

THE STORY OF
THE MODERN
PEKING OPERA

SHACHIAPANG



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the Modern Peking Opera*

Shachiapang

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THE incident took place during China's War of Resistance Against Japan.

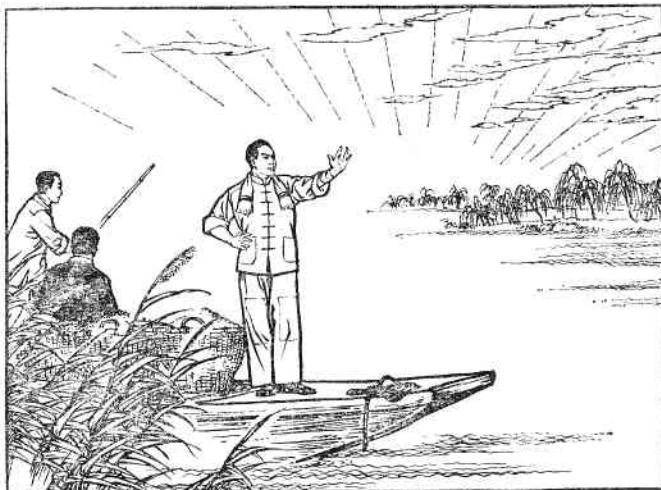
The place is the market town of Shachiapang by Lake Yangcheng, Changshu County, Kiangsu Province. Situated in an area rich in fish and rice, Shachiapang's network of lakes and rivers made it also an ideal place for guerrilla warfare behind the enemy lines. After liberating the town, the New Fourth Army set up an anti-Japanese guerrilla base there, like a dagger in the enemy's heart. Then the New Fourth Army main force soon left the area for other battle assignments.

Left behind to recuperate in Shachiapang, the company political instructor Kuo Chien-kuang, who had been wounded in battle, and seventeen other sick and wounded fighters, were helped by the county Party committee secretary, Cheng Chien-ming, and arrived in the town. Sister Ah-ching, the town's Party branch secretary, town head Chao Ah-hsiang and others were notified by the county Party committee and hurried by night to the highway to help the sick and wounded armymen cross the Japanese blockade line. Sister Ah-ching ran Spring Tea-house as cover for her work of underground liaison for the Communist Party. She quartered Kuo and the other wounded soldiers in the homes of Aunt Sha, Wang Fuk-en, Ah-fu and other peasant activists.

Led by Kuo Chien-kuang, the wounded men followed Chairman Mao's teaching that "**the army must become**

one with the people." While recuperating, they went among the people, forging fish-and-water ties with them, and in turn were quickly nursed back to health by the villagers. The rice had ripened in the fields, and Kuo and those with lighter wounds helped the villagers gather in the harvest overnight.

Early the next morning, Kuo and Yeh Szu-chung, platoon leader, arrived at Aunt Sha's in a boat to deliver the baskets of rice they had harvested for her. Kuo, having removed the jacket of his grey uniform, a white towel at his neck and his left wrist bandaged, feasted his eyes for a moment on the beautiful scenes along Lake Yang-cheng: the silky blooms of the reeds, the sweet paddy and the neat rows of stately willows lining the shore. The sun had just risen and tinged the sky with red, the entire glory of the morning being mirrored in the lake.



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The beauty of it called up in his mind his love for his motherland and the people. The working people had with their hands carved out this lovely landscape in the south, which teemed with fish and rice. As a people's fighter he had the duty to defend it — on no account must the Japanese invaders be allowed to run amuck. This thought stirred him greatly.

He had left the battlefield wounded and come to Shachiapang to recuperate. For a fortnight he had been thinking of his comrades and commanders and wondered where they were. The armymen and people stood ready to crush the enemy's "mopping-up" campaign, longing for the day when they would raise their swords and wipe them out. Day and night the wounded wanted only to be fit for battle and return to the front.

The boat was rowed in front of Aunt Sha's house, and Kuo jumped ashore and tied it up. Having unloaded the baskets of grain, he told Yeh Szu-chung to hide it in Aunt Sha's grain jar buried behind her house. Then he picked up a broom and started sweeping the courtyard. He had just finished when medical orderly Ling and Aunt Sha returned from the lake. Kuo went up to them and told Aunt Sha that they had harvested the rice and cached her share for her.

Aunt Sha was moved. "That's good of you! You must be tired," she said, and placed a stool for Kuo to sit down. "Look, Instructor," she said, pointing at the bowl on the table, "here are some rice cakes Ah-fu brought you. His mother said they were to show their love for our armymen. I've made some too, and I'll fry them for the comrades later."

"Instructor," said Ling, "Aunt Sha helped wash our clothes again."

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"The comrades harvested all night when they were not fully recovered. Isn't it only natural for me to wash a few clothes for them?"

"The people here are so good to us!" said Kuo.

Ling also told Kuo how armyman Wang had refused to have the dressing on his wound changed, saying the medicine should be kept for more serious cases.

"Didn't you tell him that it was my order?" Kuo asked.

"Yes, I did. And Aunt Sha criticized him before he finally agreed."

"Where is he now?"

"He's gone with Ah-fu to hide the grain for Aunt Li."

At this point Szu-lung, Aunt Sha's youngest son, rushed in with a fishing-net in his hand. "Ma, I've caught two fish, and some crabs and shrimps, too," he announced joyfully.

"Did you go fishing, Szu-lung, straight after work?"

"Yes. To give the instructor something to go with his rice."

"Fine. Give them to me. I'll clean them."

Kuo wanted to help her but Szu-lung said, "Don't bother. Leave it to me."

Yeh, who had finished hiding the grain for Aunt Sha, appeared from behind the house and handed Kuo some letters. They had been written by wounded comrades, asking to rejoin their units. Kuo shared his comrades' eagerness to return to the front. "How impatient they are!" he said after reading the letters. "Well, Platoon Leader Yeh, I think those who have recovered might leave first."

"Leave? Where would you go?" asked Aunt Sha.

"To find our units," replied Kuo.

"To find your units? How can you!"

From personal experience Aunt Sha knew that without a people's army the people have nothing. She had borne four sons but, in the old society, was too poor to raise them. The first two starved to death as infants, and it took her great effort to bring up the others. Then, in a famine year, she had to borrow money from the despotic landlord Tiao at an extremely high interest rate. Unable to repay the debt, she had to give her third son to slave for Tiao. Brutally beaten, the boy died. Szu-lung, her fourth son, at the age of sixteen had a fiery temper and was fearless. He had charged into Tiao's house to have it out with him, and was thrown into prison by the bloodsucking landlord. Only when the New Fourth Army liberated Shachiapang was Szu-lung freed and saw the light of day again. He who has drained the cup of bitterness knows best the sweetness of honey; he who has experienced freezing weather is most sensitive to the warmth of the sun. Aunt Sha often said that Chairman Mao was like the sun, and without the Chinese Communist Party her whole family would have perished long ago. Although the elder Tiao had died, he had left his son Tiao Teh-yi studying in Japan. Aunt Sha could never forget this bitter hatred for the class enemies both at home and from abroad. Since Kuo Chien-kuang and the others came to Shachiapang to recuperate, she had treated them like her own sons, carefully nursing them. Now that they were leaving, she just couldn't bear to part from them. She said to Kuo, "You comrades were wounded in battle, so Shachiapang is your home; if anyone doesn't look after you well, just tell me and I'll criticize him."

"Aunt Sha's asking for our criticisms. Ah . . . Aunt Sha, there's a point I'd like to raise," Kuo teased.

"Fine. Let's hear it."

"The other day the comrades had a chat. They all talked about you, Aunt Sha. Once their tongues began wagging there was no stopping them. . . ."

"Oh, they must have a lot of complaints."

"Everyone raised his thumb and praised you."

"I haven't done anything worth talking about."

"Aunt Sha, you treat our comrades like your own sons and nurse us with the tenderest care. You're always mending and washing our clothes, and cook us three fine meals a day with fish and shrimps. Our comrades say: 'If we stay here long we'll be too fat and lazy to walk or climb, to say nothing of fighting at the front.'" Kuo indicated a very fat man with a gesture, and made Yeh, Ling and Aunt Sha laugh.



"Even when the comrades have fully recovered I won't let you go," said Aunt Sha. "I want you to have

three good meals every day, and sleep until the sun is in the west. I want everyone of you to be healthy and strong, like an iron tower. And then you'll mount your horses. . . ."

"And gallop south to kill the enemy, clearing out all traitors and bandits and driving out the Japanese aggressors. When the sun disperses the clouds and the red flag flies before every house, we'll come back to see you, our revolutionary mother!"

Suddenly Sister Ah-ching, Chao Ah-hsiang, Wang Fu-ken and Ah-fu rushed in. "The Japanese invaders have started 'mopping-up,'" Sister Ah-ching told Kuo. "They're moving fast. The county Party committee wants you to hide in the marshes for a while. I've got a boat and provisions ready."

Kuo Chien-kuang had long been prepared for the enemy's "mopping-up" campaign. He said calmly, "Sister Ah-ching, Comrade Chao, ask the militia to help the people evacuate and rush to cache as much grain as possible. If there's any you can't hide right away, bring it along."

"Don't worry about us, Instructor," said Sister Ah-ching. "Go and take cover in the reeds. When the coast is clear, I'll fetch you. Aunt Sha, how about Szu-lung and Ah-fu taking the comrades there? The boat's at the northwest corner of the town."

"All right," Aunt Sha said, and left.

"Platoon Leader Yeh," Kuo ordered, "tell the comrades to assemble at the northwest corner."

"Right!" Yeh replied, and went off at the double to call the men.

"Szu-lung," Sister Ah-ching said, "mind you keep under cover. Don't let anyone see your boat."

Szu-lung was about to go when Aunt Sha came out of the house with a basket of rice crusts and cakes for him to take to the wounded. "There's no shelter in the marshes," she said. "How can the wounded comrades stand it?"

"Aunt Sha," said Kuo, "we have Chairman Mao's wise leadership and the tradition of the Red Army men who crossed snow-covered mountains and swamps. No difficulty can stop us."

Guns rumbled in the distance; the situation grew tense. Sister Ah-ching urged Kuo to leave at once. Seeing that everything had been well arranged, Kuo once again warned Sister Ah-ching, town head Chao and Aunt Sha to be very careful, before he left with Ah-fu and Szu-lung for the northwest corner of the town.

Sister Ah-ching told Chao Ah-hsiang and Wang Fu-ken to do as Kuo said: Chao was to look after evacuating the people and Wang was to get some of the militiamen to hide the rest of the grain. And they went off to perform their tasks. Having told Aunt Sha to get her things ready to evacuate, she went up a slope to see if the wounded comrades had got off safely.

The gunfire soon drew closer and flames shot up in the distance. Sister Ah-ching and Chao helped the elderly people and children and directed the villagers along the evacuation route. After hiding the grain, Wang Fu-ken and the other militiamen started to help the people evacuate. Just then Japanese troops came into the town. They fired into the crowd and the villagers rose in furious resistance. Fu-ken bravely killed an enemy and carried a wounded villager on his back. Szu-lung seized a rifle and fought dauntlessly to cover the evacuees. The Japanese entered the town only to find it empty — not a single

New Fourth Army man, able or wounded, was there. The Japanese colonel Kuroda was exasperated and ordered burning, killing and looting. But still he got nothing, to his great disappointment. Having left the county town weakly garrisoned, he had been in constant fear of losing his den, so, three days later, after briefing the traitor interpreter, Tsou Yin-sheng, he led his troops back to the county town.

After the Japanese troops left, Sister Ah-ching helped the villagers to return. The sight of the ruined walls, the broken bricks and tiles, filled everyone with anger and hatred. Spring Teahouse by the roadside near the wharf was at sixes and sevens, with tables and stools overturned and crockery smashed, the awning askew and the shop sign on the ground. When they offered to help straighten the place up, Sister Ah-ching said, "Don't bother. I can do it myself. Go home and see how things are." She said good-bye to them and set about putting up the awning, hanging up the shop sign, picking up the tea-sets and sweeping the courtyard. She thought of the wounded comrades who had been in the marshes for three days. They must be running out of provisions and medicine. And with no shelter against wind and rain, they must have met with a lot of difficulties. Now that the villagers were back, a boat must be sent at once to fetch the wounded comrades.

As Sister Ah-ching was thinking this, Aunt Sha and Szu-lung returned. "Now that the Japanese have gone, we should bring the wounded comrades back," said Szu-lung.

"Right, Szu-lung. Let's go straight away," Sister Ah-ching agreed.



But just as they were about to leave, they saw a man running and shouting: "Hu Chuan-kuei is coming! His troops will be here any minute!" Presently Chao Ah-hsiang and Wang Fu-ken ran in and told Sister Ah-ching that Hu had dozens of soldiers, with Kuomintang insignia on their caps and the words "Loyal and Just National Salvation Army" on their banner. Tiao Teh-yi, the son of the despotic landlord, had come back too. "Loyal and Just National Salvation Army"? . . . And Kuomintang insignia? . . . The more she thought about it the graver Sister Ah-ching felt the situation. How was it that Hu came hot on the heels of the Japanese? What were they coming to Shachiapang for? Were they coming to stay or just passing through? Gazing at the roadway, she was thinking how she would deal with Hu and his men.

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THERE was a reason why Hu Chuan-kuei came to Shachiapang at that particular moment. After his wild-goose chase in Shachiapang, Kuroda returned to the county town and sent his interpreter Tsou Yin-sheng to ask Hu Chuan-kuei and Tiao Teh-yi to capture the wounded New Fourth Army men in Shachiapang. Under the signboard of "resisting Japan" and "saving the nation" the Kuomintang self-styled "Loyal and Just National Salvation Army" actually attached itself publicly to Chiang Kai-shek and privately to the Japanese aggressors, claiming that this was "saving the nation by a devious path."*

Hu had been a bandit, but when the anti-Japanese war broke out he knocked together a brigand force of a dozen men and half a dozen rifles. At first the Japanese mistook it for an anti-Japanese force and wanted to wipe it out. Pursued once by the Japanese troops, Hu fled into Spring Teahouse, begging Sister Ah-ching for help. Hu had not yet placed himself under the Japanese, so, in the spirit of the Communist Party's policy and tactics, she saved his life by hiding him in a water vat. Later, however, Hu's troops were reorganized by the Kuomintang as the "Loyal and Just National Salvation Army," with Hu himself as commander and Tiao Teh-yi as chief of staff.

Since the New Fourth Army main force had gone, leaving only a few sick and wounded behind, Hu Chuan-kuei thought it would not be difficult to capture them.

* This refers to the practice of capitulating to Japan and fighting communism followed by the Kuomintang reactionaries during the War of Resistance Against Japan. The Kuomintang reactionaries directed part of their troops and government officials to surrender to the Japanese invaders and then, as puppet troops and officials, to join the Japanese troops in attacking the Liberated Areas, which were under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. This was what they cunningly named "saving the nation by a devious path."

Moreover, he had accepted a large sum of money, arms and ammunition from the Japanese, and so readily promised to collaborate with them.

In this changed situation, Sister Ah-ching decided not to send for the wounded, but to ask Chao Ah-hsiang and Szu-lung to take some food to them. She must first further clarify the situation, and would know how to proceed from there.

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On arriving at Shachiapang, Hu Chuan-kuei wanted first to see his benefactor, Sister Ah-ching, at the teahouse, so he sent his adjutant, Liu, to tell her. As an old subordinate of Hu, Adjutant Liu had met Sister Ah-ching before. The moment he saw her he began reeling off a long story about his bandit exploits, and Sister Ah-ching knew that Hu Chuan-kuei had become a commander, while Tiao Teh-yi was his chief of staff. She also learned that Hu's troops were to be stationed in Shachiapang permanently, with headquarters in the Tiao family house.

As soon as they set foot on Shachiapang the bandit troops started looting and plundering, showing the true nature of the "Loyal and Just National Salvation Army." Hu and Tiao soon arrived at Spring Teahouse, and Sister Ah-ching, while serving them tea and cigarettes, tried to find out more about the enemy. Hu was very pleased with himself, and said he would repay Sister Ah-ching for saving his life that time. The cunning Tiao Teh-yi remained silent throughout their conversation, but observed Sister Ah-ching carefully. He concluded she was no ordinary teahouse proprietress, and attempted in a roundabout way to sound her out on the whereabouts of the wounded men. He tried

also to find out her political background. But Sister Ah-ching handled the situation calmly and resourcefully, giving the enemy tit for tat. Sensing some contradiction between Hu and Tiao, she decided to make use of Hu as a "shield to keep off the wind." Since Sister Ah-ching had the courage to hide Hu from the Japanese, thought Tiao, might she not do the same for the New Fourth Army men?



"Sister Ah-ching," he began, "the New Fourth Army stayed here a long time, like a big tree with fine shade. You had plenty of dealings with them and I'm sure you served them with special care."

"My stove is built for business, my kettle doesn't ask where the water comes from and my tables are used by travellers from everywhere. Whoever comes here is a customer and I have to be pleasant to him. I greet all

comers with a smile, and once out of sight, out of mind. When the customer leaves, the tea grows cold. So there is no question of giving anyone special care." She went over and threw out the tea remaining in Tiao's cup, giving Tiao a start.

Outwitted, Tiao Teh-yi parried, "Ah, Sister Ah-ching, you are just the right person to run a teahouse. However much a person says, nothing ever leaks out. My compliments to you!"

To push the wedge further between Hu and Tiao, Sister Ah-ching turned round and asked Hu, "What does he mean, Commander Hu?"

"Don't take it serious," said Hu, in fact displeased with the way Tiao kept bombarding Sister Ah-ching with questions. But when Sister Ah-ching went to fetch something from the teahouse, he complained to Tiao that he simply gave him no face.

"Don't misunderstand, Commander," Tiao explained. "But she's a shrewd woman, fearless and level-headed. Since we intend to stay here to save the country by a devious path, she could be very useful to us. But we still don't know whether she's for us or not."

"Sister Ah-ching? She's for us."

"Then let's ask her the whereabouts of the New Fourth Army and their wounded. She's bound to know. But she might not say, even though she knows."

"I'll handle it. You'd only get snubbed."

Sister Ah-ching reappeared with a plate of melon-seeds. "Sister Ah-ching," said Hu, "there's something I'd like to ask you."

"Well, if it's something I know. . . ."

"It's about the New Fourth Army. . . ."

"The New Fourth Army? Why, of course. Many New Fourth Army men were stationed here."

"Any wounded?"

"Yes."

"Where are they now?"

"Now? They left long ago."

"The wounded, too?"

"All gone. The Japanese combed the town for three whole days in a 'mopping-up' operation but couldn't find any trace of them."

Hu was dumbfounded, his hope vanishing like a bubble.

"The Japanese don't know this place, they blunder blindly," said Tiao. "Nothing is easier than to hide a few men in a big place like Shachiapang. Take the case of Commander Hu. Didn't you hide him in your water vat right under the nose of the Japanese?"

"In that case," said Sister Ah-ching, putting on a grave face, "I shouldn't have saved you, Commander Hu, for it's become a handle for gossip. Today, before your eyes, Commander Hu, have your men search my small teahouse inside and out. Otherwise I'll be under suspicion and it'll be hard for me." Throwing the duster on a table, she flicked her apron and sat down with her arms folded, head erect and a sullen look on her face.

"I was only joking. Why take it so seriously?" said Tiao in embarrassment.

"How am I to bear the consequences of such jokes, Commander Hu?" With this she flounced into the house.

Tiao Teh-yi, however, would not let matters rest at that. After all, he was born in Shachiapang, a snake in its old haunt. He watched the reed marshes across the lake for a while, then turned to tell Hu that the wounded men were most likely there. Hu thought this likely, and wanted

to send at once for a search. Tiao stopped him. He knew that the marsh area was large, with many paths in it. If they went in blindly, it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. They'd just be picked off by the New Fourth Army men hiding among the reeds. "Make the New Fourth Army men come out themselves," he suggested. "Tell the villagers to go out on Lake Yangcheng to catch fish and crabs. We'll put some of our plain-clothes men in every boat. Seeing people fishing on the lake, the New Fourth Army men will think the coast is clear and they'll come out. Then we'll fire at them from every boat. That should do the job."

"Ingenious!" Hu laughed and ordered Adjutant Liu to summon the villagers to Spring Teahouse, where at gun point, they were addressed by Tiao. "Fellow countrymen!" he said. "We are the Loyal and Just National Salvation Army, and fight the Japanese. Now, we've come here. We know you're too poor to give us much of a welcome. That's not your fault. But we'd like you to catch some fish and crabs in the lake. We'll pay you the market price."

"No, we're not going! We can't go!" the villagers protested.

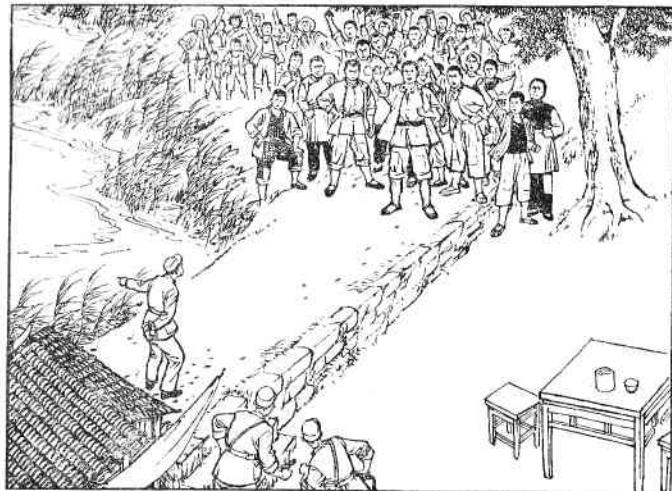
And Fu-ken shouted, "No, officer! We'd be killed if we ran into Japanese motorboats!"

"Don't worry about that," said Tiao. "We'll put three of our men in each boat to protect you."

"No, we're not going!" the villagers persisted.

"Damn it! Who dares to refuse? I'll shoot anyone who refuses to go!" Hu threatened.

Hearing this, Sister Ah-ching hurried out of the house. The viper Tiao Teh-yi was setting a trap, and the comrades might be fooled. If the fishing boats rowed out, there would be trouble. If the villagers refused to go, there



would be bloodshed. How she wished she had wings to fly to the marshes and tell her comrades there!

"You won't go? Then I'll shoot!" Tiao Hsiao-san threatened, assuming the authority of his cousin Tiao Teh-yi.

Sister Ah-ching got an idea. A shot fired here would be a warning to the men in the marshes. They would know something had happened in the town, and hide deep in the reeds. She decided to induce the enemy to open fire. She wrapped a broken brick in the straw hat hanging on the wall and hurled them into the lake. Hearing the splash and seeing a straw hat floating on the lake, Tiao Hsiao-san shouted, "Someone's jumped into the water!" Hu Chuan-kuei and Adjutant Liu both ran to the lake and fired into it. Tiao Teh-yi rushed up, but it was too late to stop them. "Do you expect the New Fourth Army men to come out

after hearing all this firing?" he raged. His plan thwarted, Hu ordered Tiao Hsiao-san to arrest all the villagers who were making trouble, and Tiao Teh-yi ordered Adjutant Liu to detain all the boats. Disappointed in their trick, they could only try starving out the wounded men in the marshes. From her doorway, Sister Ah-ching gazed at the marshes across the lake. What should she do to save the wounded comrades holding out there?

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CUT off from Shachiapang, the sick and wounded New Fourth Army men were concerned for the safety of the villagers. United as one under Kuo Chien-kuang, they overcame one difficulty after another in their three days in the marshes. It was on the fourth day that the shots rang out from Shachiapang, and Kuo ordered the men to keep watch in the direction of the town and prepare for battle. Time passed, but nothing happened. Kuo looked up at the sky. Dark clouds were gathering. He posted some soldiers to stand guard, and the rest to mend the reed-sheds to protect the seriously wounded against the approaching storm. Then he went to a forward position to have a look.

A discussion arose among the soldiers. "Comrades! What was that shooting from Shachiapang?" asked Lin Taken, gripping his gun.

"It means there are enemy troops there, either Japanese or traitors," replied another.

"If the enemy hangs out in Shachiapang, we'll have to stay where we are for a while. But we've run out of food and medicine. This is quite a problem," said Chang Sung-

tao. No one noticed the instructor, who had come back and was listening.

"Why did we come here anyway? We'd have done much better if we'd stayed in Shachiapang to fight the enemy," Hsiao-hu said, gazing towards the town with his gun firmly in his hands. Others agreed, wishing to be in Shachiapang fighting the enemy to the finish.

"That would have been very foolish," said the squad leader coolly. "If we want to fight, we'll have to wait for orders. Hasn't the instructor told us to mend the reed-sheds? Come on, let's do that first."

As he listened, many thoughts crowded through Kuo's mind, disturbing him for some time. Shots had rung through the marshes, but why were there no boats on the lake? Why hadn't Sister Ah-ching come to bring them news? There was much behind all this. The Japanese, Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wei had been making secret deals for a long time. The people of Shachiapang were bound to face disaster. . . .

Kuo was a fine commander educated by Mao Tsetung Thought. The shots had certainly been fired by the anti-popular Kuomintang, and he was worried about the safety of Sister Ah-ching, Aunt Sha, Chao Ah-hsiang and other villagers. With searing hatred for the enemy, whether Kuomintang or foreign aggressor, the wounded soldiers wanted nothing more than to leave the marshes and fight the enemy. But Kuo, as political instructor, must educate his men, teach them to guard against impetuosity and think of the over-all situation. They must watch the enemy moves and wait for orders, holding tight their guns, he thought, feeling his heavy responsibility as he gazed at the misty marshes and the town of Shachiapang in the distance.

Suddenly Hsiao-hu reported that Young Wang had fainted, and presently the squad leader came carrying Wang on his back, with Yeh, Ling and other soldiers following. Gently, he laid Wang down, cradling him in his arms. The comrades gathered round, calling softly, "Young Wang! You're ill!"

Soaked by the rain, Wang's wound was worse, and what with a high fever from malaria and weakness from hunger he had lost consciousness.

"Has he had any medicine?" asked Kuo.

"We're out of quinine," Ling replied.

"How are the others with bad wounds?"

"They're not doing well either, and the medicine's about gone."

"Instructor, medicine and food are urgent," Yeh said.

"Well, we must find a way out."

When Wang came to, he looked at the comrades around him and stood up with some effort.

"Young Wang," said the squad leader, "you must be hungry. I've a rice cake here. Take it."

"Eat it, Young Wang," urged the others.

Wang was deeply moved as he looked at the cake and then at his comrades. "Comrades! Our instructor has given his ration to the seriously wounded. You take it, Instructor!"

Kuo waved it away and, with warm proletarian comradeship, urged Wang to eat it. "Comrades," he said, "though medicine and food are a big problem, I'm sure the local Party organization will try in every way to help us, and so will the people here. But it seems that right now the Party and the people have difficulties, and can't come to our aid right now. What are we to do? Are we fighters

trained in the old Red Army tradition to be daunted by a little hardship?"

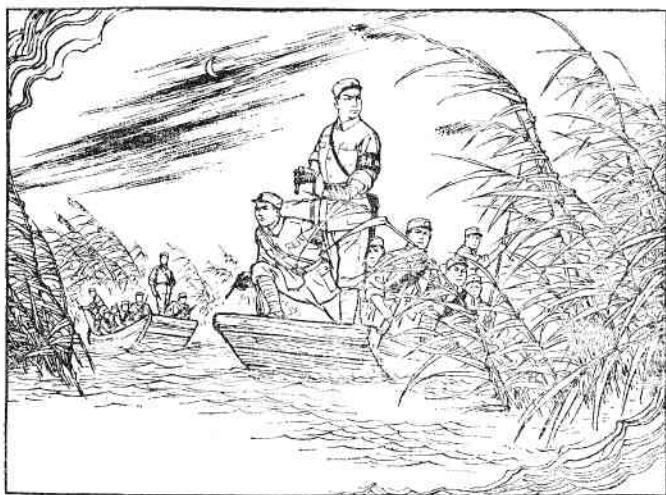
The men's spirits rose. "No, we're not!" they replied. "On the Long March our Red Army men climbed snow-capped mountains and crossed swamps, overcoming every kind of difficulty. We can hold out just as they did."

"Right!" said Kuo. "We can stick it out. Chairman Mao teaches us: '**As one aspect in the development of our nation-wide guerrilla warfare, we should effectively organize guerrilla warfare in the Hungtse Lake region north of the Yangtse River, in the Taihu Lake region south of the Yangtse, and in all river-lake-estuary regions in the enemy-occupied areas along the rivers and on the seacoast, and we should create permanent base areas in and near such places.**' Comrades! Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee guide us forward, encouraging us to keep up the fight around this lake town. We must be patient and hold out among the reeds, take the initiative and be flexible, so we can defeat a stronger foe. Rivers, lakes and estuaries are good battlegrounds, this region south of the Yangtse is a natural granary. Do not say the marshes are locked in dense mist and clouds, nothing can block the radiance of the red sun."

Chairman Mao's teaching and the instructor's encouragement fortified the fighters with confidence and broadened their vision. "That's right. We must keep calm and hold out in the marshes!" they resolved firmly.

Suddenly, the chug of an engine broke the silence over the lake, and a sentry came to report that he had spotted a motorboat. Instantly Kuo ordered him to keep it under observation, the platoon leader to take two soldiers with him to guard the outpost, the squad leader and Ling to go

and take care of the seriously wounded, and the others to get ready for battle.



The men fixed their bayonets and slammed bullets into the chambers of their rifles, all gazing in the direction of the sound. As it grew fainter, Yeh ran back to report that the motorboat was heading for Shachiapang.

"Judging from what's happened, the Japanese must have gone," said Kuo. "A moment ago those shots in Shachiapang, now a motorboat on the lake. . . ."

"Only the Japanese have motorboats," Yeh affirmed.

"My idea is to send two comrades across the lake to scout."

"Right."

Many requested the mission, but Kuo chose only Lin Ta-ken and Chang Sung-tao, telling them to take a boat

and row over in disguise. "Contact Sha Szu-lung or Ah-fu," he said. "Don't call on Sister Ah-ching, she must be in a tough spot herself. After getting information about the enemy, try to find some medicinal herbs. Be careful when you enter the town, and don't let anybody spot you on your way back."

"We'll accomplish our mission without fail."

"The comrades left behind have full confidence in your success," Kuo encouraged them, "and look forward to your triumphant return. Once we find out what the enemy's up to, we can make our plans. With the initiative in our hands, we'll be free to advance, withdraw, attack or take cover, and fight the enemy with flexibility. Our wounds will be healed, we'll rejoin our units, ask for assignment, and swing eastward to wipe out the enemy forces. With battle drums rolling and the red flag unfurled, we'll recapture the region south of the Yangtse at one stroke."

Lin and Chang set out. The squad leader returned to camp with something he had found. "Instructor! Look what I've got! Underground stems of reeds, and water plant seeds. Aren't they edible?"

"Yes, they are! If all of us rack our brains to find ways and means we can overcome our difficulties, however great! Chairman Mao says: **'Frequently a favourable situation recurs and the initiative is regained as a result of holding out a little longer.'** Comrades! Heroes are not daunted by difficulty, the Red Army's tradition will be passed on from generation to generation. Chairman Mao's teachings are clear in our minds; persevering in the struggle, we will seize victory tomorrow." He paused and looked at the men, then continued proudly: "Comrades! These marshes are the front, they are our battlefield. We must await orders, and hold out to win victory."

"Yes, we must wait for orders, fear no difficulties and hold out to win victory!" responded the fighters to the instructor's words.

Suddenly the sky clouded over, lightning flashed, thunder crashed, and rain fell heavily. Another test for the sick and wounded soldiers, but these heroic fighters armed with Mao Tsetung Thought took it in their stride.

Kuo led the men in the fight against the storm. He inspired them in powerful tones: "We must be strong, like the pine on the summit of Mount Tai!"

"Right!" the soldiers answered firmly. "We must be like the pine on Mount Tai standing tall and proud against the sky. No hurricane can uproot it, no thunderbolt can split it asunder, the fiery summer sun cannot wither it, and in winter's snow and ice it only grows greener and fresher."



The fiercer the wind and the heavier the rain, the tighter the men grasped their guns, united as one man around their political instructor. The next day the storm subsided, but the sky was still dark and louring.

*

AS Kuo Chien-kuang had thought, Sister Ah-ching was in fact having a hard time. Hu Chuan-kuei, having failed to ferret out the sick and wounded New Fourth Army men, arrested some of the villagers, but he couldn't get a word out of them. After that, he hung around the teahouse all day playing *mah-jong*. Meanwhile, Tiao Teh-yi posted more sentries and detained all the boats. With Hu in the teahouse, and Tiao running in and out, Sister Ah-ching found little chance to arrange contact with the men in the marshes.

Once when Hu and Tiao were at a game of *mah-jong*, Adjutant Liu rushed in to tell Tiao that the interpreter Tsou Yin-sheng wanted to see him. Tsou, who had been sent by Kuroda, had come by motorboat the day before to tell Hu to hurry up and capture the sick and wounded New Fourth Army men. A little while before, Kuroda had telephoned to ask about this, so Tsou was looking for Tiao to consult with him. After telling Adjutant Liu to keep his eyes open and on the lake, Tiao left dejected.

Sister Ah-ching came out of the teahouse and scanned the lake, thinking how the sick and wounded could be rescued from danger. Yesterday, she had sent Chao Ah-hsiang and Szu-lung to take food to the comrades, and they weren't back yet. The comrades had been in the marshes for five days. They had run out of food and medicine, and she had lost touch with them. How they must have suffered

in the violent storm! The eighteen men were precious to the revolution, they were the people's flesh and blood. As a liaison worker she had a heavy responsibility, as Secretary Cheng had stressed repeatedly on parting. After all these years of education by the Party she must not falter in the face of danger! The thought of the Party gave her confidence. With Chairman Mao's teachings and the wisdom of the masses, she could certainly meet this test and best the enemy.

Aunt Sha appeared with Szu-lung, who told Sister Ah-ching he had failed to get the food to the men in the marshes. The night before, he and Chao Ah-hsiang had been spotted by the enemy before they had rowed far. They had jumped into the water and got away, but the boat was seized by the enemy. Old Chao had had a relapse of malaria on top of a bad cold, and he was in bed with a high fever. "Sister Ah-ching, what do you think we ought to do?" asked Szu-lung.

"We must get hold of a boat somehow and send them some food," she replied.

Hearing Adjutant Liu's footsteps in the house, Sister Ah-ching hit upon an idea. "Let Szu-lung pretend to be ill. Then we'll ask him for a boat to send him to the county town for treatment," she said.

When Liu saw a man with his head down on the table, he asked: "Hey, who's that?"

"Aunt Sha's son," Sister Ah-ching replied.

"What's he doing here?"

"He's sick."

"Adjutant Liu, we hope you'll lend us a boat to take him to the county town to see a doctor," said Aunt Sha.

"Lend you a boat? Out of the question. The boats are not to be touched. Chief of Staff Tiao's order."

A man appeared on the road, ringing the bell in his hand. When challenged by the sentry he said he was a roving doctor.

The man was none other than county Party committee secretary Cheng Chien-ming. He had come to ask Sister Ah-ching to find out the disposition of the enemy forces, co-operate with the New Fourth Army main forces in wiping out Hu Chuan-kuei's forces and move the sick and wounded at once to Red Stone Village.

Sister Ah-ching and Aunt Sha recognized the Party secretary from his voice, and were overjoyed. "What a piece of luck!" exclaimed Sister Ah-ching. "He'll be able to cure the boy. Adjutant Liu, please let the doctor examine the lad!"

"No, it can't be done. You know well, Sister Ah-ching, that I wouldn't be able to account for this to Chief of Staff Tiao. He's given explicit orders that no stranger is to come here." Sister Ah-ching repeated her request, but he just wouldn't hear of it.

Hu Chuan-kuei heard the voices and came out to ask what it was all about. "Commander!" said Sister Ah-ching. "The boy is sick, and a doctor happens to be passing by. So I put in a word and suggested that he should examine the lad. Adjutant Liu said you wouldn't mind granting us this favour, but that it would put you in an awkward position if Chief of Staff Tiao came to know of it. After that, I didn't dare ask you."

Irritated by her taunts, Hu turned to Liu: "Don't treat an utterly worthless thing like an order from on high! Let the doctor examine the lad!" With that he went into the house to continue his *mab-jong* game.

Cheng Chien-ming sat down and felt Szu-lung's pulse. To give Cheng a chance to learn the enemy situation,

Sister Ah-ching fetched two cups of tea and started talking with Liu. "Adjutant Liu," she said, "you and your men have really had a tough time the past few days: guards posted all along the lake shore, boats seized, and people not allowed to go out fishing. What's really happened?"

"Nothing, really. It's just that New Fourth Army men are said to be in the marshes. . . ."

"New Fourth Army men? Then why don't you send troops to track them down?"

"The chief of staff says the marshes are too big. We'd never find them." Aware the conversation was getting out of hand, he added quickly, "Let's change the subject!" Then he turned to Cheng and said, "Hurry up there!"

Sister Ah-ching wanted to say something but Cheng waved his hand. "I know the patient's symptoms and the cause of the trouble without being told. This illness is due to some obstruction in the stomach. The patient must feel a stifling sensation. There's a hot humour in the stomach. Not eating properly, lacks nourishment."

"Just now he complained of a tightness in the chest," Aunt Sha responded.

"So he does know his job," said Adjutant Liu.

After feeling the boy's pulse, Cheng began to make out a prescription while Adjutant Liu stood by, fixing his eyes upon him. To get Adjutant Liu out of the way, Sister Ah-ching went into the house, and in a little while a puppet soldier came out and told Adjutant Liu that Hu Chuan-kuei wanted him. As soon as Liu left, Sister Ah-ching signalled to Szu-lung and Aunt Sha to keep a look-out while she whispered with Cheng. After assigning her tasks, Cheng told Sister Ah-ching that he would

send for the information in a couple of days. Just then Szu-lung coughed, and the two drew apart.

When Adjutant Liu came out and saw the doctor still there, he told him to hurry up and leave. Packing his medical kit, Cheng said, "Mind he takes that medicine promptly, not later than this evening."



After Cheng had gone, Adjutant Liu left to do some shopping for Hu Chuan-kuei, who had won the game. Then Sister Ah-ching told Aunt Sha and Szu-lung: "The county Party committee wants us to move the comrades to Red Stone Village. We've got to get a boat."

"I have an idea," Szu-lung said. "I'll slip away into the water, cut the moorings of a boat and push it out. I won't use a pole or oars. The boat will be empty, and

it won't make much noise. If I can push it out a few dozen metres it'll disappear into the mist on the lake."

"He's a good swimmer, Sister Ah-ching, let him go," said Aunt Sha.

"That's all we can do now," said Sister Ah-ching. "Take that path, Szu-lung, and find a quiet spot to slip into the water. But you must be very careful."

Shortly after Szu-lung had gone, Ah-fu came and told Sister Ah-ching that the previous night the instructor had sent Lin Ta-ken and Chang Sung-tao to his house for information about Hu Chuan-kuei, and when they left they took with them some medicinal herbs and food. Sister Ah-ching nodded and told him to go back to avoid arousing the enemy's suspicion.

*

WHEN he got home, Tiao Teh-yi talked secretly with Tsou Yin-sheng for a long time, about capturing the sick and wounded New Fourth Army men. He also arranged a marriage between Hu Chuan-kuei and Tsou's younger sister. After Tsou had left by motorboat, Tiao returned to Spring Teahouse where he saw Adjutant Liu, just back from shopping.

"Adjutant Liu," said Tiao, "the commander is getting married. The bride-to-be is Mr. Tsou's sister. I've got a good job for you, a trip to the Changshu county town to buy something for the wedding."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, Chief of Staff!"

Thoughtfully, Tiao walked up a slope on the shore and looked across the lake through binoculars. Suddenly he shouted: "Hey, it looks like there's a boat on the lake!"

"A boat!" Liu was astonished. "There's been a strong wind all day. Maybe it snapped the moorings, so an empty boat has drifted out."

But Tiao knew better. An empty boat with a broken rope would drift with the wind and the current towards the shore. How could it go against them? Someone must be in the water pushing it. So he ordered Liu to give chase immediately. But it was too late, for Szu-lung and the boat were out of reach. Once in the middle of the lake he climbed into the boat and rowed towards the marshes as fast as he could. Upon his arrival he told Kuo the county Party committee's instructions, and with him as guide the comrades moved safely to Red Stone Village. From then on Szu-lung became a fighter of the New Fourth Army.

*

THE enemy searched for Szu-lung, but couldn't find him, so they took Aunt Sha away instead. Hu Chuan-kuei and Tiao Teh-yi knew that the New Fourth Army men had moved out of the marshes safely. Pressed by the Japanese, they decided to torture and interrogate the villagers they had arrested. Hours of questioning, however, brought them nothing. Hu said angrily, "Old Tiao, why not shoot a few of them?"

Tiao, who had been thinking the same, decided to start with Fu-ken, who had taken the lead in protesting against going fishing with them on the lake. When Fu-ken was brought in, Tiao, believing he could entice him with blandishments, said: "We'll set you free when you tell us who the Communists are in the town."

Staring furiously at Hu and Tiao, Fu-ken denounced them. "You're traitors and stooges riding roughshod over the people!"

Hu yelled, "Orderly! Have him shot for the other riff-raff to see!"

Fu-ken fearlessly walked to the execution ground head high, shouting: "Down with Japanese imperialism! Down with traitors and stooges!" "Long live the Chinese Communist Party!" "Long live Chairman Mao!"

There was a volley of shots, and Fu-ken died a hero's death. He was followed by an old man named Liu, whose son was in the New Fourth Army. The blood-thirsty Hu Chuan-kuei wanted to have Aunt Sha shot too, but Tiao Teh-yi suggested that she be locked up for the time being.

For days, Tiao had been pondering certain questions. As he thought where Adjutant Liu started shooting so rashly that day and where they lost one of the boats they'd seized, he became more and more suspicious of Sister Ah-ching, for both happened near Spring Teahouse. Moreover, the Japanese wanted Aunt Sha to tell who the Communist working behind the scenes was. Hence Tiao's intention to spare Aunt Sha. He told his idea to Hu Chuan-kuei, as well as his plan to test Sister Ah-ching when she came to help Hu with his wedding. Hu nodded his agreement, if with reservations.

Sister Ah-ching had followed Cheng Chien-ming's instructions and reconnoitred all enemy positions except headquarters. Now that Hu had asked her to help with his wedding, she would have a chance to examine the area.

Before going in, Sister Ah-ching took a look around. Then when she saw Hu, she congratulated him on his coming wedding, and praised his bride's beauty. Hu was

very pleased and repeated his invitation to her to help him with the wedding. Left out in the cold, Tiao thought: You're doing all right, while I'm in a jam. He brought a cigarette tin down with a bang on the table and demanded, "Has that old woman Sha owned up? Bring her in!" Sister Ah-ching knew Tiao was going to test her again, so she deliberately turned to go.

"Sister Ah-ching," Tiao stopped her, "you can stay while we get on with our business!"

"Yes, stay a little longer, since the chief of staff asks you!" said Hu.

"All right. Then I'll sit a while." Sister Ah-ching walked steadily over to the table and calmly sat down.

Aunt Sha was brought in. Her hair was dishevelled, her forehead bloodied and her clothes torn. But she stood firm, her eyes flaming with hatred. Sister Ah-ching felt still



greater respect for this old revolutionary mother. At first Aunt Sha was surprised to see Sister Ah-ching sitting there, but then she understood. The enemy was putting Sister Ah-ching to a test too. She must protect Sister Ah-ching and take all the consequences herself.

"Old woman," Hu began, "did your son row the New Fourth Army men out of the marshes?"

"I don't know!" Aunt Sha replied, unruffled.

"Where is your son now?"

"I don't know!"

"Who got you and your son to do this? Who was behind it?"

"I don't know!"

The exasperated Hu Chuan-kuei had raised his whip when Tiao intervened. "Old lady," he said hypocritically, "don't be so stubborn, or you'll suffer. How could an old woman like you have made such a cunning scheme? You must have acted at someone's bidding. She pulled the strings, while you played on stage. Just tell me who she is, and I guarantee you'll never be short of firewood or rice." He threw a glance at Sister Ah-ching, who remained calm in her chair. Then he looked at Aunt Sha standing there with her head high.

Tiao's first scheme failed, so he tried his next. He turned to Sister Ah-ching and asked her to persuade Aunt Sha. "All right," Sister Ah-ching said. "Since Chief of Staff Tiao thinks so highly of me, I'll try. But I know this old lady's temper. I don't expect anything better than a rebuff."

She went over to Aunt Sha, her arms folded. "Aunt Sha, Chief of Staff Tiao said your son had sent a boat to the New Fourth Army men. Is that true? He's your only son. How could you bear to part with him?"

Aunt Sha appeared very angry. "The boy's grown up," she replied, "and free to choose his own way."

"Tell me," interrupted Hu Chuan-kuei, "what has the New Fourth Army ever done for you?"

This was too much, and Aunt Sha answered in a storm of indignation. "On August 13, the Japanese attacked Shanghai, and the land south of the Yangtse was overrun by the aggressor; our people were put to the sword, corpses piled up, flames scorched our beloved land far and wide. But, led by the Communist Party, the New Fourth Army has resisted Japan. Braving hardships, it marched east, deep behind the enemy lines, and liberated villages and towns. Where the red flag flies, people see the sun again and sing. You call yourselves the 'Loyal and Just National Salvation Army,' then why haven't you fired a single shot at the Japanese invaders? Tell me, what country is it you



want to save? Why not save China, why collaborate with the Japanese? Why insist on fighting the Communists? To whom are you loyal and just? You're stooges of the enemy, a bunch of traitors, without shame or conscience!"

Aunt Sha's denunciation hit Hu and Tiao like a thunderbolt. "Shut up!" they yelled.

Aunt Sha, fierce and cool as she defied the enemy, went on: "I dare you to justify yourselves and tell people the truth. When you've done that you can cut me to pieces for all I care! The day will come when Shachiapang is free. We'll see how you traitors meet your end!"

Aunt Sha's stern and righteous denunciation pierced the enemy's heart like a sword. "Take her out!" Hu snarled. "Have her shot!"

Tiao motioned to Hsiao-san not to carry out the order, and Hsiao-san took the hint. Aunt Sha angrily shook off Hsiao-san, and walked off with her head high.

"Commander Hu!" Sister Ah-ching called. Ah, thought Tiao Teh-yi very pleased, had Sister Ah-ching fallen into his trap? "Wait a minute," he said smugly, "Sister Ah-ching has something to say."

Sister Ah-ching rose calmly and said simply: "It's time I left."

Her remark was like a pail of cold water thrown on Tiao. "Sister Ah-ching," he pursued, "the commander wants to have the old lady shot. As a neighbour of hers, how can you bear to see her die without trying to save her?"

"Others will come to save her."

"What others?"

"Well, if her son Szu-lung took a boat to the New Fourth Army men, he's bound to save his mother. What's more,

the New Fourth Army men will surely come to rescue her!"

"If I have her shot now, what can they do for her?" Hu snarled.

"Exactly," said Sister Ah-ching. "If you have her shot now, no one will come. If no one comes, you won't catch anyone!"

"Right!" Hu agreed. "This is called angling for a big fish with a long line."

Tiao thought for a while, then said, "Good. Sister Ah-ching is really on our side. All right. We'll set that old lady free at once. Will you please take her home?"

"Of course I will, Chief of Staff, since you have so much trust in me."

After Sister Ah-ching and Aunt Sha had left, Hu asked Tiao to explain what he had in mind. "I've told Adjutant Liu to follow them and listen to what they say. If they start whispering together, it'll prove that they're in cahoots. Then we'll arrest them at once and question them both!" He had barely finished explaining when Adjutant Liu hurried in to report that Aunt Sha and Sister Ah-ching had come to blows.

Presently Sister Ah-ching returned, her hair a little disordered and one shoe half off. "Oh my! What a fierce old woman!" she said. "As soon as we were outside she threw herself on me and started calling 'traitor,' 'stooge.' Look at me! My clothes torn, my mouth bleeding. Just look!" She put on her shoe as she continued, "My, that old woman's out of her mind, imagining she could get the better of me. She's no match for me. I soon put her in her place!"

After telling his men to send Aunt Sha back to jail, Hu chided Tiao for fancying himself clever. Outwitted by Sister Ah-ching, Tiao was very much embarrassed. "Sister

Ah-ching," he said, dejected, "I hope you aren't suspicious?"

"Humph!" sneered Sister Ah-ching. "If I were that suspicious, I'd take care to steer clear of suspicious types!" The resourceful Sister Ah-ching's brave, revolutionary spirit and Aunt Sha's help once again frustrated the enemy's plot. She had learned what she needed to know about the enemy headquarters.



Back at Spring Teahouse, Sister Ah-ching quickly sketched the details of Hu Chuan-kuei's brigand troop disposition in Shachiapang, and sent the map to county Party committee secretary Cheng Chien-ming. Cheng then summoned the commanders of the New Fourth Army detachment to discuss the plan for smashing the enemy. They chose Hu Chuan-kuei's wedding day for the action. Kuo

Chien-kuang was to lead a commando platoon of his men who had recovered, into the enemy's heart, smash the bandit headquarters and wipe out the enemy there. The main force of the detachment was to surround Shachiapang and destroy Hu's main force on the east and west flanks. Sister Ah-ching and Chao Ah-hsiang were to lead the militiamen to cut off the enemy's signal communications and co-ordinate the actions of the detachment's main force. After the commando platoon fighters arrived, Sister Ah-ching was to help them get into the enemy headquarters through the back courtyard.

*

A pre-dawn, cool breeze was blowing, and a crescent moon hung in the western sky as this New Fourth Army detachment passed through the slumbering villages in a forced march on Shachiapang. The commando platoon fighters led by Kuo Chien-kuang advanced in front of the main force. The fighters were in grey home-spun uniform and bast sandals, automatic pistols in their belts and red armbands on their left arms, embroidered with the three bright characters "New Fourth Army." Kuo marched briskly at the head of the platoon. He was thinking of Shachiapang's villagers, languishing under the enemy's iron heel and longing to see the light of day, and was eager to smash the enemy headquarters at one stroke and wipe them out. When the commando platoon came to the foot of a hill, they were met by the scouts Yeh Szu-chung and Sha Szu-lung, who reported their discovery of an enemy patrol. Instantly Kuo ordered the fighters to take cover in the bushes behind the mound, where, sure enough, a patrol of puppet soldiers passed, flashing their electric torches

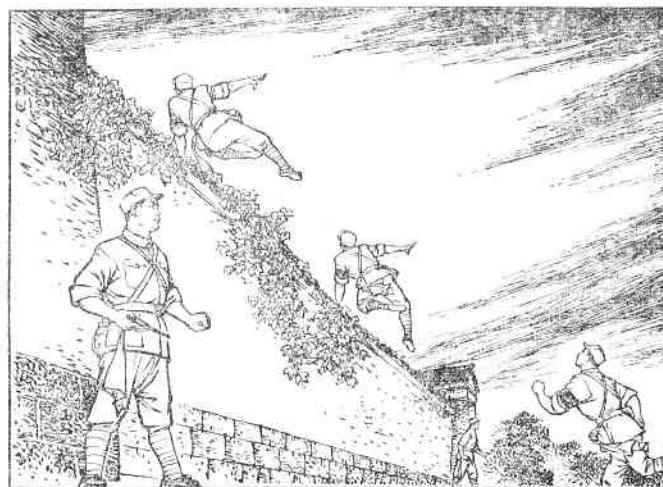
here and there. Soon they were gone, and Kuo and his men rounded the hill, where they could see the town of Shachiapang in the distance. Kuo ordered Yeh and Szu-lung to go on scouting ahead while he led the fighters straight to Shachiapang.

Soon the commando platoon was on the outskirts of the town, where Sister Ah-ching and the militiamen were waiting. After shaking hands all round, Sister Ah-ching led the fighters quietly through one street after another, till they were just outside Tiao Teh-yi's back courtyard wall. The fighters took cover in corners nearby and sized up the situation. A sentry slunk outside the courtyard, his neck drawn into his collar and his rifle in his arms. They heard him murmur to himself: "The commander's invited the Japanese to his wedding, so he's got more of us out here on guard. They spend the night feasting while I've got to stay out here. Just my rotten luck!"

Kuo looked round, then beckoned to Yeh Szu-chung who rushed forward and seized the puppet soldier by the throat before he knew what had happened. Hsiao-hu snatched off the puppet's cap and stuffed it into his mouth. They then took his gun and dragged him away. Sister Ah-ching came over with Kuo and the fighters. "Instructor," she said, "go over this wall and you'll be in Tiao Teh-yi's back yard! The enemy disposition remains unchanged. Their main force is posted east and west of the town, with only one squad left at the gate to the house. The militia has cut their telephone line so they won't be able to call up reinforcements from their flanks. The wedding party inside are drinking and pretty gay. Climb over this wall. It's an excellent chance to wipe out the lot of them at one stroke!"

At Sister Ah-ching's report, Kuo quickly formed his battle plan. He ordered Szu-lung to lead the assault group

to the gate and dispose of the enemy guards, while Sister Ah-ching was to lead the militia at once to meet the main force. After Szu-lung and Sister Ah-ching left, Kuo vaulted up onto the wall. The courtyard was in total darkness. Kuo waved back and the fighters followed him nimbly over the wall to make a dash for the front courtyard.



The bandits were absorbed in their wedding feast and drinking with the Japanese in the courtyard. To curry favour with the Japanese, Hu Chuan-kuei had sent a special invitation to Kuroda to attend his wedding. It was nearly dawn. Kuroda knew the New Fourth Army main force was in the area and didn't dare stay too late. He told his men to get his motorboat ready. Soon the interpreter Tsou Yin-sheng reported that the motorboat was there, and that Kuroda should leave. Kuroda, coward that he was, wanted

to telephone his headquarters to send troops to escort him back, and he tried again and again but couldn't get through. At last he cried out: "The line's been cut! Something's happened. Look out!" He had scarcely said this when he heard gunfire. Paling, he asked, "Where's the firing?"

Befuddled and scared, Hu Chuan-kuei couldn't tell where it was coming from. Meanwhile, a puppet soldier ran in to report that New Fourth Army men were in the back courtyard. "Delay them, block them!" Kuroda shouted, meaning to escape.

The courtyard became like a poked hornets' nest, with puppet and Japanese soldiers turning over tables and chairs and jostling each other as each sought to escape. A few of the enemy drew pistols to put up a desperate fight. Gunshots mingled with battle cries as the assault group which had disposed the enemy guards at the gate fought their way in.

By now the commando platoon fighters led by Kuo Chien-kuang were all in the courtyard, and all were ready for the fight. Kuo pressed forward boldly. He fired his automatic with deadly accuracy, picking off one enemy soldier after another. Suddenly Adjutant Liu darted out from a dark corner and lunged at him with his bayonet. Kuo kicked a puppet to the ground, turned round, seized the bayonet from Adjutant Liu and ran him through with it.

Kuroda tried to flee by the front gate, was driven back by Szu-lung and others, then turned to run for the back courtyard, where he was blocked by Kuo Chien-kuang. The Japanese whisked out his pistol when Kuo rushed at him, but Kuo seized him by the collar, at the same time grabbing his pistol. When a Japanese soldier lifted his rifle to shoot, Kuo quickly pulled Kuroda to his side, using him as a

shield. Kuo then shot the soldier before he could get away. Kuroda was left trembling before Kuo, who pinned him to the ground, face down.

The enemies under our cross fire were either killed or wounded, while the others were bottled up like turtles in



a jar, and threw up their hands in surrender. The New Fourth Army fighters relieved them of their guns and led them off.

By now the shooting gradually subsided as the enemy main force had been wiped out. Cheng Chien-ming, Sister Ah-ching and Chao Ah-hsiang and the detachment fighters joined forces with Kuo Chien-kuang and his men. Szu-lung opened the gate of the prison in Tiao Teh-yi's house and freed the arrested villagers. Aunt Sha, supported by Szu-

lung, and the other released villagers poured into the courtyard to meet their kinsmen. Townspeople also crowded in.

At sight of Kuroda, and Hu, Tiao and other traitors to their country, the free prisoners raised their shackles in anger to strike them, but Kuo Chien-kuang said, "Fellow countrymen! We'll hand these traitors over to the Anti-Japanese Democratic Government for trial!"

"Right!" Sister Ah-ching responded. "They must be tried by the people!"

Hearing this familiar voice, Hu Chuan-kuei raised his head and met Sister Ah-ching's angry glare. "You are? . . ." he asked trembling.

"I am a member of the Chinese Communist Party! You Japanese imperialists! You traitors!"

"Take them away!" Kuo ordered.



In the ocean of people's war, Kuroda, Hu, Tiao and Tsou, deadly enemies of the people, who had once had their way in Shachiapang, hung their heads and were led off by the New Fourth Army men.

Shachiapang was liberated, the people having been led by Chairman Mao and the Communist Party to rid themselves of the Japanese and puppet troops, so that they once more saw the light of day. The sun rose red in the east, shedding its rays over the vast waters of Lake Yangcheng and the land of Shachiapang, where the red flag was raised on high as army and people cheered: "Long live the Communist Party of China!" "Long live Chairman Mao!"

现代京剧《沙家浜》的故事

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