

WOMEN IN CHINA TODAY

6



Printed in China

Published by the
All-China Democratic Women's Federation
October, 1952

CONTENTS

Our Happy Life 1

Children, I Envy You! 13

OUR HAPPY LIFE

Pu Chun-sheng

Three and a half years ago, I led the inactive life of a hibernating insect, buried deep in the soil, and quite unaware that spring is near. I am an intellectual; I passed my student-days in Yenching University and afterwards taught in a missionary school. Lacking the courage to face the cruel reality, I went home at the outbreak of the Pacific War, shut myself up in the house and turned house-keeper. My husband Dr. Chen Ching-yun is an osteologist by profession. He is an uprighteous man. He bore the burden of the whole family, while I only looked after the children, put the house straight and made it a cozy home. Our friends used to praise me as an ideal wife. We never bothered with

politics, thinking we were above all that. I agreed with my husband's non-political attitude. Sometimes we felt rather depressed, and tried to talk things over, but we always resumed the same daily routine without any change.

Then the liberation came like thunder in spring, rousing me from my winter-sleep. The People's Republic of China was founded and new things came up all around to make me realize that society was changing indeed. Our government was laid in the hands of honest people. So I did not need any longer to worry about the social environment our children would have to face on leaving home and school.

One evening my eldest boy, Wen-tai, called me to his bed and said: "Mamma, did I tell you that the Young Pioneers has been set up in our school and I have joined it?" His eyes shone. Young as he was, he knew already that this was glory and happiness. His youthful ardour awakened an echo in me. The enthusiasm of my school days revived in me again. My husband was away at the time, studying in London. I had to take care

of the four children. So I decided to study first by myself. I began to read books on politics, art and literature and the writings of Chairman Mao. Not having studied for ten years, I often came across difficulties which I could not solve by myself. Fortunately at this time I met comrade Cheng Teh-fang. We used to be good friends before the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. When that war broke out, she went to the Liberated Area and took part in the revolution. After a separation of twelve years, she emerged as an advanced revolutionary cadre, while I remained backwards in many respects. She gave me a great deal of help and it was through her that I came to know the Communist Party of China better and realized that it was fighting for the right cause.

In February, 1950, I started teaching mathematics in the May First Girls' Middle School (it was then named "Bridgeman Academy" after its missionary founder). I made up my mind to be modest and learn from my colleagues. For example, Miss Wang Hung-wen, a young teacher in the

school, used to call me "Mamma," but "Mamma" often sought advice from her "daughter." Some of my colleagues and myself too used to complain that we could hardly make any progress in our studies because we had no spare time for reading. Overhearing this, my colleague Miss Tao Fen-chuan corrected our mistaken view by telling us that one could improve oneself just as well by learning from one's practical work. I began to realize that practical work was just as important as theoretical studies. In this way I was coming along gradually with the help of my colleagues.

My husband returned to Peking in January, 1951, and worked in the Hospital Attached to the National Peking University. While he was away, I had kept him constantly informed of the changes both in the family and in the country. I had always regretted that by living abroad he was unable to get first hand knowledge of the great and unprecedented historical changes that were taking place in our country. So on his return I did my best to help him catch up and told him everything I knew. When I had read the

The children and I starting out together, they for their own schools, I for the May First Girls' Middle School where I teach.



speech made by Liu Shao-chi to the meeting of cadres held on May 1, I immediately recommended it to him. He was greatly impressed by it. On the eve of May 4, my eldest boy, Wen-tai, and myself were making preparations to take part in the celebration and parade in front of Tien An Men together with all the teachers and students. My husband hesitated. Not knowing his attitude towards the parade, I did not make the decision for him. The result was that he stayed at home to write his lecture-notes. But on October 1, the day of the founding of the People's Republic of China, he did not hesitate any longer but went enthusiastically to join the ranks of the Educational Workers' Trade Union and attend the parade in front of Tien An Men. In the evening he took the children to the top of the Peking Children's Hospital to see the fireworks. Now we not only realized that the new society was for the good of all the people but also felt proud of the fact that everyone of us was master in this new society.

The Campaign to Resist American Aggression and Aid Korea was launched in

November, and everyone in my family was mobilized. I led the Workers' Trade Union in the May First Girls' Middle School (I had been elected chairman of the Union in the School in September) and worked together with the Students' Union to initiate an upsurge in studying current events and doing propaganda work, while my husband joined the Peking Volunteers Medical Corps and set out for Korea on 26th November. I often brought home the letters written by my students to the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers and read them to the children. This gave the children a great education and they began to write letters themselves. Even my youngest boy, Wen-yuan, who was in his second year of primary school, took great pains to write two letters to little friends in Korea.

On December 30, the Government Administration Council of the Central People's Government adopted the "Decision on the policies for dealing with American subsidised cultural, educational and relief organizations and religious bodies." I saw that taking this measure was just what an independent state

ought to do and that this wise decision was entirely in accordance with the will and demands of the people, so I decided to do my utmost for the early realization of this correct decision. The first thing my colleagues and myself had to do was to turn the "Bridgeman Academy" into a school of the Chinese people. From 1951 our school completely cut off its financial relations with the United States. After this, we joined all the missionary schools in Peking in launching a patriotic movement to wipe out every trace of the poisonous ideological influence of the American cultural aggression. On the eve of the May Day of 1951, we formally gave our school its present name, "The May First Girls' Middle School."

In May, 1951, I was happy to join the Land Reform Work Team going to Szechwan to help the peasants to carry out land reform movement. Practical work taught me that the Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Government was in the interest of the people. I began to know from personal contact the wisdom and strength of our peasant masses. Besides that, I began to hate the

landlord class for its cruel exploitation of the peasants, and love the peasants from the bottom of my heart. I realized also that during all these years I had been living on the fruit of the peasants' toil, so I should devote my whole life to serving their cause.

I returned from Szechwan in September, and in October my husband was invited to come back from Korea to attend the Third Session of the First National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in a consultative capacity. He heard both the inaugural speech and the adjourning speech made by Chairman Mao, as well as reports made by the heads of the various departments of the government and the speeches made by the committee members. He also took part in the group discussions. From these he learned a good deal and they enlightened him politically. After the meeting he rejoined the Volunteers Medical Corps. From his letters I can see that he loves his work and that his progress has been rapid. In a recent letter he told me that he has been asked to choose between the Osteological Hospital and the Osteological College, as his

field of work, both of which were to be established in the near future, and he replied that he did not mind where he was going to work, but would go wherever he was most needed. He added: "I am sure you will entirely agree with me in this decision."

This brought back my memories of our life during the past fifteen years. We met twenty years ago, fell in love and after a short engagement we were happily married. In the old society such a marriage might be regarded as ideal. But it is only in the last two or three years that we really have deep affection for each other. Before this, what each of us desired from the other was only "You should suit me." Very often we found that we did not suit each other so well. But since the liberation that has all vanished gradually. Now we work for our common ideal, that is how to render our best services to the country. Since we have a common aim in life, we can easily agree with each other on practical matters, and our real affection is built on the basis of this mutual agreement. I feel sure that only in the new

society could we have such a really happy family life.

Three and a half years have passed since the liberation of Peking. In these years our life has completely changed. Our four children are all happily studying, while my husband and myself have devoted ourselves selflessly to the realization of our common ideal. We will not remain contented with our present happy life. Together with the people of the whole country, we are following Chairman Mao and marching forward, redoubling our efforts to win the greater victory that is yet ahead of us.

August, 1952

Children, I Envy You

Chen Chu-ying

When listening to the report made by Chien Chun-jui, Vice-Minister of Education of the Central People's Government, in the latter part of June, I heard the good news that further measures would be taken, regulating the People's Scholarships* for all the secondary and higher educational institutions in the country. I felt glad for the happy younger generation and for their parents. I am a mother of eight children. In former days, I went through every imaginable difficulty so that my children could stay on in school. But, in spite of all my efforts, I was often distressed to see my children, studious and intelligent as they were, deprived of the opportunity of education

when of school-age. So I can deeply appreciate the motherly concern with which the government make provisions for the young people to attend schools and universities.

My husband was Professor Chu Tzu-ching.† Some comrades might still remember how, under the reactionary regime of the Kuomintang traitors, my husband laboured under the double pressure of the corrupt old social system and the heavy family burden, and how that double pressure suffocated him and caused his death. He taught as a university professor for over thirty years and tried all his best to impart his knowledge to the young generation, but our own children were denied the right to education, owing to our poverty, when they were of school-age.

My husband's salary was quite insufficient for the needs of a family of twelve persons. His salary went entirely to keeping us from starvation and nothing was left to maintain the children in school. Once the new term started, the payment of tuition fees grew to be a big difficulty. I well remember how, in the autumn of 1934, we asked permission from the university-authorities to take up one

month's salary in advance, promising that the sum would be refunded out of the salary over the next six months by monthly instalments. It was only by such makeshift that we overcame the difficulties for the time being. But in 1935, we were confronted again with the same problem. Five children were to be sent to school. Where was the money to come from? Talking over the problem several times with a friend, he promised to lend us a hundred dollars, to be returned by instalments within the following five months. But at the last minute he failed us and the only way out was selling our personal possessions. I sold the ring my mother gave me on her death-bed as a keepsake; I sold my furcoat and even my engagement ring. With the sum we scraped together in that way, our children barely managed to pay their school fees. In 1941, my second daughter had to put in only one term more for her to be graduated from senior middle school. She was a hard-working student and her record was excellent. We were reluctant to stop her education one term before her graduation. But what could

we do? We had nothing more to sell. My husband was compelled to sell part of his books, together with a volume of old calligraphy and a piece of Tan-Chi ink-stone, two rare curios which he had always loved and treasured. One can well imagine how a scholar would feel when he had to sell his books and art-treasures.

In spite of all our efforts and struggles, we could not save our children the bitter experience of being denied the right to education. Our eldest boy had to leave school in the early period of the War of Resistance against the Japanese Aggression when he was already in the second year of senior middle school. Some years later, our second boy and third daughter followed suit, the latter before completing her primary school, the former before completing his middle school. I may be too doting a mother. Everyday I worried about sending my children to school, but they were not able to go to school after all. Such a blow was too heavy to bear!

Even at this moment I shiver when I recall the day my husband departed from this world.

His death was a fatal blow to the whole family. I did not have the courage to think of our future. With the whole family to support and still three children to maintain in school, and with the scanty salary I earned, how could I manage to make both ends meet? I was broken-hearted and even the bright sunshine appeared gray to me. It was just at this precarious moment that our saviour came. We began to live under the sunshine of Chairman Mao.

Now our situation has completely changed in New China. The People's Government is doing justice to everyone who has rendered some service to society, our family has come under its kind consideration. The school-expenses of my two young boys and a daughter are now paid for by the government. Our family has been put on a secure financial basis. For the first time we begin to enjoy life. For the first time in my life, as a mother of eight children, I need not worry about my children's education, and this year, I am cheerfully looking forward to the pleasure of sending one of our children to middle school and another to the university. When

we sit chatting around the family table, we need not feel down-hearted because we are unable to pay school fees, nor do we need to bother about tomorrow's bread. What we chat about now is the children's work and studies and the good news in the daily papers. Sometimes we also discuss subjects like the construction of our motherland and the happiness of our life. I am often surprised by the children's progress. They are full of high ideals and are convinced that they will be able to realize them. I myself am infected with their rosy outlook now. Once their innocent faces glowed with warm colours as they said to me, "Mamma, you have already seen the new democratic society; you will live to see the socialist society and then the communist society! That is quite certain, you can be sure of that!" Their ardent enthusiasm makes me feel young again.

Today, the People's Government share the duty of us mothers in bringing up our children. They have created a proper environment for children to learn in and opened up the road to happiness. Children who



For the first time, we enjoy life.



Chen Chu-ying at work in the Tsinghua University Library.

live in New China, I envy you. Happy you are and forever happy you will be!

* Starting from autumn 1952, all the students of the higher educational institutions, secondary technical schools, normal schools and the short-term middle schools for workers and peasants in the whole country will be granted the People's Scholarship offered by the People's Government. This means that the government will provide tuition, board, lodging and miscellaneous. Besides this, it also offers different grades of living-allowances (including medical care, books and stationary, clothing and pocket-money etc.) according to the needs and economic conditions of the applicants.

† Professor Chu Tzū-ching, a distinguished writer and literary critic in China, was born in 1898 and died in 1948. He was head of the Chinese Department of Tsinghua University. He was at the same time poet, prose writer and scholar, with sincerity, modesty, gentleness, simplicity, and a sense of humour as his chief characteristics. Persisting in carrying on patriotic activities and struggling against the dark forces of the old society in spite of his bad health, he died exhausted and in poverty the year before the liberation. His wife Chen Chu-ying is now working in the library of Tsinghua University.

