fusang*. Each sun was carried by a rook and every day one of them was driven out in a cart by Hsiho, the Sun God. But then all ten suns came out together, making the earth too hot for all living things so that Yi had to mete out punishments. The Giant Bird was shot down to punish the Wind God, for it was believed that the Wind God had a bird's body but the head of a deer. The other monsters Yi wiped out were also half beasts, half men which preyed upon the people. These few examples enable us to envisage the many difficult trials Yi must have gone through to rid the world of such scourges.

The Story of Kun and Yu:

According to the *Book of Mountains and Seas,* a terrible flood submerged hills and valleys and threatened to destroy mankind. To avert this disaster, Kun stole from the Emperor of Heaven some magic self-propagating soil with which to stop the flood. In a rage the Emperor of Heaven killed him. But for three years his body did not rot. When people cut him open, Yu was born, and Yu carried on his work of harnessing the waters. He plodded across the country dredging channels and cleaving mountains to guide the waters back into the sea. He was helped by the winged *Ying* Dragon which drew lines on the ground with its tail to show the way the water should flow. Yu sometimes turned himself into a bear to work on the mountain blocking the Yellow River. Whenever he sounded his drum, his wife Tushan would bring him his meal. One day when Yu was hard at work dislodging rocks on the mountain top, he struck the drum by mistake. When his wife came with his food, she surprised him in the form of a bear. Ashamed of being a bear's wife, she walked away, turning into a rock at the foot of Sungkao Mountain. "Return me my son!" cried Yu. At this the rock split asunder and out came Chi.

Another old book relates that when Chi was born, Yu heard the infant's wail but was too busy fighting the flood to go and see his new-born son. These tales show that Yu worked hard and selflessly to harness the waters on behalf of the people.

Tradition has it that the people made Yu their sovereign because he was successful in checking the flood. When he died they made his son Chi succeed him. According to legendary history, Yu was the first emperor of the Hsia Dynasty and lived in the 21st century B.C.

In addition to these three stories there are many fragmentary tales dealing with the people's struggle against Nature in ancient times and their incredible will-power. For instance, the story of Ching Wei in the *Book of Mountains and Seas* tells about the fate of the young daughter of the legendary Fiery Emperor. Having drowned in the east sea, she turned into a bird called Ching Wei which carried bits of wood

or stone from the western hills in an attempt to fill up the east sea. There is also the story of the giant Kuafu who chased after the sun and caught it at Yuku in the extreme west. He grew so thirsty that he drank all the waters of the Yellow River and Wei River but still could not quench his thirst. Hastening north to drink from the big lake there, he died of thirst on the way, leaving a cane which turned into a green grove of peach trees.

Our ancient myths and legends include many stories of social struggles which may have been inspired by historical happenings, then turned into imaginative legends. Here we shall present the story of the Yellow Emperor and the tale of Kungkung.

There are many legends about the Yellow Emperor whose most outstanding feat was his battle against Chihyu. This Chihyu was a ferocious monster with eighty-one brothers, all of whom had metallic heads, a beast's body and lived on sand and stones. They were adept at making all kinds of weapons and they butchered the people at will. Chihyu was a follower of the Fiery Emperor and he began by fighting him, driving him into the valley of Cholu in the northern part of present-day Hopei. In desperation, the Fiery Emperor sought help from the Yellow Emperor who sent him a horde of bears and tigers to aid him. Chihyu made more weapons and turned his army to attack the Yellow Emperor, who sent his *Ying* Dragon to fight Chihyu on the Hopei plain. The dragon called up clouds, but Chihyu brought in Uncle Wind and Master Rain who created a storm which overpowered the dragon. The Yellow Emperor then invoked the Goddess of Drought to cause such a widespread drought that even Master Rain was helpless. The storm had to subside. Chihyu then conjured up a heavy fog, but the Yellow Emperor invented a compass-cart which enabled him to find his way through the fog. The struggle ended with the triumph of the Yellow Emperor.

The battle between these two powerful legendary figures was recorded in several old books in beautifully written accounts with much action and colour.

A comparable tale is that about the struggle between Kungkung and Chuanhsu. According to *Huai Nan Tzu*:

> In ancient times Kungkung and Chuanhsu fought each other for the throne. In a fit of rage, Kungkung butted against Mount Puchou, breaking the pillars of heaven and snapping the ties of the earth. Then the sky shifted towards the northwest, tilting the sun, moon and stars. The earth sank in the southeast so that water flowed in that direction.

Chairman Mao praised Kungkung as "a victorious hero". The story of this fight for the throne may have been inspired by some battle between different tribes. However, this myth was a bold and imaginative explanation of the fact that in China the water flows eastward because of the lower terrain there.

An even more imaginative and bolder story of this type is that of Hsing Tien's defiance of the Emperor of Heaven. The *Book of Mountains and Seas* relates that Hsing Tien quarrelled with the Heavenly Emperor, who chopped off his head and buried him in Changyang Mountain. Although headless, Hsing Tien fought on, using his nipples as eyes, his navel as mouth. Holding a big shield and an axe he danced wildly, showing his determination to hold out. This was a subtle reflection of the people's desire to fight against the slave owners.

These fragments of myths and legends in old books make it clear how rich and colourful were the many legendary tales created in ancient times. It is a pity that so few were handed down intact. Hardly any written records are left from the period of slave society apart from the inscriptions on oracle bones and bronzes. During the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) Confucius and his followers, the spokesmen of the slave-owning nobles, not only scorned but distorted old myths and legends. For instance, legend had it that the Yellow Emperor had four faces. Confucius insisted on taking this to mean that he sent four men out to rule the four regions of the earth. That was the only interpretation he allowed to be spread. Because of him and the later Confucians, legends were handed down in a much changed and mutilated form.

Incomplete as our ancient legends are, their characteristic features are nevertheless obvious. Chairman Mao's appraisal of the story of Kungkung gives us tremendous inspiration, and we can see that

many heroes in ancient Chinese legends had tremendous daring and struggled hard to win through difficulties and dangers. In the face of a shattering natural calamity or a powerful enemy, these heroes were not helpless but displayed immense strength and the will-power to triumph over adversity. Good examples are figures such as Nuwa, Yi, Kun, Yu and the Yellow Emperor. They would not submit to Providence but determined to be the masters of their own fate. Instead of knuckling under, they put up a resolute fight.

Ancient myths and legends had a tremendous influence on later literature and art. Unearthed bronze utensils of the 16th-9th century B.C. reveal beautifully engraved *tao-tieh, kuei*-dragon and other designs which had their origin in early legends. Paintings and sculptures of the 5th-3rd century B.C. also drew their themes from legends. The silk painting unearthed in 1972 from the Han tomb in Mawang-tui in Changsha, Hunan, for instance, presents images from the legend of the ten suns. Again, the clay tree excavated in 1969 from a 2nd century B.C. tomb in Chiyuan County, Honan, is a sculpture of the legendary *fusang* tree and forms part of a scene of jubilation after Yi shot down the nine superfluous suns.

In the period after the 5th century B.C. many poems, essays and other writings dealt with myths and legends. Chu Yuan's poems with their powerful imagery drew abundantly on ancient myths and legends. Later poets like Li Po (A.D. 701-762) and Li Ho (A.D. 790-816) used legends to give colour and atmosphere to their poems. Our fiction evolved from myths and legends too, and one of the earliest Chinese narratives *Travels of King Mu* has a strong legendary flavour. The tales of the supernatural of the 3rd-5th century include a number of legendary stories. *Pilgrimage to the West,* a well-known novel written in the 16th century, describes battles between Monkey and various monsters which are reminiscent of the battles described in ancient legends.

One of the earliest sources of Chinese literature and art, legendary tales provided them with their distinctive national flavour and spirit.

Chronicle

New Books in Memory of Chairman Mao

Some new books about Chairman Mao's revolutionary activities and great historical achievements were recently published in Peking and sold throughout the country. These included *The Great Journey — Reminiscences about Chairman Mao During the War Years* published by the People's Publishing House; *Reminiscences of Chairman Mao* by the People's Literature Publishing House; *Chairman Mao in Northern Shensi* and *Chairman Mao's Concern for Young People* by the China Youth Publishing House; and *Stories About Chairman Mao in His Youth* by the China Children's Publishing House.

Other new works are *Chairman Mao, the Never-Setting Red Sun in Our Hearts*, a book of more than 160 popular songs published by the People's Music Publishing House; *Sing of the Red Sun*, a collection of over 100 folksongs, ballads and poems in the classical and modern style edited by the Chinese Language Department of Yenan University; *The Sun Rises, the East Is Red*, a collection of poems; *Raise High the Great Banner of Chairman Mao and Advance Victoriously*, an art album; *The Fountain of Happiness Given Us by Chairman Mao*, a selection of ballads; and *The Golden Sun Will Never Set*, a collection of children's songs.

Works of Modern Literature Republished

To meet the demands of China's reading public, the People's Literature Publishing House has republished a number of outstanding works written since the May 4th Movement in 1919 and after the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* in 1942. These include *The Heroes of the Luliang Mountains*, a novel about the War of Resistance Against Japan by Ma Feng and Hsi Jung; *The Hurricane*, Chou Li-po's novel about Land Reform; *Daughters and Sons*, a novel by Yuan Ching; *Midnight*, a novel by Mao

Tun; *The Family*, a novel by Pa Chin; *Sunrise*, a play by Tsao Yu; *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang*, a narrative poem by Li Chi; *The Water of the Changho River*, a poem by Yuan Chang-ching; and *The Goddess*, a collection of poems by Kuo Mo-jo.

Another well-known novel *Red Crag*, after being revised, has also been republished by the China Youth Publishing House. First published in 1961, this novel was a best-seller. By 1966 it had been reprinted 23 times in 4,800,000 copies.

The "Doena" Art Troupe of Romania in China

In the autumn of 1977, the "Doena" Art Troupe of the Armed Forces of Romania paid a friendly visit to China, performing in Peking and other parts of our country.

The Romanian artists sang with feeling *The Army Cantata*, *I Love Our National Emblem* and other songs which express the devotion of the Romanian Armed Forces to socialist Romania and their firm resolve to defend their country. They also presented solos, folk music and dances with a distinctive national flavour.

In addition, the art troupe presented the Chinese songs *The East Is Red*, *Song in Praise of Chairman Hua* and *I Am a Sentry for the Great Motherland*, as well as the Chinese dance *Washing Clothes*. Their performances were warmly applauded by the Chinese audiences.

Exhibition of Romanian Paintings

An exhibition of 19th and 20th century Romanian paintings, sponsored by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, was recently held in Peking. On display were more than 100 representative works by outstanding Romanian artists since the beginning of the 19th century. Among them were such paintings as C. D. Rosenthal's *Revolutionary Romania*, Nicolae Grigorescu's *A Young Woman Serf* and Octav Bancil's *The Year* 1907. The exhibition reflected the development and high standard of Romanian art, portraying the struggle waged by the Romanian people for national independence and liberation and their achievements in socialist construction.

Crocheting a Table Cloth (woodcut) **by Hsu Tzu-ching and Lu Yu-ho**
(commune members in Chenghai County, Kwangtung Province)

中国文学
英文月刊1978年第1期
本刊代号2—916